REPLICATION STRATEGY

Restoring and promoting a long term sustainable management of Fennoscandian wooded meadows in Estonia and Latvia

WOODMEADOWLIFE

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SER-Europe

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Introduction

This document presents the **WOODMEADOWLIFE Replication Strategy**, developed by the European Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration (**SER-Europe**) as a framework for **facilitating the transfer and uptake of approaches developed within the WOODMEADOWLIFE (LIFE20 NAT/EE/000074) project** beyond the original project areas.

Its purpose is to **identify which elements of the project are transferable**, describe the **mechanisms and processes through which knowledge and experience can be shared**, and clarify how project results can be **adapted and applied in different ecological, social, and governance contexts**. The strategy does not prescribe site-specific restoration actions; rather, it focuses on how to **enable replication through documentation, exchange, and learning**, supporting practitioners, authorities, and organisations in applying restoration approaches in comparable wooded grasslands.

DISCLAIMER

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Project Overview: WOODMEADOWLIFE

Wooded meadows are among the **most species-rich habitats in the Boreal region**, shaped by long-term, low-intensity land use that combined mowing for hay, occasional grazing, timber use, and other traditional practices. This diverse management created mosaic landscapes of exceptionally high biodiversity, with up to **76 vascular plant species per square metre**, while also holding strong cultural and aesthetic value. Today, wooded meadows provide an important **reference system for sustainable agroforestry and multifunctional rural landscapes**.

Over the past century, however, **the vast majority of Boreal wooded meadows have been lost** due to abandonment and land conversion. In Estonia and Latvia, the area of wooded meadows has decreased more than 95% over the past century, with only a **small fraction—on the order of hundreds of hectares—remaining in active management today**. Wooded meadows do not fit easily into contemporary agricultural systems, which makes their **long-term maintenance labour- and management-intensive**. While the **initial restoration of overgrown wooded meadows is often feasible at moderate cost**, their continued upkeep requires sustained effort and appropriate management arrangements. In contrast, the **re-creation of wooded meadows once they have been completely destroyed is extremely difficult, if not impossible**, underscoring the importance of timely restoration and long-term maintenance support.

The **WOODMEADOWLIFE project** addresses this challenge by restoring approximately **10% of the remaining Boreal wooded meadows** (about **500 ha in Estonia and 200 ha in Latvia**) and by establishing the **long-term governance, knowledge, and management arrangements** needed to secure their future on private land.

Project Replication: Scope and Definition

A core requirement of the LIFE Programme is that knowledge, experience, and tools developed through project implementation are transferred beyond the original project area. This Replication Strategy describes how **WOODMEADOWLIFE facilitates that transfer** during and after the project, with the aim of extending its impact across Europe.

In the context of **WOODMEADOWLIFE**, replication refers to the **transfer and uptake of approaches rather than the duplication of site-specific actions**. It focuses on sharing and adapting restoration principles, management and governance models, and knowledge products that have proven effective in restoring and maintaining wooded meadows. Replication is understood as a **context-sensitive process**, whereby approaches are adapted to local ecological, social, and institutional conditions rather than applied as a fixed blueprint.

Replication is facilitated through a structured process that includes:

- **Identification of transferable elements** – determining which approaches, practices, and experiences from WOODMEADOWLIFE can be transferred beyond the project area, including selected techniques piloted to improve restoration efficiency and habitat quality;
- **Synthesis of project experience** – consolidating key ecological, management, and governance lessons from project implementation;
- **Consultation with practitioners and networks** – reflecting on project experience together with practitioners, researchers, and authorities to assess relevance and applicability;
- **Development of replication tools and mechanisms** – designing practical guidance, knowledge products, and networking structures that support uptake in different contexts;
- **Refinement for wider application** – reviewing and adjusting the replication approach to ensure clarity, usability, and broader applicability.

The purpose of this replication approach is to **enable uptake of best practices and support context-sensitive replication**, rather than to prescribe restoration actions. The specific objectives are to:

- **promote** replication of conservation and management approaches developed, tested, and evaluated within WOODMEADOWLIFE;
- **facilitate** adoption of improved management guidelines and restoration approaches beyond the project sites and beyond the Boreal biogeographical region;
- **identify** the information, tools, and support required by potential adopters to design, implement, and sustain restoration and management activities;
- **support** replication through mentoring, peer learning, and networking, enabling stakeholders to develop restoration initiatives adapted to their local contexts.

