



BALTIC  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
FORUM LITHUANIA

# ACTIVITY REPORT 2022

SAUGOME GANTA DRAUŽE SU ŽMONEMIS

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# PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED



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# STEPPING STONES TOWARDS ENSURING LONG-TERM FAVORABLE CONSERVATION STATUS OF AQUATIC WARBLER IN LITHUANIA (LIFE MAGNI DUCATUS ACROLA)



**2016-2023  
LITHUANIA AND  
BELARUS**

**2023-2026  
LITHUANIA AND  
POLAND**

**MELDINE.LT/EN**

## **The project was extended for another three years**

This year, we continued our work on the project "Stepping stones towards ensuring long-term favorable conservation status of Aquatic warbler in Lithuania" (LIFE Magni Ducatus Acrola). We paid the most attention to the analysis of the results and the preparation of the extension of the project. At the end of the year, the approval of the European Commission was received to extend the project until 2026. Activities will be continued and renewed, it is planned to share the experience of successful translocation with colleagues from Poland and Germany while implementing translocation of the Aquatic Warbler in Poland.

## **We traditionally counted Aquatic Warblers**

Records of Aquatic Warblers, a species protected at European and national level, are carried out on an annual basis, as the state of the populations of this species is constantly evolving and it is essential to have the most accurate data possible to plan the necessary measures. In addition, all hatcheries of the earliest of this species need to be inspected annually, as it is important to pay special aquatic warbler payments to farmers caring for grasslands that are needed to manage them. The counting of aquatic warblers is carried out in accordance with the constant methodological requirements, only singing male warblers are counted, the counting is performed twice a year - in the beginning of June and the beginning of July.

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The exact abundance of the breeding population is determined only after the second survey, when a comparison of the number of birds detected in the two surveys reveals the actual size of the population. It is determined by the maximum number of males found. This year, 187 singing male aquatic warblers were detected during the first census, and 208 during the second census. Last year, 209 singing males were found during the first census, and 243 during the second census.

Although in 2022 the total abundance of the Aquatic Warblers was slightly lower than in previous years, the total population abundance remained above 200 singing males. The birds were found in all the most important crossing points in the country and this, according to specialists, is a sign that the population of this species can still be considered stable.

### **The welcoming event for Aquatic Warblers is back**

After a break of several years, the welcoming event for Aquatic Warblers took place again on June 1 in the Šyša polder. Farmers and nature lovers who protect this bird were invited to taste delicious meals and listen to the sounds of the surrounding nature, as well as for the informal communication with naturalists.

News of protection of this species and the problems faced by farmers were discussed. In the evening, those gathered welcomed the sunset while listening to the songs of Aquatic Warblers in the meadows of the Šyša polder.



### **The suspension of project activities in Belarus and a threat to Aquatic Warblers posed by the war in Ukraine**

Due to the war in Ukraine, after European Union sanctions entered into the force, in the autumn of 2022, the activities of the protection of the Aquatic Warblers project in Belarus were suspended. We are glad that we managed to implement most of the good works for nature. Extremely significant results have been achieved in the most important habitat of the Aquatic Warblers in the world - the Zvaniec bog - where thanks to the project, the possibility of regulating the water level has been created, and - a significant part of the bog has been restored.

The war in Ukraine could have a fatal impact on the survival of the Aquatic Warblers. According to naturalists, the uncertain situation in the two most important countries for this species - Ukraine and Belarus - may lead to a drastic decline of the species and increases the importance of conservation actions in war-untouched Lithuania, Poland and other countries. Therefore, the peaceful countries of the European Union have an even greater responsibility in protecting this rare species from extinction.

Two-thirds of the world's Aquatic Warblers breed in Ukraine and Belarus. Although the war in Ukraine did not physically destroy the habitats, some of them are mined and cannot be accessed by scientists or farmers. It is clear that the proper maintenance of these habitats will not be a priority for a long time, which may eventually lead to the disappearance of these birds in abandoned habitats. Meanwhile, Belarus, as an aggressor country, has been cut off from practically all support for nature conservation, which had a fundamental role in the implementation of the protection of not only the Aquatic Warblers, but also the entire biodiversity. In such an uncertain situation, even greater responsibility for the survival of the species falls on the countries of the European Union. First of all, to Lithuania and Poland, where these birds live.

## The National Mowing Championship is becoming a tradition

On August 6, in the National Mowing Championship held in the village of Rupkalviai, Šilutė district, the Mowers of the Year were awarded for mowing the fastest and most qualitatively with a scythe. Kozmas Auškalinis became the "Lawn Mower of the Year" in the men's category for the second year in a row, Ekaterina Jevkova from the Kharkiv region in Ukraine became the "Lawn Mower of the Year" in the women's category, and Andrius Matulis won the "Scythe Debut" prize. A Lithuanian record was set at the championship - the most massive mowing, in which 32 mowers worked with scythes.

47 participants of the championship from Šilutė, Plungė, Klaipėda, Kaunas, Alytus, Šiauliai, Vilnius, Druskininkai and Biržai districts gathered with scythes in the village of Rupkalviai, they were accompanied by support teams. A particularly large group came from Kėdainiai - almost a full bus of lawn mowers and their supporters. The US Ambassador in Lithuania Robert Gilchrist also participated in the event and learned how to make hay.

There were 10 men competing for the title of "Mower of the Year", among which there were many experienced scythe enthusiasts. Even half of them participated in the championship for the second time, most of them have been mowing lawns with a scythe since childhood. 2 women competed for the title of "Mower of the Year": a Lithuanian and a Ukrainian. The team for the best mowing and the champion of fine mowing were also awarded. Although the championship was held for the second time, newcomers could compete in it only last year. During the event, they were first offered to participate in the Mowing School or the Scythe Frog, after which they could try their luck with a scythe in the novice competition. An individual section 1.5 m wide and 50 m long awaited the newcomers. In this event, mowing time and quality were evaluated. The scythe rookie title and the Scythe Debut prize were established by SBA Urban, the sponsoring company of the championship, whose real estate development manager Arnas Bušmanas also tested the scythe in the novice competition.



According to the organizer of the championship, the head of the Baltic Environment Forum, naturalist Žymantas Morkvėnas, this unique and record-breaking event is taking place in the Nemunas delta for two reasons. First, the regions of the Nemunas delta and the Pamariai are famous for the unique culture of meadow farmers, which was formed due to natural conditions - regular floods and meadows flooded by the Nemunas. Thanks to the natural fertilizers brought by the flood, the meadows were extremely fertile: hay was harvested 3 times a year, and the haymakers here were particularly skilled at this craft.



Secondly, many birds flourished and continue to flourish in these meadows - their abundance is inseparable from the scythe-mowing tradition practiced in the region, which helped to preserve the diversity of birds. The meadows of the Nemunas delta are the habitat of the rarest songbird in Europe - the Aquatic Warbler.

According to him, the championship of haymakers not only revives the forgotten cultural heritage. At the same time, farmers and the public are informed about farming in harmony with nature and the need to protect endangered species.

### **International attention to the Aquatic Warbler**

The Aquatic Warbler protection project implemented in Lithuania has been included among the best European conservation initiatives for the second time, and Sir David Attenborough, the director of the most famous nature documentaries, noticed the special achievements in saving this rare bird from extinction.

This year, for the second time, the initiative to save the Aquatic Warblers has entered the ranks of the finalists of the international nature protection competition "Natura2000". For the first time, the project was nominated among the best two years ago, in the category "Socioeconomic benefit", and in 2022 a jury of experts chose it as a finalist in the most popular award category "Protection on Land". Meanwhile, during the other international awards LIFE Awards'22, Sir David Attenborough, speaking about the achievements of LIFE program projects during the thirty years of this program's existence, singled out the Aquatic Warbler as one of the species that naturalists managed to save from extinction thanks to LIFE program projects.



