WOODMEADOWLIFE

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

LIFE20 NAT/EE/000074

Deliverable action E3 :

Student designs developed during the course how to present wooded meadows values to wide audiences

Final design of the produced exhibition

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Estonian Academy of Arts

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Photos: Taavi Varm & Andrus Laansalu

The creation and production of the outdoor exhibition has been carried out as a process of learning and awareness raising where at every step new target groups were involved. The concept of the exhibition has been to use innovative methods, involve young audiences in creation and exploring of the exhibiting media. The outcome of the process – the virtual reality games carry the ideology of respect for nature and promote the role of individuals in the protection of its values on the example of wooded meadows. The apps are based on recordings made in Nedrema, however they can be used everywhere.

The process

Summer school

EKA organised an international interdisciplinary summer school in the Loode tammik, Abruka and Saaremetsa in 2023 (report of the workshop https://digiteek.artun.ee/fotod/aruanded/konserveerimine/event_id-4658) to identify and discuss the heritage of the wooded meadows and generate the concept of the exhibition. The workshop was attended by 18 students from the Estonian Academy of Arts, the University of Latvia, the Latvian Academy of Arts, the University of Tartu and foreign students from Japan and Brazil. The aim of the summer school was to explore and contextualise the heritage of the wooded meadows and to collect material for an exhibition.

The workshop was facilitated by experts Riin Alatalu, Robert Treufeldt, Elo Lutsepp and Andrus Laansalu. The workshop focused on wooded meadows as a human-induced natural heritage, its study and protection, the role, responsibilities and rights of local communities and the different impacts on heritage conservation.

The summer school was opened by Jüri Metssalu from the Estonian Museum of Literature. Heidi Öövel and Anneli Vahter from the Environmental Board and Liis Koppel from the National Heritage Board presented different perspectives on wooded meadows.

Triin Reitalu and Mario Talvist guided the participants through different wooded meadows. The students interviewed a number of local residents, including Lea Saar, Riho Leppik and Eha Ennemuist. The days included fieldwork, walks and discussions.

The feedback from the students was inspiring, as many of the students had not been exposed to wooded meadows before. The perspectives of the foreign students, who provided a valuable insight into the nature and specificities of Estonian nature, traditions and heritage, were very useful for the future.

The Abruka summer school was important because it provided a platform on which people with a restoration and conservation background can draw to unravel the biological and practical aspects of woodland management. An understanding emerged of the ways in which heritage landscapes encompass buildings as well as biology and archaeology. The field trips in the landscapes of Abruka helped to understand why heritage conservation needs to be addressed in a way that also includes ecology. The wooded meadows are a fascinating example of how the otherwise interlinked conservation objectives of nature and heritage can sometimes conflict in very uncomfortable ways. The aim of the summer school was to identify common ground and common solutions.

The students provided valuable feedback to the Summer School, identifying what was important for them. For example, Kätlin Tugedam, a first-year conservation student, wrote: "During the practicals in Abruka and Saaremaa, we got to know the island of Abruka and its wooded meadows, and in Saaremaa, under the introduction of Mario Talviste, we had a deeper contact with the management of wooded meadows. In addition, the internship was enhanced by an interview with Talviste's grandmother, who talked about how the meadows were managed in the past and told several stories about it."

The summer school also aimed to provide initial input for the planned exhibition - six analysis on the values of the wooded meadows were developed during the summer course. During the discussion, it was realised that the exhibition should give even a theoretically unprepared person an emotional view of how it is possible to perceive a wooded meadow as both a natural and a cultural community in a contemporary cultural situation. In other words, both sides must be taken into account at the same time in the protection of the values of the community.

Exhibition

As a university, EKA links its activities as a partner in the wooded meadows project with its teaching activities. In 2023, an international summer school was held in Abruka and Saaremaa to prepare the concept of the exhibition. The outcome of the summer school emphasised the fragile nature of the wooded meadows, therefore an approach was taken to experiment with the use of information technology to present this layer via an app. In 2024, an exhibition was prepared in cooperation with the Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation and the Video Games in Arts Lab (VIA Lab) of the EKA under the leadership of Andrus Laansalu and Taavi Varm. The first experimental version of the exhibition was introduced at a public event on 02.07.2024 and the digital version of the exhibition is further developed based on the feedback and testing with students in the autumn and winter 2024.

Photos:

- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1D_XWnWC2MIc5rptclQL-f0Jw3uUWRkiF?usp=sharing Author to be accredited: Taavi Varm

Youtube:

1. NEDREMA puisniidu hommik https://youtu.be/zXv5g-voRH0
2. NEDREMA rohujuure tasand https://youtu.be/XRyFs9Lu20c

3. NEDREMA rohuring https://youtu.be/V-NVA80qcvI
4. NEDREMA mahalangenud puu https://youtu.be/kQhWPUSidM8
5. NEDREMA rabasaar https://youtu.be/ufLXN0DhnN8
6.1 NEDREMA heinaküün https://youtu.be/WDVEeyxN8GE
6.2 NEDREMA puu sisemine külg https://youtu.be/EZe21SLHDJg
7. NEDREMA puisniidu päikeseloojang https://youtu.be/OHG6AIpPU0E

The concept of the virtual exhibition, born on the outcome of the student workshop in Abruka and Saaremaa in 2023 was developed further by the students of the New Media Department of EKA in their international masterclass September – December 2024. Based on earlier research and brainstorming with the young generation, EKA decided to create the exhibition that consists of multiple app games. The outcome is based on understanding that the preservation and maintenance of wooded meadows depends on broader understanding and knowledge about this peculiar phenomenon of traditional culture. The outcome reflects the methods of learning proposed by young people and at the same time targets to reach a broad audience of young people that is not always the most predictable sector to be interested in wooded meadows.