Accordingly, the strategy focuses on enabling replication through **transferability**, **dissemination**, **networking and collaboration**, and **scalability where appropriate**. While WOODMEADOWLIFE focuses on **Fennoscandian wooded meadows**, the approaches developed are partly applicable, with appropriate adaptation, to **wooded pastures, other wooded grasslands, and low-intensity agroforestry systems**. In these contexts, replication does not aim to recreate wooded meadows as such, but to transfer relevant principles of restoration, management, and governance that support biodiversity-rich, multifunctional landscapes.

Principles for Enabling Replication

To enable effective transfer of the WOODMEADOWLIFE approach, the following principles guide documentation and knowledge-sharing throughout the project. In practice, this means that project staff will:

- **Systematically document key steps, decisions, and processes**, including site selection criteria, restoration techniques, management choices, governance arrangements, and lessons learned. Documentation will be prepared in formats suitable for transfer (e.g. illustrated guidelines, short technical notes, decision frameworks) and will be used both for internal learning and for external communication through workshops, site visits, and peer exchanges.
- **Provide clear and accessible information for potential adopters**, enabling them to:
    - assess whether the WOODMEADOWLIFE approach is relevant to their ecological, land-use, and governance context;
    - understand what adoption involves in practice, including preparatory steps, required skills, time commitments, costs, and long-term management needs;
    - evaluate whether the expected ecological outcomes and socio-economic benefits are likely to justify adoption under their local conditions.

Transferable Elements Supporting Replication

Replication within **WOODMEADOWLIFE** is enabled through a set of **transferable elements generated through project actions**, which function as learning, demonstration, and exchange mechanisms. These elements provide practical insight that can be adapted to different ecological, social, and governance contexts, rather than serving as prescriptive models.

Key transferable elements include:

- **Landowner and local community engagement approaches**, including cross-country learning between Estonia and Latvia. Documented experiences inform how participatory restoration and long-term management can be organised in different institutional settings.
- **Volunteer engagement models**, supporting restoration and management while fostering public participation, stewardship, and knowledge exchange.
- **Lessons learned from biodiversity monitoring**, including insights into ecological responses to restoration and management, supporting evidence-based adaptation in other contexts.
- **Selected restoration techniques** applied or piloted to improve restoration efficiency and habitat quality, with outcomes assessed for their relevance and applicability beyond the project area.
- **Alignment of restoration, management, and monitoring with SER Standards**, including approaches to preparing restored sites for long-term management and ecological follow-up.
- **Use of locally adapted native seed**, generating transferable experience on seed sourcing, collection, and application for ecologically appropriate restoration.
- **Public-facing communication approaches**, including exhibitions and outreach activities that communicate the values, history, and future role of wooded meadows to diverse audiences.
- **Cultural heritage collection and communication**, integrating historical, cultural, and societal dimensions into conservation and restoration narratives and strengthening public and policy support.
- **Experience from international heritage recognition processes**, including preparation of a UNESCO World Heritage nomination for wooded meadows, providing transferable insight into linking ecological restoration, long-term management, and cultural heritage values.

Together, these actions create a **portfolio of experiences** that can be shared, adapted, and reused to support replication beyond the project area.

Replication Mechanisms and Activities

To support the transfer and uptake of **WOODMEADOWLIFE** outcomes, over the project period, especially over the final two years, project partners will implement the following **replication mechanisms**, combining knowledge consolidation, networking, and targeted exchange:

- **Compilation and dissemination of best practices** for wooded meadow restoration and management from Estonia, Latvia, and other relevant countries (including Finland, Sweden, and Lithuania). Outputs will be shared through project communication channels, the **SER International Restoration Resource Centre**, and **SER-Europe** dissemination platforms.
- **Establishment of a European professional working group** (European Wooded Grasslands Working Group (EWGWG)) bringing together practitioners, researchers, and authorities working on wooded meadows, wooded pastures, and related wooded grassland and agroforestry systems. The group will function as a **community of practice**, supporting peer learning, exchange of experience, and future replication initiatives.
- **Targeted knowledge-exchange events**, including:
    - an international webinar to present and discuss WOODMEADOWLIFE best practices and gather feedback from practitioners, scientists, and land managers (in 2026);
    - a synthesizing workshop focused on practical guidance for the adoption of selected restoration and management approaches in different contexts (at the end of the project).