The protection project of the Aquatic Warbler received exceptional attention due to the extremely successful translocation (transfer of birds from one country to another) implemented with this species for the first time in the world, the restoration of wetlands, a practical solution for the use of biomass and other measures, which significantly improved the condition of rare songbirds in Lithuania and created the conditions for our apply the experience of compatriots in saving this bird in other countries.

Also, in the autumn of this year, the European Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, speaking at the meeting of conservation LIFE projects in Klaipėda, was happy that the Lithuanian Aquatic Warbler protection initiative was even nominated twice in the European Natura2000 awards.

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# LIFE NATURALIT - OPTIMIZING THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURA 2000 NETWORK IN LITHUANIA (LIFE IP PAF-NATURALIT)



**2018-2027  
LITHUANIA**

**[NATURALIT.LT/EN](https://naturalit.lt/en)**

LIFE integrated project aims to ensure the full protection of the Natura 2000 network, the most valuable natural areas in the EU. Thus, we will preserve the ancient woods, wetlands, grasslands, other habitats and their naturalness, which has surrounded Lithuanian people from ancient times.

### **The second season of the result-oriented measure "Conserving abundantly flowering natural meadows"**

This innovative result-oriented agro-environmental protection measure aimed at preserving richly blooming natural meadows was launched in Lithuania in 2020. It is characterized by the fact that during its implementation, the farmer constantly observes and evaluates the impact of his actions on the field. There are no specific mowing or grazing deadlines or other requirements. Farmers observe how the vegetation changes, consult with naturalists and thus strive for the best impact on nature.

In 2022 one more farmer joined the group, implementing the measure, so their number increased to 30. The second season of the measure differed from the first because the farmers performed the assessment of vegetation completely independently.



It is interesting to note that most of the results did not change: a few evaluated areas fell into the lower tier of the measures rating, but there were also quite a few that rose to the higher tier.

Meanwhile, the team of the Baltic Environment Forum, which coordinates the implementation of this measure, conducted an analysis of similar measures implemented abroad, interviewed the coordinators of these measures in order to adopt good practices, get advice on how to improve the measure and learn from mistakes made.



All the information collected during the implementation of the measure, as well as foreign experience, will be used to create the final model of the result-oriented measure, which we will seek to include in the new Lithuanian agricultural and rural development plan for 2023-2027. strategic plan. In this way, the measure will be available to a wider circle of farmers, which will help preserve an even larger area of abundantly blooming meadows.

### **Promotion of animal husbandry in protected areas**



The project aims to promote animal husbandry in protected areas, as this is probably the most effective way to preserve naturally valuable grasslands. Livestock grazing continued in Aukštaitija National Park, Pabiržė Peninsula, in 2022 - the results of this activity can already be seen here: the vegetation is diversifying, new oaks are beginning to sprout in the soil disturbed by the animals' hooves.

This year was intensive in terms of nature management in the other three project areas. At the end of the year, restoration was started of the Kretuonykštės bog and Ginučiai oak grove project areas. There, low-value woody vegetation was removed, and an open landscape was restored. These works will be continued in 2023.

At the beginning of the year, part of the abandoned areas were also restored in the Dzūkija National Park in the valley of the Grūda River. At the beginning of summer, Hereford cattle were already grazed here, which were bought from the project funds and handed over to a local farmer, who will ensure that the restored Pagrūdžiai grasslands are not overgrown again. In autumn, the next stage of restoration of the meadows of the valley was started, which was completed at the end of the year. In 2023 extensive livestock grazing is also envisaged in the newly restored areas in order to maintain these areas and increase their biodiversity.

The work did not only take place in the fields: the project team actively took up the problem of maintaining the habitats of the European Community, such as the wooded pastures. Grazing is required to maintain these habitats, but most of them are on state forest land, where livestock grazing is prohibited. The project team seeks to change this policy and has submitted relevant proposals.

### **Agricultural environmental protection and Lithuanian agricultural and rural development in 2023-2027 strategic plan - the gateway to the promotion of nature-friendly farming**

The project team also participated very actively and continues to participate in submitting proposals for the Lithuanian Agricultural and Rural Development 2023-2027 strategic plan. In 2022 specific proposals have been formulated for many ecological systems that will replace most of the activities of the agri-environment and climate measure. The proposals should not only strengthen the environmental impact of the measures, but also facilitate their implementation for the farmers who have chosen these measures.

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## "Good Farmer's" Championship 2002

This year, together with the "Naturalit" project partners, we organized the second "Good Farmer's" Championship. In the championship, we want to draw attention to the leaders who care about the common good of all of us - a healthy, harmonious and prosperous nature. We believe that a good farmer nowadays is one who carries out his activities in harmony with nature and creates a much wider public good than just quality products. So we want to show by good examples that nature-friendly farming can be progressive in agrarian, economic and social terms.

The "Good Farmer's" Championship" consisted of two parts - competitions for farmers and elderships. In the Farmers' Competition, we invited the public to nominate farmers who admire their example, protect our environment and farm in harmony with nature. The public nominated a total of 22 farmers. Their farming model and benefits were further assessed by a special panel of championship experts with in-depth experience in nature and agriculture. Following an initial assessment, the commission selected and visited 11 exceptional farms and, after assessing the environmental, social and economic benefits generated by the farms, selected 5 exemplary farms to become ambassadors for the Good Farmers' Championship. You can get acquainted with the elected ambassadors on the championship website [www.gerasukininkas.lt](http://www.gerasukininkas.lt). Moreover, we announced the "Public Sympathy" election and encouraged the public to elect the most liked farmers.

Special ambassador plates of the "Good Farmer" championship were presented at the ceremony to the Eglė and Julius Stašauskai family farm "50 acres of work and joy", to the ecological biodynamic farm "Forest gardens" of Vaiva Jundulaitė and Giedrius Kosa, to the cheese farm "Copper pot" of Audrius Jokubauskas and Giedrius Tėvelis, to the farm of Vytautas Miliškevičius who is promoting no-till technology and to the farm of Vladas Vickunas "Fish mail" which is using aquaponics technology.

At the ceremony event, the special title "Audience Sympathy" was won by Audrius Jokubauskas and Giedrius Tėvelis cheese farm "Copper pot". This farm received the most public support during a two-week public vote. "Copper pot" is a place where aged cheeses are made from the milk of free-grazing cows in the forests of Dzūkija, Varėna district. Chemical fertilizers are not used on the farm, the land is cultivated only as much as it is necessary to renew the meadows, rotational grazing of animals is applied. "Copper pot" conducts its activities in protected areas, their cheeses have a product mark of the Dzūkija National Park.



The organizer of the championship, Žymantas Morkvėnas, who presented the awards, says that all these farmers have the basic quality of a good farmer – good host. "Everything starts with love and attention to our land. When you feel like you are the owner of your estate, and not some kind of controller, manager, or administrator, you look at the food grown on the farm, a beaver that suddenly appeared or an oak tree that has been growing in the middle of the fields for centuries in a completely different way. In the end, a good host always manifests itself in attention and sensitivity to nature. There is no single formula for what it means to be a nature-friendly farm. A good farmer knows what is best for his farm".



In the "Good Farmer's" Championship eldership competition 2022 in the statistics of agricultural land declaration, we collected exceptional elderships that have made the greatest progress in declaring "Agri-environment and climate" activities. In this we wanted to encourage the specialists of the elderships to contribute to the protection of the nature and landscape of the eldership and to encourage farmers to declare as many areas as possible for the activities of "Agri-environment and Climate".

