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Republic of Latvia

Nature conservation and the role of cross-sector synergies

by Juris Jātnieks

The Baltic Peat Producers Forum 2017

September 13-14 th, Riga, Radisson Blu Hotel Latvia, 55 Elizabetes Street

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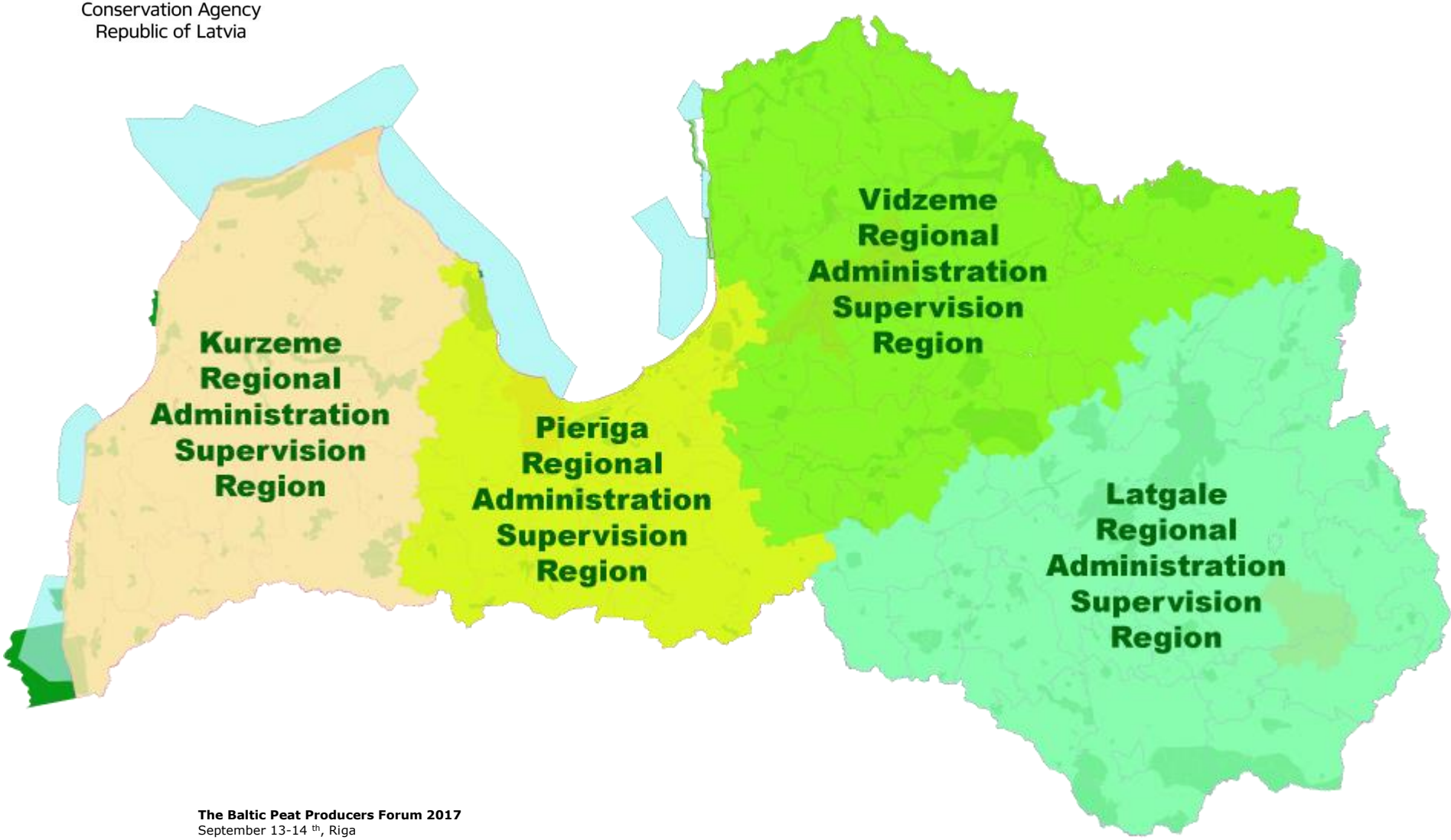
Current management of Protected Nature Areas of Latvia – 4 regional administrations



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Protected Nature Areas of Latvia

There are 683 protected nature areas in Latvia established by National laws or Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers On Specially Protected Nature Territories.