In general, people know the term 'wooded meadows' but there is little awareness of the meaning and related features and activities connected with this. Apps can be easily downloaded from the App Store to individual phones and allow to play related virtual games. The emphasis is not on sharing precise research-based scientific information but rather on the inclusive approach of wider communities, including children.

The apps are the creation of EKA students supervised by Andrus Laansalu and Taavi Varm and are based on student's personal experiences from wooded meadows and on the data on flora and plant communities from Nedrema wooded meadows. As none of the students were biologists, they contributed the artist's approach constructing micro-stories on the relations between young people and meadows without necessary previous knowledge on values and goals of protecting nature and biodiversity.



Students learning about Nedrema, photo Andrus Laansalu



Students learning about Nedrema, photo Andrus Laansalu

Launch of the first phase of the exhibition



On July 2nd 2024 an event took place at Nedrema wooded meadow. The participants downloaded to their phones the app that was developed earlier based on the material from Nedrema. People could activate their apps on the spots marked with QR codes and explore a 360 degree view, zoom it in or out and listen to the recorded voices of nature and commentaries on the biology and ecological dynamics of the wooded meadows read by Peeter Rästas. The applications were created by Andrus Laansalu and Taavi Varm. The event was visited among others by many children who tested the applications to be handy and interesting. The cultural highlight of the event was the concert by Maarja Nuut, who has created signatory music for the apps.



Photos by Andrus Laansalu

Launch of the apps

Authors:
Project coordinator: **Riin Alatalu**
Tutors: **Taavi Varm, Andrus Laansalu, Jaagup Irve, Amanda Warner, Camille Laurelli ja Sten Saarits**
Students: **Ako Allik, Bob Bicknell-Knight, Kairi Getman, Mihhail Grigorjuk, Joel Jõevee, Marie (Müü) Kanger, Caitlyn Kesa, Lene Lekše, Anett Maiste, Rosa-Maria Katariina Nuutinen, Yiyang Sun**



Google:
https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=EVA+Lab&hl=et

Apple:
https://apps.apple.com/ee/developer/estonian-academy-of-arts/id1802663077

List of events presenting the apps

26-30 August 2024 14th European Conference on Ecological Restoration Bridging Science, Practice, and Policy of Nature Restoration in Tartu (SERE 2024)

02.04.2025 Presentation of the concept of the exhibition on the UNESCO compliance seminar in Kõue

At the seminar in Kõue the concept and outcome of the apps was introduced to the participants of the UNESCO compliance seminar and to the students of cultural heritage and conservation and art history and visual culture.



15.04. 2025 Presentation of the apps to the teachers of biology and nature sciences at Nedrema

04.05.2025 Presentation in program “Labor” in Vikerraadio (Estonian National Broadcast) https://vikerraadio.err.ee/1609669328/labor-lucy-kividega-kosmoses-videomangud-puisniidul/f4cc0d205cdfee732116a7aa325b3130



In Nedrema wooded meadow with students. Photo by Riin Alatalu

07.05.2025 Introduction of the apps in Kanal2 Hommikuprogramm (Morning program) (minutes 1:06- 1:14) https://data1.station.ee/station.ee/ee/2025/05/c6124d31-f1e8-4a65-b5fe-22d22e534054.mp4

Article in weekly “Õpetajate leht” (Teachers Magazine) Andrus Laansalu, Taavi Varm “Virtuaalne loodusnäitus, Kas puisniit saab olla telefonis” (Virtual exhibition of nature. Can a wooded meadow fit into your phone?) https://www.opleht.ee/2025/05/virtuaalne-loodusnaitus-kas-puisniit-saab-olla-telefonis/

07.05.2025 Presentation of the video games to the students of Estonian Academy of Arts https://www.artun.ee/en/calendar/presentation-of-wooded-meadow-augmented-reality-video-games/

07.05.2025 Presentation of the apps to the students of EKA https://www.artun.ee/et/kalender/videomangude-vaikesed-elud-esitlus/



Visual of the Game. Photo by Riin Alatalu



13.-15.02.2026 EKA students promoted video games and wooded meadows highlighting the Estonian nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List at the Tourism Fair Tourest 2026. During the days of the fair two students were constantly at the stand and providing visitors with information about the games and the significance of wooded meadows. Tourest is the biggest tourism event of the year and attracted approximately 16,500 visitors.[1]

Links about the event:

https://www.artun.ee/en/eka-exhibits-wooded-meadows-and-estonian-internationally-recognized-heritage-at-the-the-tourism-fair-tourest-2026/

https://www.artun.ee/et/eesti-kunstiakadeemia-toob-puisniidud-ja-muu-eesti-parandi-turismimessile-tourest-2026/

https://kaitsealad.ee/et/uudised/eesti-kunstiakadeemia-toob-puisniidud-ja-muu-eesti-parandi-turismimessile-tourest-2026

[1] https://tourest.ee/en/tourest-2026/