At the awards ceremony, the "Agri-Environmental Champion" was awarded - the eldership where most of the agricultural land in the area is declared for agri-environmental measures. It became the eldership of Kintai eldership of Šilutė district. The Agri-Environmental Accelerator 2022 was also congratulated - the Kražiai eldership of Kelmė district, which has made the greatest progress in declaring areas for agri-environmental measures during 2022. Special thanks went to Nemunaičio Eldership in the Alytus District for initiative and the biggest change of applicants during 2022. Special thanks signed by the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania were also given to the specialists of these elderships working with agricultural issues.



**MORE ABOUT THE GOOD FARMER'S CHAMPIONSHIP AND THE AMBASSADORS' FARMS.**

## Protected areas product label

Each protected area has its own product label, which is awarded by a special label commission to the exclusive products and services of that area. These are sustainable products and services that not only protect local nature and nurture culture, but also contribute to the well-being and prosperity of that area.

To help small local businesses in protected areas, we have further developed the Protected Areas product label, promoted it, and worked with manufacturers and service providers who have the label.

In 2022 we again organized seminars for small entrepreneurs with the Protected Areas product label. Next, we updated the website [www.gamtoje.org](http://www.gamtoje.org). We have also traditionally published an updated publication-catalog, which also includes all trademark holders and their products and services.



*Choose products and services from protected areas!*

## NATURE FESTIVALS - TO MAKE NATURE MORE UNDERSTANDABLE, MORE INTERESTING AND MORE APPRECIATED

*In order to reveal the meaning of natural values to the inhabitants of protected areas and the general public, we organize three events - nature festivals - every year.*

### ***"In the middle of woods" 2022: invited to experience the awakening nature in the Dzūkija National Park***

After a two-year hiatus caused by the pandemic, the nature festival "In the middle of woods" has returned. During the holiday weekend, an event that has become a tradition took place in the Dzūkija National Park and invited to get to know nature better by participating in creative workshops, competitions and hikes to the most interesting surrounding places, led by experienced experts of nature and the surrounding area. The rain did not scare nature lovers and 171 participants came to the festival.

Naturalist Mindaugas Lapelė welcomed those who arrived in Marcinkonys from Vilnius by train. He introduced nature enthusiasts the history of the station and the village. Next followed a hike to *Meškos šikšna*, and later - discussions on current nature conservation topics, stories and conversations on the topic: Curiosities of Dzūkija heath. Those gathered could get to know wild dyeing plants in nature, learn how to make their decoctions and dye threads. For the first time, the festival program included garden tying, familiarization with wooden beekeeping and the local bee of Lithuania. The latter is a very unique experience, because in Lithuania this ancient craft is currently continued only in Dzūkija.

The festival also had plenty of entertainment for its young participants: together with folklore and nature experts, children were invited to nesting workshops, competitions for the most beautiful easter egg, bird-watching trips and traditional shepherd games.



The organizers of the festival invited not to rush to leave, to stay overnight in the park. Participants could choose to spend the night in remote areas in small groups. Other visitors settled in a common campsite by Kastinis lake or chose nearby rural tourism homesteads. A special evening program was waiting for those staying at the common campsite - an evening by the campfire with the ethnographic ensemble of Marcinkonys. There was little rest after the evening - the festival program continued from 4 o'clock in the morning on Sunday with a trip to Čepkeliai to listen to the trumpeting of cranes and other sounds of waking nature.

**Festival "In the middle of the woods" in 2023 will be held on April 29-30.**



### MORE ABOUT NATURE FESTIVAL "IN THE MIDDLE OF WOODS".

***"Natura orient" – orientation hikes introduced the natural values of Žemaitija and Aukštaitija national parks***

On May 21, 2022, it has been thirty years since the Natura 2000 network of protected areas was established in the European Union. Since nature has no borders, these territories jointly protect the most vulnerable species of birds, birds and plants and their natural homes - natural habitats - throughout the territory of the European Union. Currently, the "Natura 2000" network covers almost a fifth of the community's land and a tenth of its marine area.

Instead of the nature festival "In the middle of lakes", we decided to celebrate this beautiful anniversary and invited everyone who is interested to the "Natura orient" orienteering competition in the national parks of Žemaitija and Aukštaitija.

This orienteering competition was organized on the occasion of the International Natura 2000 Day, so it was unusual - at each control point the participants had to complete a task, by doing which they learned more about internationally protected natural habitats and rare species. The 84 participants chose the family or challenge courses, where they competed on scenic roads, lake shores and forest tracks.



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**"Forest spells" – an impressive theatrical festival for families in the Žemaitija National Park**

On October 15 a free theatrical festival for the whole family "Forest spells" was held in the Žemaitija National Park. The heroes of legends played with the children and their parents in the Plokštinė forest, which is spread out near lake Plateliai. Fairies and witches invited to discover the magic and miracles hidden in nature. A large group of participants gathered - almost 1100, of which 600 were children. The festival is being held for the fourth time. This year it has the largest number of participants.

The only one of its kind in Lithuania - this is how the event "Forest spells" could be described, where our rich cultural heritage and delicate charms of nature intertwine. By playing with the heroes of legends, children better remember stories or facts about the environment around them. And experiencing an extraordinary adventure in nature, positive emotions - love for nature is cultivated. Such a fun time in nature will turn into its care in the future. This is the most important thing for us naturalists.



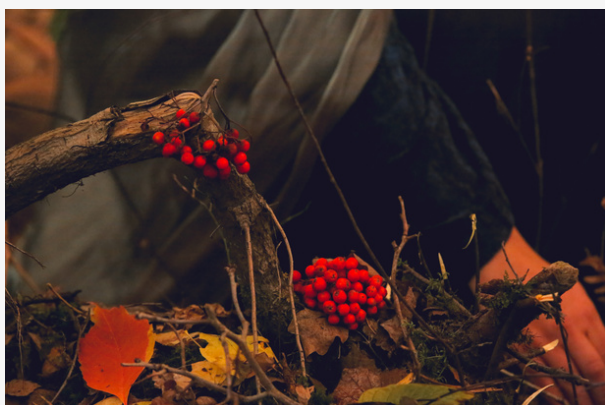
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The children were delighted by the variety of activities - nature games and treasures, learning to make incense, bird and wand making, thunderous music, an exclusive hike to the mysterious Plokštinė reserve and etc. Not only naturalists, but also the local community take an active part in the event - activities were offered to the children by volunteers from the Liepija School, the Plateliai Art School, the Telšiai Regional Branch of the State Forest Office, the Telšiai Scouts, small local artisans and entrepreneurs.

The event is the only opportunity of the year to meet the king of *Kaukai*. He and his entourage of magical creatures come out of their homes in protected Natura2000 areas to talk with children before deep sleep, show them the magic of nature, and interest them in things happening in nature.

The event has already managed to gather a large group of its fans - some participants visited all four festivals. This year many families came dressed in their magical costumes.

Festival "Forest spells" in 2023 will be held on October 7.



### **MORE ABOUT NATURE FESTIVAL "FOREST SPELLS".**

*All nature festivals are free, as they are partially funded by the "Naturalit" project.*

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# PILOTING INTEGRATED WETLAND RESTORATION APPROACHES IN LATVIA AND LITHUANIA (LIFE MARSHMEADOWS)



**2021-2027  
LITHUANIA AND  
LATVIA**

**SLAPYNE.LT**

The project aims at establishing and demonstrating the intrinsic link between fully functioning natural ecosystems and economic benefits for local communities.

The project is being implemented in Lithuania and Latvia to restore wetlands and wet meadows, as the main focus of work choosing restoration of the hydrological regime, habitat creation and maintenance, and socio-economic benefits.