333 of them are **NATURA 2000**

~ 100 of them include mires, bogs and/or fens

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Protected Nature Areas of Latvia

4 Strict Nature Reserves

4 National Parks

9 Protected Landscape Areas

42 Nature Parks

261 Nature Reserves

7 Marine Protected Areas

1 Biosphere Reserve

355 Nature Monuments

~ **2000** Microreserves

Protected Nature Areas of Latvia

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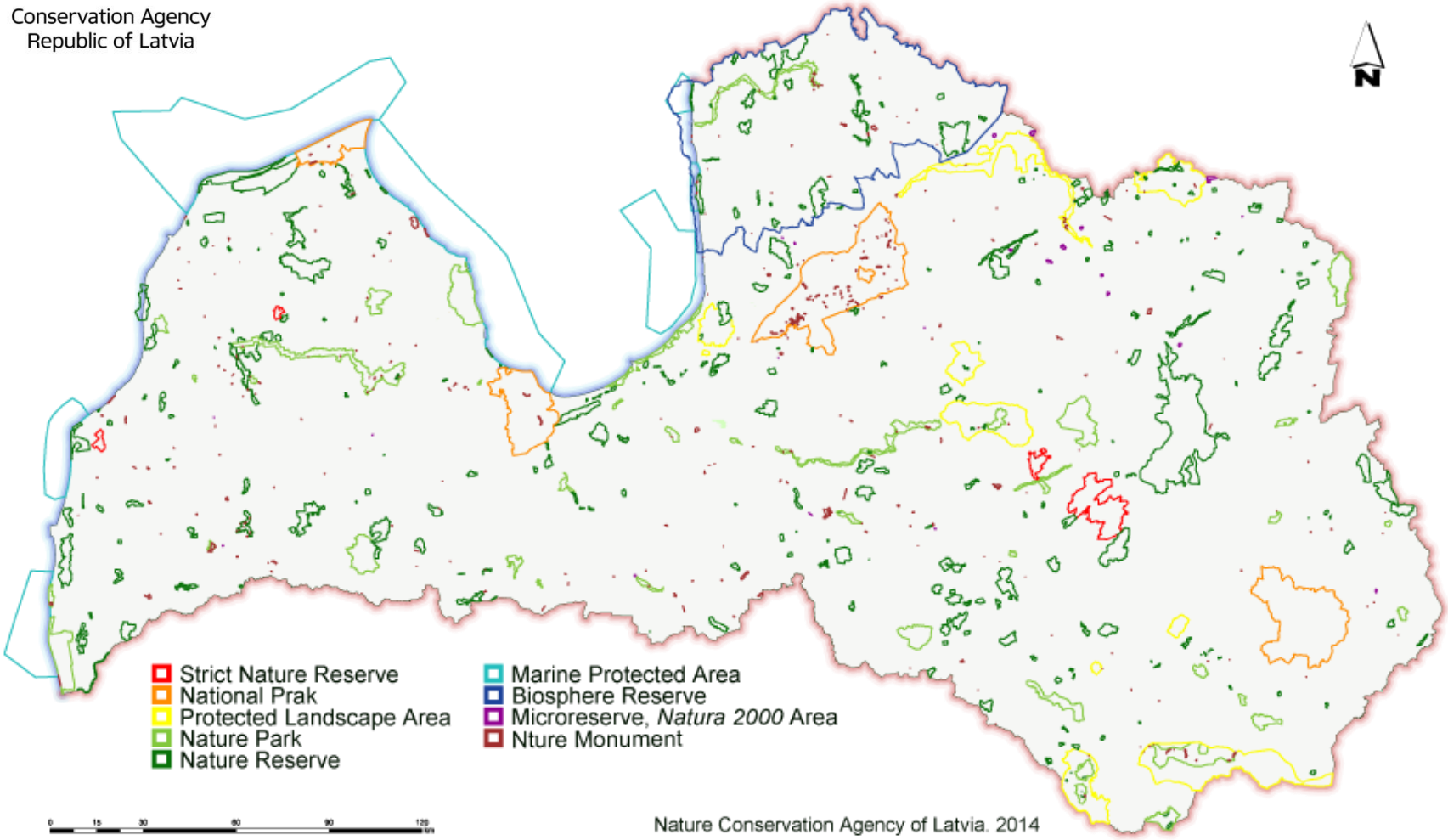

