**Joint actions for more efficient management of common groundwater resources (WaterAct)**



State limited Liability Company “Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre” (LEGMC) starts WaterAct project.  Project is being implemented with the support of Interreg V-A Estonia-Latvia cross-border cooperation programme 2014-2020.

**Need for WaterAct project**

Within the framework of the project, close co-operation will continue between the Estonian and Latvian organizations involved in the preparation of River Basin Management Plans in order to improve the efficiency of joint groundwater resources management in the transboundary area. Joint transboundary management of the Gauja-Koiva and Salaca-Salatsi river basins is necessary for both countries to implement the requirements of the EU water policy (Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC).

The project is important for strengthening Latvian-Estonian cross-border cooperation. This will ensure a harmonized approach to the management of groundwater resources and the assessment of the status of groundwater bodies in the Latvian-Estonian cross-border area, thus ensuring the long-term sustainable management and protection of the main drinking water resource - groundwater.

**Aim of the project**

The project aims to promote sustainable management of shared groundwater resources in a transboundary area. The goal will be achieved by (1) development of a common approach for status assessment of groundwater bodies, (2)  implementation and testing of developed approach in the Latvian-Estonian transboundary Gauja-Koiva and Salaca-Salatsi river basin districts, (3) development of common understanding about groundwater dependent ecosystem management, (4) raising public awareness and interest in groundwater management and protection.

**The main tasks of the project:**

1.    overall capacity building through the exchange of knowledge and good management practices between project partners and experts from other EU countries;
2.    assessment of shared groundwater resources in the Gauja-Koiva and Salaca-Salatsi river basins to improve long-term groundwater management and ensure implementation of binding EU directives;
3.    dissemination and information activities to raise awareness among the public and responsible organizations about the protection of groundwater and associated ecosystems.

**Following activities will be performed within the project:**

* Experience exchange between project partners and improvement of the knowledge base by analyzing the requirements of the EU water policy and the experience of other EU Member States (including attendance of international conferences);
* development of tools for management needs and training (using R programming language);
* assessment of the status of transboundary groundwater bodies using harmonized principles and tools developed within the project;
* development of transboundary groundwater monitoring strategy for the Gauja-Koiva and Salaca-Salatsi river basins;
* spring monitoring optimization and catchment modeling;
* development of guide for habitat experts for identification and assessment of groundwater dependent ecosystems (including field approbation of guide);
* implementation of public spring monitoring and creation of an online platform (including organization of social campaigns for public involvement).

The results of the project will be used for development needs of the 3rd period River Basin District Management Plans (2022-2027). The strategy developed by the project for groundwater management will be used for the planning of national groundwater monitoring programs in Estonia and Latvia. The results of the project will be disseminated on the websites and social networks of the project partners.

**Project partners:**

•    Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre, Hydrogeology Division (lead partner) (LV)
•    Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Estonia (Keskkonnaministeerium) (EE)
•    Geological Survey of Estonia (Eesti Geoloogiateenistus) (EE)
•    Tallinn University, Institute of Ecology (Tallinna Ülikool) (EE)
•    Nature Conservation Agency, Nature Protection Department (LV)
•    University of Latvia, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences (LV)
•    Vidzeme Planning Region (LV)
•    Estonian Environment Agency (Keskkonnaagentuur) (EE)

Total budget of the projects is EUR 411 764.76. Interreg V-A Estonia-Latvia cross-border cooperation programme contributes EUR 350 000 EUR and partners’ self-contribution is EUR 61 764.76. Project No. Est-Lat155.

Project duration is 24 months (01.06.2020.-31.05.2022.)

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