### **Aim to restore the life in the wetlands of Baltoji Vokė**

In Lithuania, the project is being implemented in the Baltosios Vokės šlapžemė, a peat bog, abandoned in the last century, covering over 1 000 hectares of land affected by peat extraction. Although natural wetland restoration processes have already started on the site, the disturbed hydrological regime prevents the establishment of typical wetland habitat plant and animal species. There is a risk that the whole area will be overgrown with spontaneous shrubs, trees and reeds, which will only further reduce biodiversity and increase CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

With 2022 being the second year of the Life Marsh Meadows project, we have moved from the preparation and planning phase to the implementation of the work on the sites.

This year we have started the crucial work of monitoring species, habitats and water levels. We monitored the target species of the bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*), the European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), and the Northern crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). We have also installed fixed water level monitoring stations that will provide valuable information on water level changes and dynamics.



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To assess the status of the habitats, detailed monitorings of vegetation and insects were carried out throughout the site. It is the first observations of species and habitats that provide the basis for assessing the status of the whole ecosystem and for tracking further progress.

In some areas of the site, reeds have been mowed, and overgrown shrubs and trees have been felled, thus providing more light and space for the originally growing mosses in the wetland.

### **Tireless environmentalists - cows**

And the most anticipated event of the year is the arrival of the beautiful Highland cows! The cows play a key role in this project, as they are the only ones able to reach even the waterlogged, inaccessible areas of the site and carry out the management work of removing unwanted vegetation, overgrowing shrubs and reeds. Long-term, extensive, and well-managed grazing can be the key to successful ecosystem restoration and maintenance.



In order to adapt and use the best practices of other European countries in the use of cattle, goat and sheep grazing for ecosystem restoration, together with partners from Latvia this summer we cycled and visited projects in Denmark. The insights and experience of our colleagues allow us not only to better anticipate the future course of the project, but also to avoid potential problems that may arise.

We want to involve institutions and local people responsible for the territories in the project planning and activities as early as possible, so we organised the first presentation of the project to the staff of the Dzūkija-Suvalkija Directorate of Protected Areas, discussed the planned nature management works and the further course of the works. We have also installed temporary information boards at the main entrances to the territory, where we provide information about the project activities, ongoing works and protected values. In the coming year, we are planning more meetings with locals and open to the public events to share more about the secrets of the wetlands of Baltoji Voke.



# LIFE ASKREACH - ENABLING REACH CONSUMER INFORMATION RIGHTS ON CHEMICALS IN ARTICLES BY IT-TOOLS



## 2017-2022 LITHUANIA AND PARTNER COUNTRIES

[WWW.ASKREACH.EU](http://WWW.ASKREACH.EU)



*A leaflet about why and how companies should correctly inform consumers about hazardous substances in products.*

## „Scan4Chem“ application helps to find out whether the products contain dangerous substances

In fourteen EU countries, the LIFE project partners have further developed a special scanning application, Scan4Chem, which helps to find out if products contain substances of very high concern or to send a pre-generated inquiry to the manufacturer. The app is available in Lithuanian to all users of the App Store and Google Play.

## 125,000 app downloads and 220,000 scanned products

In 2022 the LIFE AskREACH project was completed, concluding that, given the huge investment in awareness campaigns, the project is a striking example of how simply providing information to consumers does not automatically change behaviour. Policy makers need to understand that consumers can never be the only driver of the transition to SVHC (Chemicals of Very High Concern) free products. On the contrary, it is very important to emphasize the responsibility of the industry and to address this problem with appropriate measures and policies. Empowering companies to know the chemicals in their products, including future SVHCs, can be a "game changer" not only to finally ensure Article 33 compliance, but also to the vision of a circular economy. At the end of the year 2022, the number of users of the Scan4Chem app exceeded 100,000. They scanned 220,000 products and submitted over 40,000 requests to manufacturers.

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## TOOLKIT FOR THE TOYS SUPPLY - AN INTERNATIONAL CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT TOOL FOR TOY SUPPLY CHAINS

**2021-2022 LITHUANIA,  
ESTONIA AND  
GERMANY**

**Dissemination of experiences of European countries in the management of chemical substances**

In 2021-2022 BEF Lithuania, together with BEF Germany and BEF Estonia has engaged in the work to develop International Chemicals Management Toolkit for the Toys Supply Chain. The toolkit was developed in collaboration with United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Economy Division, Chemicals and Health Branch in the framework of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project on Global Best Practices of Emerging Chemical Policy Issues of Concern under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

Toolkit is targeted for the international children's toys supply chain including producers of plastic raw materials, manufacturers of parts, assemblers of toys and importers and retailers but also policy makers. The intent of the toolkit, is to help companies to manage chemicals, including hazardous and endocrine disrupting chemicals, in toy manufacture, take steps to reduce their use and transition to safer products in order to protect children's health and the environment.

The toolkit was designed for countries where chemicals legislation is not as advanced as e.g., in Europe. Thus, it introduces the basics of chemicals management but also more advanced topics such as supply chain communication or reducing harmful chemicals use. The toolkit has been reviewed by several large toy producers and associations and when released it is expected to be taken up by many large companies in South-East Asia and all over the world.



## IMPACT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY ON UKRAINIAN LEGISLATION AFTER THE RUSSIAN INVASION

**2022**

**The new legislation will ensure that as Ukraine recovers, so will its nature**

The main goal of the project is to have an impact and influence on the environmental community in order to ensure that after the Russian invasion, the legislation of the Ukrainian government and parliament prepared and adopted for the restoration of the country not only meets the needs of citizens and the state, but also meets international and European standards and practices, environmental and climate change in mitigation areas.

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For the implementation of the project from 2022 June 1 Anastasiia Bondarenko, a specialist from Ukraine, joined our team for half a year. She is a member of the Ecological Safety Group of experts, which is responsible for the preparation of the "ecological safety" part of Ukraine's recovery plan.

The group created a document with a description of the current situation, goals and risks of their implementation, an action plan until 2032, and prepared projects that must be implemented in order to achieve the set goals. Also, general guidelines for the recording, calculation and methodology preparation of the negative effects of military actions on the environment, especially the consequences for climate change, and war crimes on the environment have been launched.

## WATER-PROOF – TOWARDS INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGICAL AND CLIMATE-RESISTANT WATER MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH BALTIC REGION

**2022 LIETUVOJE,  
DANIJOJE IR  
ŠVEDIJOJE**

"WATER-PROOF" is one of the preparatory projects financed by the "Interreg South Baltic" program 2021-2027 (Seed Money), which aims to strengthen sustainable practices in the southern Baltic region. The purpose of this project is to prepare an application for an upcoming future project.

### **The necessity of new water management solutions in order to reduce the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea**

In order to overcome the current and future challenges arising from the impacts caused by climate change in the South Baltic region, the WATER-PROOF project aims to contribute to innovations and concepts to demonstrate new water management solutions. Climate change in Europe is expected to increase the intensity of precipitation and the frequency of extreme weather events. With the intensification of such weather phenomena, the flow of nutrients and pollution into the waters of the southern Baltic region will increase. Based on the work carried out by HELCOM, 3 main causes of nutrient leakage into the Baltic Sea have been identified, which will be supported in the development of the project:

- Agriculture as a source of diffuse pollution;
- Urban wastewater - domestic and industrial;
- Overflowing of wastewater treatment plants during extreme rain events.

The project aims to develop innovative water technologies and sustainable water management practices that would indirectly reduce the discharge of nutrients into rivers and coastal waters, thus reducing the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. The Seed Money project took place in March-July 2022. During it, potential partners of the future project were analyzed, communicated with, and further opportunities for cooperation were developed. Finally, a preliminary application for a further project was prepared. Project leaders - CLEAN Environmental Cluster (Denmark) lead this project in cooperation with Sustainable Business Hub (Sweden) and Baltic Environmental Forum (Lithuania).