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History of mire conservation in Latvia:

PASSIVE PROTECTION

CONSERVATION + ACTIVE RESTORATION

1990s

Designation of protected nature areas

Botanical reserves (1920s-30s)

Complex reserves (1970s)

Cranberry reserves (1970s-80s)

Nature reserves (1990s-...)

Recultivation, reclamation of cut-over peatlands (after-use for different purposes or abandonment without any measures)

Continous designation of protected nature areas (Natura 2000)

+ first trials of ACTIVE mire restoration

including cut-over peatlands

time

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How are the bogs and mires protected?

The largest, spectacular and mainly natural bogs in Latvia – Teiču and Pelecares bogs, Ķemeri mire, Cenas mire, Northern bogs on border with Estonia, and many others are protected since 80`and 90`ies.

-Areas with a mire and bog vegetation cover (316,486 ha) or 4.9% of Latvia, and 128 000 hectares, or

< 40% of all bogs and mires in Latvia are protected within Natura 2000 network;

Mentioned 4.9% are presumed from the Peat Fund data (1980 !!!) , accounting only areas with typical bog vegetation.

Current situation differs significantly - transition bogs become raised bogs, part ot drainage systems not functioning anymore. Peat harvesting is developing, etc.

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The habitat mapping project of Latvia

To obtain actual data, the Nature Conservation Agency started the full inventory of habitats in whole Latvia including mires, bogs and other wettlands:

- The Project „The prerequisite to create better conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems in Latvia” *(The habitat mapping project of Latvia)*
- timeline - 2017- 2021; **New data expected on 2020.**
- the total cost 9 500 000 EUR

Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde

The EC LIFE programm project "Sustainable and responsible management and re-use of degraded peatlands in Latvia" = "LIFE Restore"

Main aim:

To develop recommendations for sustainable use of degraded peatlands

POST-HARVESTED PEATLANDS

~ 37 000 ha* in Latvia (0.5% of country)