Target Audiences and Recipients

The Replication Strategy is designed to reach **multiple stakeholder groups** at local, national, and European levels, reflecting the diverse actors involved in restoration and long-term management of wooded grasslands.

- **Local and national level (Estonia and Latvia):**
  Dissemination will take place through partner networks and collaboration with conservation authorities, landowners, and land managers. Engagement with relevant ministries (e.g. Ministries responsible for climate and environment) will support policy relevance and broader uptake of project outcomes.
- **European level:**
  The strategy and its outputs will be disseminated through **SER-Europe**, including the SER-Europe newsletter, website, bi-annual conference, and the **European Wooded Grasslands Working Group**, reaching a wide network of restoration practitioners, researchers, authorities, NGOs, and private-sector actors across Europe.

Dissemination and Delivery of Replication Outputs

Dissemination within WOODMEADOWLIFE prioritises **accessibility, clarity, and usability** of all outputs. Key dissemination products and formats include:

- **European best practice publication** on wooded meadow restoration and management, addressing:
    - practical restoration and management approaches;
    - engagement of landowners, farmers, and local communities;
    - ecological outcomes and recovery trajectories;
    - governance, co-design, and co-management approaches.

The publication will be made available as a downloadable document, disseminated through SER-Europe channels, included in the **SER International Restoration Resource Centre**, and presented through webinars, podcasts, and conference sessions to ensure long-term accessibility and use.

- **Tailored communication formats**, including webinars, field-based events, and lay-language summaries, adapted to the needs and capacities of different target audiences.

Dissemination activities will prioritise engagement of **landowners and habitat managers**, while also targeting conservation authorities, NGOs, universities, and other stakeholders interested in applying the project's outcomes. Communication will be **multilingual where relevant** to ensure broad accessibility and uptake.

Continuity of Knowledge Beyond the Project Lifetime

The continuity of knowledge generated within **WOODMEADOWLIFE** will be ensured beyond the project lifetime through its integration into **long-term professional networks, open knowledge platforms, and institutional practices** coordinated by **SER-Europe** and project partners. Key outputs, including best practice guidance, methodological insights, and lessons learned, will remain openly accessible through the **SER International Restoration Resource Centre** and SER-Europe communication channels. In addition, the **European Wooded Grasslands Working Group** will provide a sustained platform for peer exchange, learning, and further adaptation of the WOODMEADOWLIFE approach, supporting its continued uptake in future projects, policies, and restoration initiatives across Europe. **In this way, WOODMEADOWLIFE outcomes will also contribute to the practical implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation by supporting knowledge-based restoration planning, adaptive management, and capacity building for semi-natural grassland and agroforestry systems.**

Appendix 1. Replication Strategy Calendar and Execution

Timeline for development, implementation, and dissemination of the WOODMEADOWLIFE Replication Strategy, including both core replication milestones and supporting international knowledge-exchange activities.

A1. Core replication milestones

Action	Timeline
First draft of the Replication Strategy prepared, feedback gathered internally and from international collaborators	2025
Establishment of the European Wooded Grasslands Working Group (EWGWG)	Early 2026
International webinar to present and discuss best practices	Late 2026
Final synthesizing workshop focusing on best practices and replication experiences	Late 2026
Publication of European best practices on wooded meadow restoration and management	December 2026

A2. Supporting dissemination and knowledge-exchange activities

In addition to the core milestones, replication is supported through ongoing **international dissemination, study visits, and knowledge-exchange events**, including:

- **International conferences and meetings**, where WOODMEADOWLIFE results are presented (e.g. poster and session contributions at relevant European restoration and conservation conferences);
- **International study trips and excursions**, including:
  - study visits organised in Estonia (e.g. Tartu region and project areas);
  - excursions linked to international events and conferences hosted in Estonia;
- **Large-scale LIFE networking events**, including international LIFE meetings hosted in Estonia, combined with study trips to WOODMEADOWLIFE project sites (e.g. early September site visits);
- **Webinars and online events**, organised through SER-Europe and the EWGWG, focusing on:
  - presentation of best practices;
  - discussion of replication experiences;
  - guidance for adoption in other contexts.

These activities collectively ensure **continuous visibility, feedback, and uptake** of WOODMEADOWLIFE outcomes throughout and beyond the project lifetime.