## ALL PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED IN 2022

\*this column shows the total budget of all partners participating in the project.

| Duration  | Total budget*  | Financed by   | Title   | Partners/executors  | Project website   |
|-----------|----------------|---|---|---|---|
| 2016-2026 | 4 097 038 EUR  | EU LIFE programme, Republic of Lithuania and project partners | Stepping stones towards ensuring long-term favorable conservation status of Aquatic warbler in Lithuania (LIFE MagniDucatusA crola) | Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania (coordinating beneficiary), Lithuanian State Forest Enterprise, Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve Directorate, The State Scientific and Production Amalgamation "Scientific and Practical Center of The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus for Biological resources"   | <a href="https://meldine.lt/en">https://meldine.lt/en</a>     |
| 2018-2027 | 17 000 044 EUR | EU LIFE programme, Republic of Lithuania                      | Optimizing the management of Natura 2000 network in Lithuania (LIFE IP PAF-NATURALIT)   | Environmental Projects Management Agency under the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania (coordinating beneficiary), Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment, National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, State Forest Enterprise, Aukštaitija National Park and Labanoras Regional Park Administration, Dzukija National Park and Cepkeliai Strict Nature Reserve Administration, Zemaitija National Park Directorate, Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania, Vytautas Magnus University Agriculture Academy, Lithuanian State Forest Enterprise, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania | <a href="https://naturalit.lt/en">https://naturalit.lt/en</a> |

| Duration  | Total budget*   | Financed by   | Title   | Partners/executors   | Project website                                       |
|-----------|---|---|---|--|---|
| 2021-2027 | 4 295 806 EUR   | EU LIFE Programme, Republic of Lithuania and project partners | Piloting integrated wetland restoration approaches in Latvia and Lithuania (LIFE MarshMeadows)                  | Latvian Fund for nature (coordinating beneficiary), Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania, SIA FRIEDRICH HAASE, SIA M.M.P Vest, Pievu pauksčiai, SIA Sita Nature park, SIA Tiravoti | <a href="https://slapyne.lt/">https://slapyne.lt/</a> |
| 2021-2022 | 10 725 EUR (LT budget)  | United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)                     | Cheminių medžiagų politikos geriausia pasaulinė praktika pagal strateginį tarptautinį cheminių medžiagų valdymą | Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania, Baltic Environmental Forum Estonia and Baltic Environmental Forum Germany  |   |
| 2022      | 17 892 EUR  | European Climate Fund (ECF)                                   | Impact of the environmental community on Ukrainian legislation after the Russian invasion                       | Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania   |   |
| 2022      | 32 000 EUR  | ES Interreg South Baltic Programme and project partners       | Towards an Innovative Technological and Climate-Proof Water Management in the South Baltic Region               | CLEAN - Environmental Cluster Denmark (coordinating beneficiary), Sustainable Business Hub Scandinavia AB, Baltic Environmental forum  |   |
|           | <i>*-this column shows the total budget of all partners participating in the project.</i> |   |   |  |   |

# OTHER INITIATIVES AND SERVICES



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# CONSERVATION OF PUNIA ANCIENT FOREST



## [WWW.PUNIOSSILAS.LT](http://WWW.PUNIOSSILAS.LT)

For the fourth year already, we have continued our civic initiative to preserve one of the most valuable forests in Lithuania - Punia forest.

### **An important victory - the reserve has been expanded 5 times**

The efforts of several years have finally produced amazing results - in 2022 May 5th the Lithuanian government approved the decision to expand the territory of strict nature reserve of Punia forest by 5 times.

Now Punia forest is the first strict nature reserve of this size in Lithuania, covering almost the entire forest massif. According to experts, this is one of the most important environmental achievements in Lithuania during the entire period of the country's independence. Finally, Lithuania has its first state-protected forest. We didn't have a single strict nature reserve to protect the whole ancient forest. Up until now, the prevailing practice was to give the status of a strict nature reserve to marshy areas, such as the Čepkeliai, Žuvintas, Kamanos marsh complexes and others.

"We are very happy that the Government listened to the comments made many times by us, scientists and a large part of the public, and demonstrated the political will to protect whole ancient forest as a whole continues ecosystem. While there are still "holes" in Punia forests strict nature reserve left, our work for the benefit of nature has not yet been completed. But today we see a glimmer of hope that we can expect ambitious and consistent conservation solutions in our policy. Finally, Punia forest will be able to relax. After the war, Punis forest protected the Lithuanian partisans, now we can thank him by giving the opportunity for the ancient Punia forest to flourish," - says Žymantas Morkvėnas.



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## "Holes" left in the strict reserve

In the project of Punia forest strict nature reserve, approved by the government, the current area of the reserve is increased 5 times, but without including genetic reserves, which constitutes one tenth (11 percent, almost 300 ha) of the entire territory of Punia forest.

By expanding the reserve, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania obliged the Ministry of the Environment to further increase the protection of the Punia forest and the integrity of the natural reserve, paying the greatest attention to the planning process for the protection of these genetic reserves. We will be watching to see how this protection is implemented, as integrity is very important to Punia's forests..



*Genetic reserves, that are not included to the territory of Punia forest strict nature reserve*

### **Why genetic reserves are not suitable for protection of ancient forest?**

In genetic reserves, clear cuttings are periodically carried out, as well as special & sanitary cuttings, preventing the trees from reaching their natural maturity and forming a natural forest habitat with its species composition and age structure.

Such measures (cutting trees, removing dead wood, etc.) are completely incompatible with the conservation objectives of the area and the needs of the protected habitats and rare species found here. EU Biodiversity Strategy until 2030 set the goal of increasing the area of strictly protected areas. The current Government also sets such goal in its program (item 150.2).

### **Our proposal, the implementation of which we will continue to strive for:**

We propose to have a strict nature reserve covering the entire area of the Punia forest. The genetic diversity of Punia forest can be preserved within the territory of the strict reserve, by preparing a nature management plan. If necessary, special landscape management zones can be planned in the reserve, where conservation measures necessary for the protection of protected species and habitats would be foreseen and would create conditions for the preservation of genetic forests.

If the specialists decide that it is impossible to ensure the protection of genetic resources in the reserve, then in these genetic forests we suggest abandoning the goal of protecting genetic resources and giving priority to the formation and preservation of the ancient forest.

### **Support our efforts by donating:**

<https://bef.lt/join-and-contribute/?lang=en>

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# NATIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

**In 2022 we continued to represent the public interest in the preparation of one of the most important agreements on the future of Lithuanian forests**

At the beginning of 2022, National Forest Agreement (NMS) initiated by the Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Lithuania concluded the phase of topics, in which the participants of the agreement in sectoral groups sought to agree on statements reflecting certain topics. Two representatives of our organization have participated in the NMS work since the beginning of 2021, representing ecological and social interest groups.



**The National Forest Agreement serves the forest industry but not nature and society**

We were most actively involved in the work of the "Forest Ecology and Biodiversity" and "Non-timber Forest Economy" sectoral groups. Although the agreement groups worked intensively until March 2022, in the end it had to be concluded that an agreement could not be reached on three of the 9 themes of the agreement: "Compatibility and long-term balance of multiple forest benefits", "Better protection of biodiversity in forests" and "Increasing the economic benefits provided by forests". Observing the process from the inside showed clear differences in the values of the participants of the agreement representing the forest industry and broader – social and environmental interests – which prevented an agreement on the most important priorities for the use and protection of forests.

At the end of 2022, the NMS process took place in a much more closed "Document Preparation" stage. On the basis of the agreements reached, the employees of the Ministry of Environment prepared the final NMS document, which is intended to be presented to the political parties in order to approve a national document declaring common provisions on long-term balanced forest policies.