*** calculated using recent orthophoto and other data by Dr. biol . Agnese Priede**

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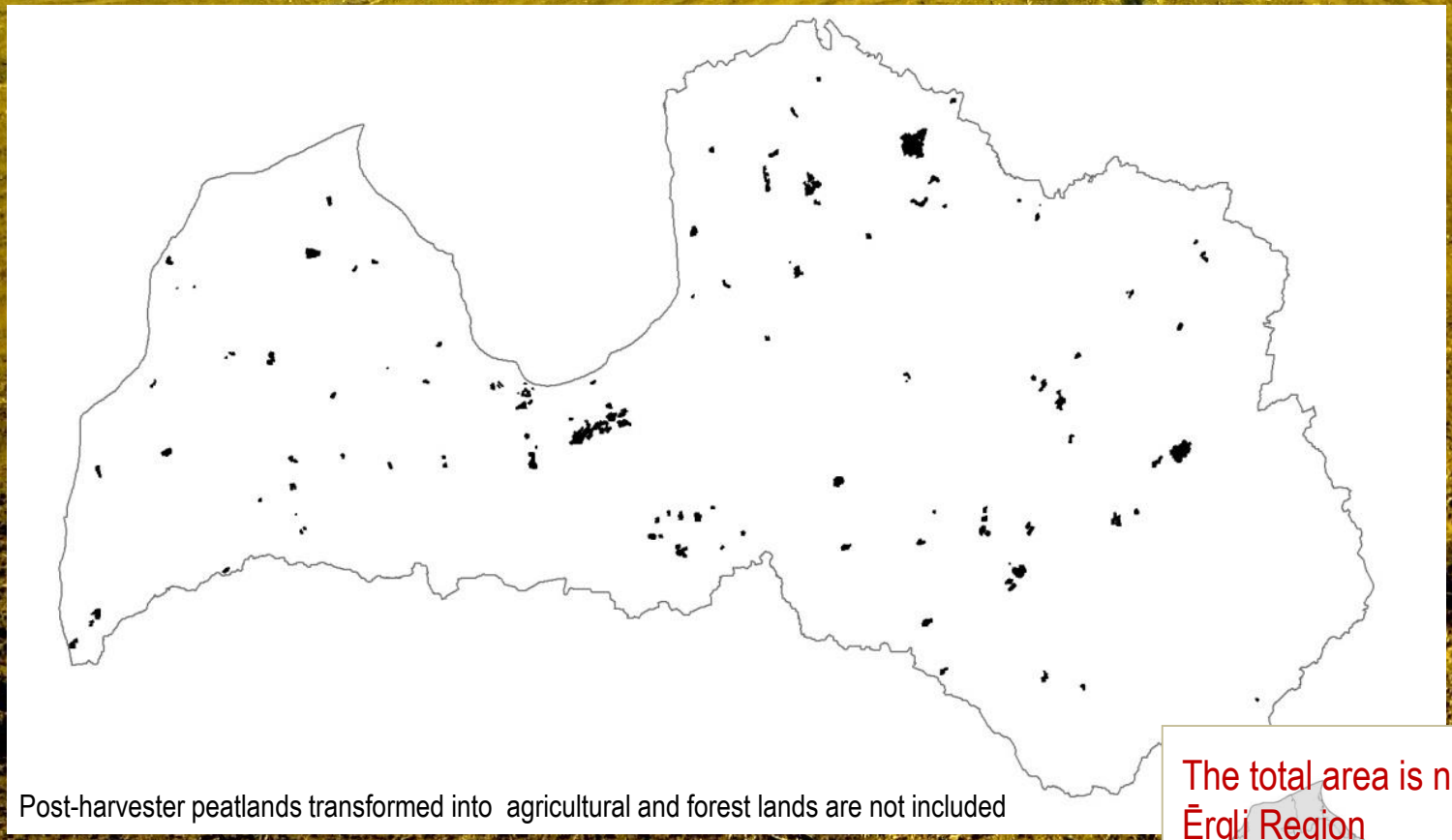

Post-harvester peatlands transformed into agricultural and forest lands are not included

THE REALITY of MANY POST-HARVESTED PEATLANDS

Peat milling field abandoned ~ 30 years ago, dryed, without any restoration measures

slide by Dr. Sc. biol . Agnese Priede

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Abandoned partly harvested peatlands:

- Vegetation recovery is slow, > 30 years,
- **Source of greenhouse gas emissions,**
- Unprofitable for any owner,
- Unsustainabile

Potential threats:

- GHG emissions,
- Degraded biodiversity,
- Increased fire risks,
- Donor areas of invasive species (invasive alien moss *Campyllopus introflexus* – potential pest in natural dune habitats)