## SERVICES TO SOCIETY, BUSINESS AND STATE INSTITUTIONS

**Sustainable inland fisheries.** In 2022 we continued our work with the Nature Research Center in the project "Sustainable inland fisheries", the aim of which is to contribute to improving the state of ecosystems and fisheries management in the inland waters of Lithuania and in the world. We helped draw up the project's communication plan and prepare events to attract interested fishermen who care about the principles of sustainable fishing, who want to contribute to the preservation of fish populations, who are interested in modern technology and who want to contribute to the development of a new mobile app for fishermen.

**Social Leaders' breakfast.** In the winter of 2022, sustainable development expert Audronė Alijošaitė-Paulauskienė participated in the event "Social Leaders' Breakfast", which discussed the topic of green economy - what it is, why and how to implement it. "Social Leaders' Breakfast" is a series of remotely held events, during which motivation, expert insights and knowledge are shared, which are useful for every participant of NGOs and social business ecosystems.

„BaltAqua“. A group of organizations: Baltic Environmental Forum (Latvia), Oldenburg and East Frisia Water Board (OOWV) and the Center for Environment and Sustainability of the University of Oldenburg (COAST) initiate the project "BaltAqua", which aims to develop cooperation by initiating a dialogue and creating a network of partners between Germany and the Baltic States actors in the water sector. Partners from July 21 until August 31 organized a series of online working group sessions, which cover two forward-looking topics:

- Management of extreme weather events in the context of climate change
- Nutrient pollution

The Baltic Environment Forum (Lithuania) helped the organizers to include partners from Lithuania: they searched for and invited partners to join the meetings of the working groups of the future project.

**Forum Theatre.** In 2022 we continued our participation in the artistic-environmental project "I save, therefore I exist". The idea of the project is to increase public environmental awareness through artistic means. The goal of this project is to promote responsible behavior, responsible consumption, and emphasize the necessary attention of each of us to environmental protection. We were invited to talk about climate change and our daily habits in interactive artistic forms: theater troupe "4ROOMS" presented a forum theater performance, after which the interactive discussion with the audience was moderated by sustainable development expert Audronė Alijošiūtė-Paulauskienė.



**Lithuanian Agriculture and Rural Development 2023-2027 assessment of the strategic environmental consequences of the strategic plan. in 2022** In the spring of 2022, Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania team participated in the Lithuanian Agricultural and Rural Development 2023-2027 assessment of the strategic environmental consequences of the strategic plan. During it, the impact of the planned measures on the environment and its significance were analysed. After a detailed assessment, specific comments and suggestions were made for the improvement of the measures in order to achieve a greater positive impact of the measures on the environment. We are glad that a considerable part of the comments was taken into account in the further improvement of the Lithuanian agricultural and rural development plan for 2023-2027 strategic plan.

**Common terns' island is full of life.** With the help of business in the fall of 2022, we installed an artificial island-raft for common terns in Totoriskiu lake in Trakai. Already in the first spring, we were happy with the first inhabitants - common terns with several young chicks, but in 2022 the island was overrun with these rare birds. This season, at least 10 pairs of common terns crossed the raft. And all those who wanted didn't even fit! In the spring, ornithologists saw about 30-35 adult birds fighting for a nesting place in a raft. At this time, some of the chicks have already grown up and fledged, and in the raft you can still see flightless babies and, probably, adult birds that are still hatching eggs. It is clear that there is a great need for such houses for common terns, so we invite other businesses to "adopt" the entire island of common terns.



Want to adopt an island of common terns?

[WRITE US](#)

# SUPPORT AND VOLUNTEERING



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# SUPPORT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BALTIC ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM LITHUANIA

The Baltic Environmental Forum protects nature with people. Together, this is much easier.

Many of our initiatives that protect nature and promote human personal experience (residence) in it could not exist without public support. Help us support existing and implement new ideas.

By supporting our activities, you have contributed at least in part to the following activities:

- Activities that promote human immersion (experience in a hurry, getting to know) in nature. An example of such activities are the festivals in nature "In the middle of woods", "Forest spells", "In the middle of lakes".
- Preserving forests for future generations.
- Help protect the globally endangered Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*).
- Contribute to informing the public about hazardous substances in everyday products.
- Contribute to the production of new publications on nature.

It can also support specific activities that interest you.

**SUPPORT**



## Donate 1.2 percent

In 2022 we received support from 1.2 % of GPM - 717 euros. Compared to 2022, the amount of support collected has remained virtually unchanged.

**SUPPORT**



## Volunteering to help protect nature

We provide an opportunity for motivated people to connect and protect nature together.

If you burn with enthusiasm and desire, and nature protection is one of the most important areas for you, you are welcome to visit us.

**VOLUNTEER  
FORM**

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



# BEF CO2 AND WASTE FOOTPRINT IN 2022

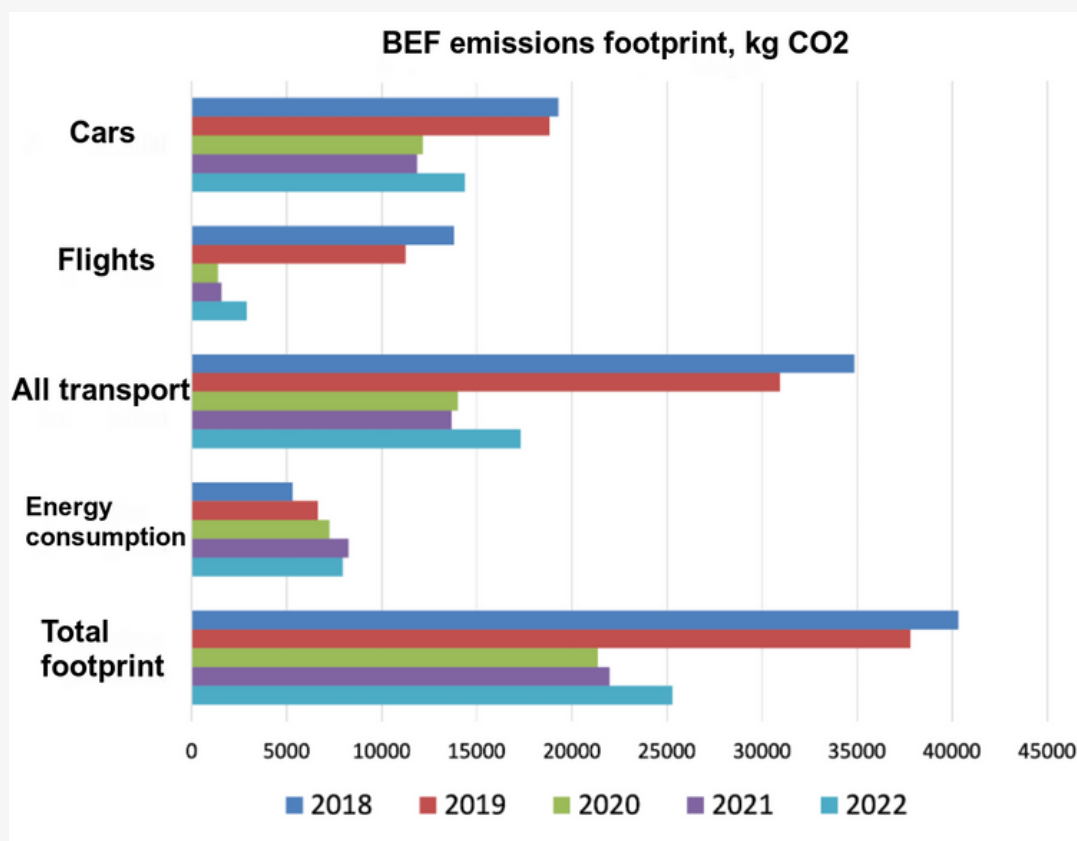
Although we are an environmental organization, our activities also have an impact on the environment. We encourage businesses to start assessing their impact on the environment, so we can't ignore our advice.

The nature of our activities and the impact on the environment are inseparable from the ongoing project activities, which change from year to year. One year we do more training, so we use more paper, the next year we work more in rural areas, which increases fuel consumption. We are at the beginning of our path to environmental impact assessment, so we are still learning to set the right indicators to properly reflect our efforts to promote sustainable change in our society at the lowest possible cost.

## Greenhouse gas (GHG) CO2 equivalent footprint

In 2022 the total GHG CO2 equivalent footprint of our organization was 25.3 t or 1363 kg per employee. Most of it, as much as 68%, was made up of the transport footprint. Air travel and car travel contributed the most. 31% was made up of the electricity and heating footprint of the office, while the remaining small part was made up of taxi, bus or train travel and the footprint related to paper use.

Compared to recent years, the total footprint has grown by 15%. The reason for this is simple - in 2022 we had more trips and meetings with foreign partners. In comparison with the arithmetic average of the previous 5 years - in 2022 the GHG CO2 equivalent footprint is 17% lower. In the chart below, we present our organization's footprint over the past 5 years for comparison.

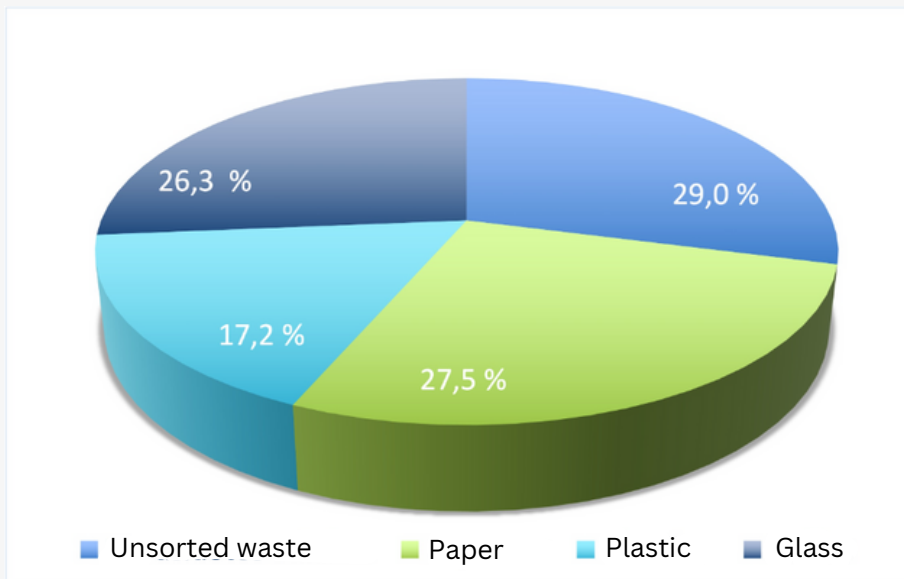


## In 2022 BEF CO2 footprint was ~25 t:

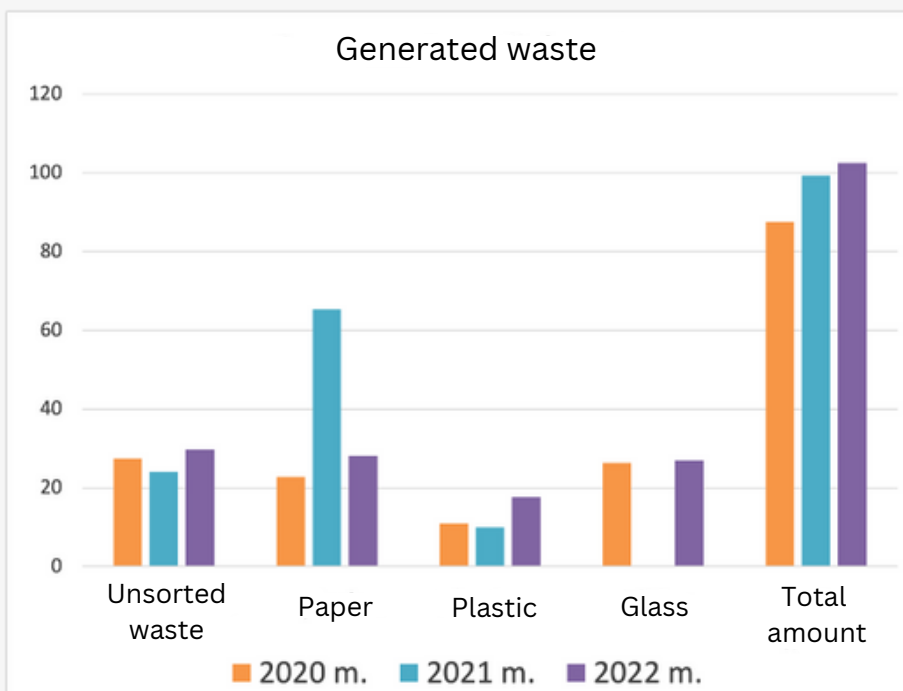
- that's how much 10 passenger cars in Lithuania throw away on average per year;
- such a footprint would be created by driving a car around the globe 5 times;
- such a footprint would be created if we charged the batteries of 3 million smartphones once.

## GENERATED WASTE

In 2020 and 2021, we worked remotely for a large part of the working time, and in 2022 we were almost fully back to office work mode. Nevertheless, in 2022 we generated only 103 kg of waste - very similar to 2021 and 2020 generated amount of waste (87 and 99 kg, respectively). Unsorted waste accounted for 29% of all waste. Everything else is paper (27.5%), plastic (17.2%) and glass (26.3%) waste, which we sorted into recyclable waste.



Compared to the previous 2 years, the amount of unsorted waste has hardly increased. We believe that we have succeeded in reducing the amount of unsorted waste, because from 2022 In the summer, we started composting food waste. We intend to continue this practice in the future as it reduces the waste disposal footprint and compost is an excellent fertilizer for plants.





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# FINACIAL REPORT



# INCOME

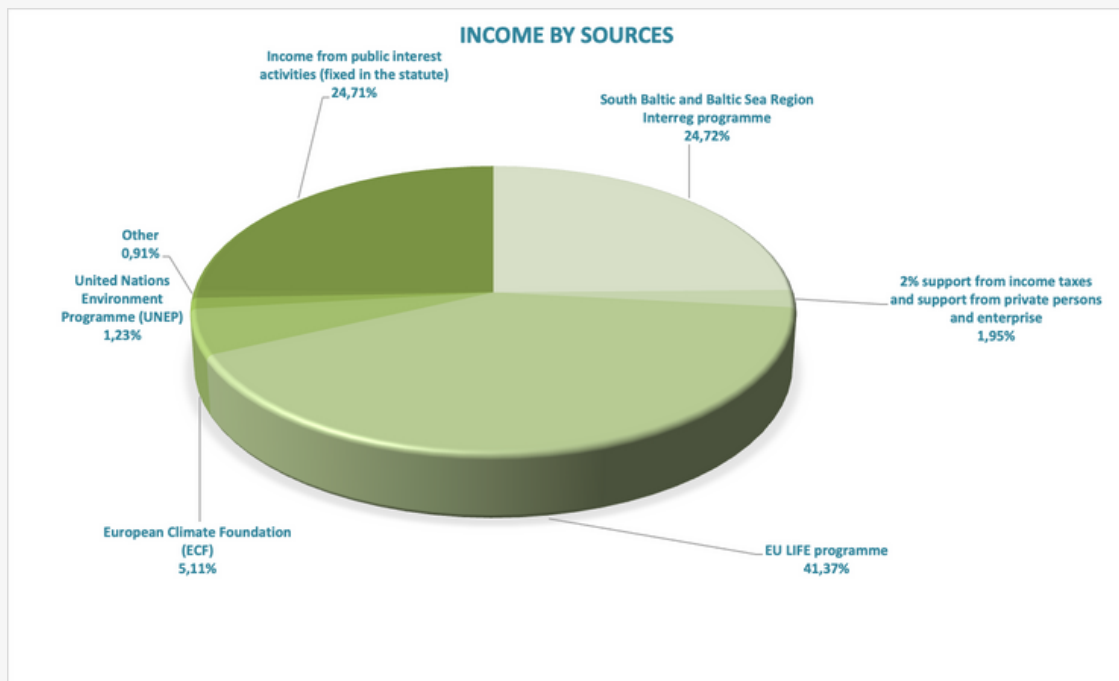
Total income for 2022 year was 280 376 euro\*. Part of this sum was related with Project expenses reimbursement from 2021 and another part with Project expenses from 2022, income from public interest activities, advance payments for projects activities implementation and support.