Campyllopus introflexus

slide by Dr. Sc. biol . Agnese Priede

Agriculture

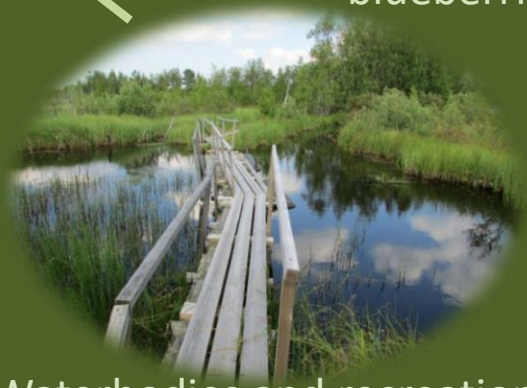
Biomass plantations

Aforestation

Craneberries & blueberries

Abandon without rewetting

Restoration of mire ecosystem



Waterbodies and recreation

slide by Dr. Sc. biol . Agnese Priede

Peatland restoration in Latvia

In most cases – **drained raised bogs** (restoration of hydrological regime)

Cut-over peatlands

Less common – restoration of **fens** by cutting the shrubs and/or mowing the herbaceous vegetation

Drained bog woodlands

slide by Dr. Sc. biol . Agnese Priede

Restoration approaches in degraded mires – wooden dams


Photo: Jānis Ķuze


Photo: Jānis Ķuze


Photo: Edgars Rudāns

Restore a wetland ecosystem
(Why rewetting?)

- **Rewetting is the only way** to restore the wetland ecosystem, though rarely it is possible to re-create a fully functioning ecosystem or to recover the previous mire type, even over a long time.
- The only way *avoid* undesireable side-effects on environment from the after-use,
- The only way to compensate the lost ecosystem functions and habitats for wild species.
- **The most efficient way to be responsible on a long-term perspective concerning climate change.**

slide by Dr. Sc. biol . Agnese Priede

“Recommendations for recreation of wetland ecosystems in post-harvested peatlands”

developed by Agnese Priede
Institute of Biology, University of Latvia, PuREST project

Available at www.lu.lv/latvijaspurvi

Or can be easily found in Google...
(in Latvian only):
Izstrādātu kūdras purvu renaturalizācijas rekomendācijas

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Our message for peat industry and landowners

Estimate all values and services of your wettland !

Use multisector aproach when involve experts .

If the peat harwesting fits as the best solution :

- Start mining on abandoned, partly-harvested areas first. They are huge enough for peat industry to grow bold during next decades,
- Do it fast to minimize GHG emissions,
- Rewett the areas on the earliest possibility, when harvested,
- Use existing guidelines (they are free !) , to decide appropriate, sustainable and profitable use of post-harvested peatland.

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The EC LIFE programm project "NATPROGRAMME"

Developed the Guidelines for management of mires and springs, coastal habitats, freshwater habitats, grasslands and forests 2017.

nat-programme.daba.gov.lv/public/

Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde

Cross-sectoral synergies reached and expected.

Guidelines for management of coastal habitats ere incorporated in **«National long-term thematic plan for the coastal area of the Baltic Sea»**

First time since Latvia joined EU, the Nature conservation priorities for habitat management and restoration are clearly defined on the National Priority Action Framework 2013 and included in National Operational Program (2014- 2020).

Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde

Cross-sectoral Synergies (2)

3. Guidelines for management of **freshwater habitats** are suggested by the Ministry of Environement and Regional Development to be applied by Municipalities governing public waters.

4. Guidelines for management of grassland habitats are accepted by the Ministry of Agriculture as a official handbook for all farmers and land managers in country, to qualify for support payments according Rural Development Program of Latvia.