*\*A remark. According to the LR public organizations legislation, the activity report has to indicate the received income, and this amount does not match with the financial turnover in the balance sheet, because the turnover in the balance sheet is counted cumulatively.*

Part of income from EU LIFE programme (including previous years income) was distributed to Project partners – 78,3 % from such income. Institutional part here was left 21,7 %.

We got 717 euros 2% support from taxes and 4 760 euros from private persons and companies (SBA Urban, UAB supported National Mowing Championship event with 4 500 eur).

In 2022 persons contributed to the activities of the LIFE MarshMeadows project through the voluntary work: they volunteered 192 hours, which amounts to 1 128 euros.

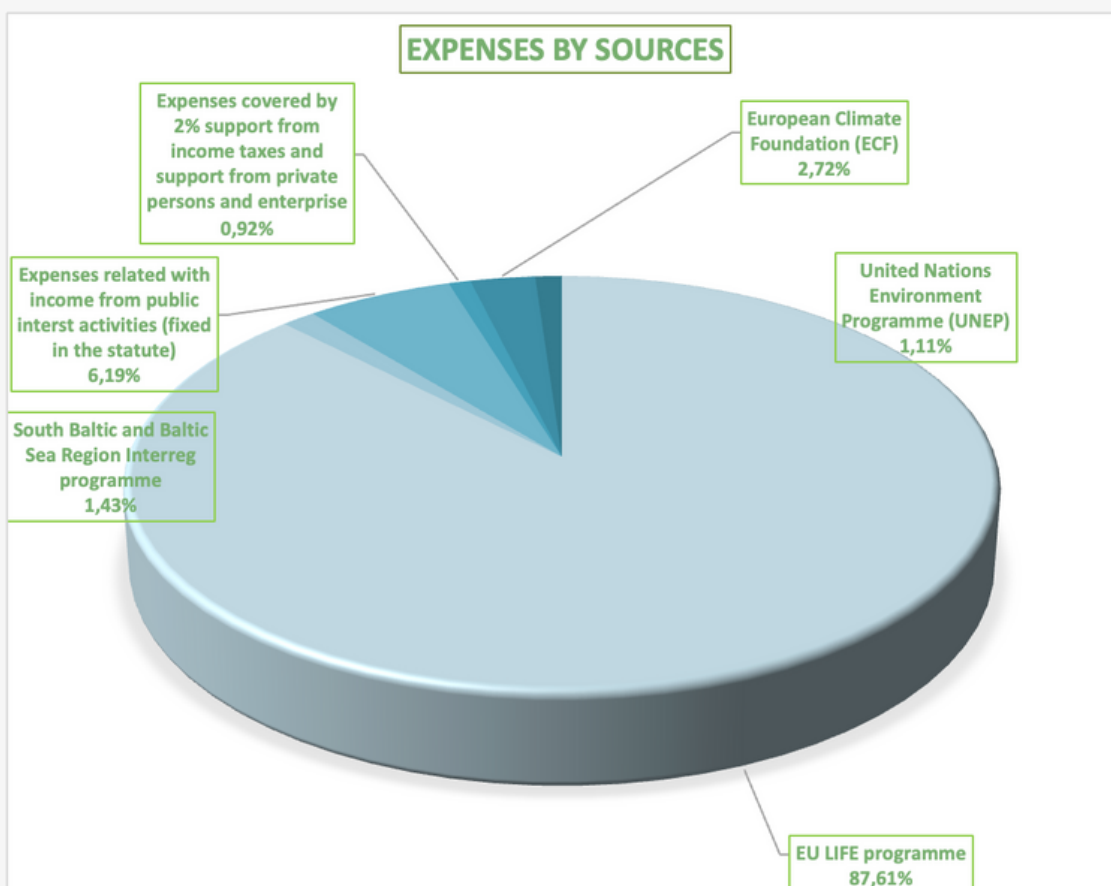
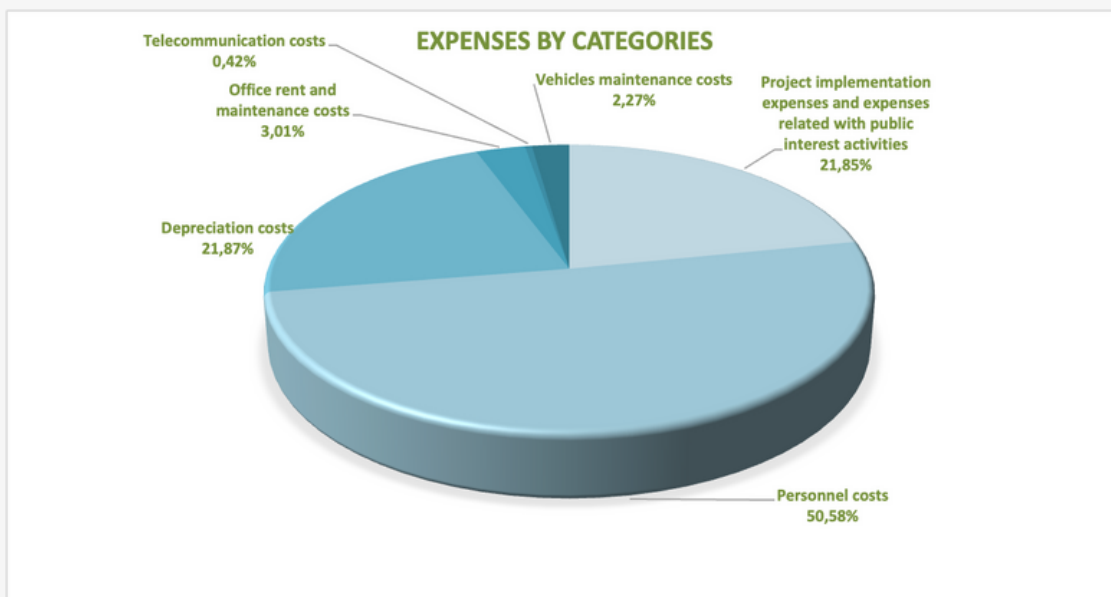


# EXPENSES

Total expenses for 2022 year was 657 323 euro. Part of these expenses were covered from previous years funding and another will be reimbursed from receivable funding on 2023.

At the beginning of 2022, we supported BLUE AND YELLOW with 1 000 euros from our earned income.

In diagrams below you can see "Expenses by categories" and "Expenses by sources".



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## EMPLOYEES AND SHAREHOLDERS

At the beginning of the year 20 employees worked in organization, 7 of them were part-time employees and 3 persons were on Maternity leave. At the end of the year 14 employees worked in organization, 3 of them were part-time employees and 2 persons were on Maternity leave.

There was no any changes in a shareholders' structure on 2022. The shareholders contribution is 1 554 euro (with the proportions 96%, 2%, 1% and 1 %). Because the organization is public (non-governmental) institution all of shareholders has one vote right (information about public organization shareholders can be found at the State Enterprise Centre of Registers).

# PHOTO MOMENTS



















BALTIC ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM LITHUANIA

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