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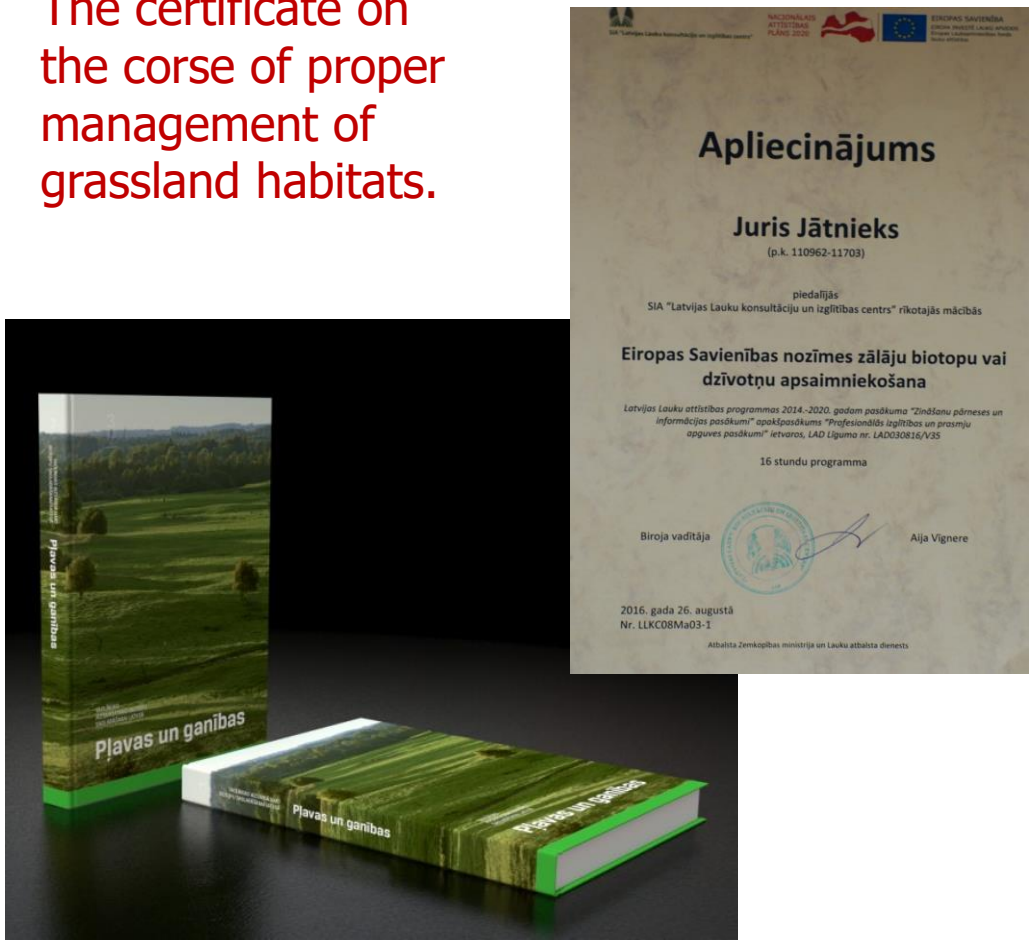
Cross-sectoral Synergies (3)

All farmers and landowners shoud pass obigatory 16 hours course of grassland management according the guidelines to qualify for EU support.

The certificate on the corse of proper management of grassland habitats.



Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde

Will the Guidelines for mires and springs have synergy with the National peat strategy?

The Management guidelines for mires and springs are ellaborated by Nature Conservation Agency, and awaiting to be integrated in the National peat strategy!

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The benefits from multi - sector synergies

When professionals from different sectors work for common objective:

- The Strategies and Action plans, as well as Spatial plans of the Municipalities and regions integrate common tasks and become more applicable,
- activities of any project are properly implemented and become cost-efective,
- broader scope of professionals and society involved, gaining better understanding on the objectives of other sectors or industry,
- the results of any projects become more sustainable and long-lasting, due to continuity of support and understanding gained during synchronizing of tasks and objectives.
- the recognition of **non-commercial ecosystem services** (mental helth, spiritual and culture value) rises tremendously.

Fall in love with mire!

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