

The Rufford Foundation Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other format. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Alexandr Iscenko
Project title	The Codru Quest II: A New Hope. Conservation of Ecosystems and Biodiversity in the Codru Forest through Education, Gamified Research, and Stakeholder Engagement
RSG reference	24272-2
Reporting period	February 2018 – February 2019
Amount of grant	£4996
Your email address	alexander@megageneration.com
Date of this report	28 th of February, 2019

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
<u>Main goal:</u> By January 2019, 300 Moldovan citizens are actively engaged in the conservation of the Codru forest and its biodiversity based on better knowledge about the ecosystem services and better understanding of the benefits and values these services bring to them personally, to the social wellbeing, and to the economy of the country.				<p>In terms of quantity of stakeholders educated and involved, this goal can be considered achieved, as there are: Over 130 direct participants of the project and users of the MEGA platform, who got access to 'closed' version of the online course, research quest, and expeditions.</p> <p>About 150 volunteers who participated in the afforestation event in the village near the targeted forest ecosystem.</p> <p>30 key stakeholders, who attended the training and networking events within the project and then connected to our community.</p> <p>Overall, it seems that the project has educated and engaged 310 stakeholders. However, it is reasonable to assume that many people within this number participated in several phases of the project, causing some double counting. In addition, the impact of the research, training, and engagement on forest conservation and management is still to be evaluated.</p>
<u>Phase I.</u> On-line Education through E-learning Course. <u>Objective #1:</u> 300 stakeholders become aware of the issues related to the forest ecosystem, the results of the Codru Quest first edition, and are educated on ways to tackle these issues through collaborative				<p>The main issue here is that the e-learning course was delivered in two stages, with the second one still ongoing. The first, 'closed' stage of the course was done only within the MEGA platform for its active users and participating stakeholders from the first edition of the Codru Quest. Overall, 134 users gained access to the first video trainings of the course through the trainings feature of the platform. The second, 'public' stage was launched at the end of the</p>

<p>sustainable management.</p>			<p>project. The updated video training with education materials based on research and experience accumulated throughout the project implementation process was released via the open-access website, http://fes.megageneration.com, and via YouTube channel of MEGA. So far, the public online course and its first video trainings have collected 100 views and subscriptions.</p>
<p>Phase II. Gamified Research on the State of Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity.</p> <p><u>Objective #2:</u> Up-to-date data on the current state of ecosystem services and biodiversity in the Codru forest becomes available due to gamified fieldwork research with 50 selected stakeholders</p>			<p>This stage was quite challenging to implement. Specifically, we could not involve 50 stakeholders into research expeditions of the project. The reason was that we had simply decided not to do it, at least not at once, as such a large number of people at one place would not be effective for any research. It would also be a significant disturbance to the forest ecosystem and its habitats. Therefore, we organised three expeditions to the forest, each one with different participants. The first, introductory one involved nine most active and most experienced among our key stakeholders. It was focused on exploring the state of the forest ecosystem, threats to it, competing interests over the forest, as well as on interviewing local community, rangers, and other direct forest users. With the help of our participants, we were able to assess the ecosystem, conduct stakeholder analysis, map all competing interests in the area, and design a sustainable forest management proposal, which was then submitted to the relevant state authorities. The two other expeditions were done with four people each with the purpose to complete the research and to gather video materials for the public course and photos for the course manual. So, although, there were only 17 people involved in the research phase, the outcomes of this</p>

			phase delivered all the necessary data and much more.
Phase III. Off-line Education and Conservation through Stakeholder Participation. <u>Objective #3:</u> 30 key stakeholders with most interest and influence on the state of the Codru forest have knowledge of the current state and issues, how to use ecosystem services for forest conservation, as well as connect with each other to design the collaborative sustainable management model of the forest			The final stage of the project went reasonably well. Although we did not get an additional grant for covering extra logistical costs of the training programme, we still managed to do it through the support of local partners. They provided us with the necessary training space, logistics, catering, additional speakers, etc. Our organisation MEGA also invested its resources into preparation and organisation of training and networking events. Hence, we succeeded in delivering a series of trainings based on the ValuES approach of integrating ecosystem services into development planning. Moreover, we organised a networking and discussion event based on the 'Green Drinks' concept from the UK for all 30 training participants and key stakeholders. Finally, yet importantly, with the support of the Million Trees Moldova movement, we engaged about 150 civil society members (including our stakeholders) into afforestation activity at one of the villages near the targeted forest. Together, individual volunteers, organisations, and businesses planted over 2000 trees in a new community forest.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

- **Diminishing Moldovan population, especially the number of its interested, concerned, and capable members**

It is true that the Republic of Moldova experiences significant outflow of young people and adults going abroad to seek better socio-economic conditions, better workplaces, and better life in general. Due to this fact, Moldova has recently gained a rather unpleasant 'status' of being the fastest shrinking country in Europe in terms of population. We understand the problems this creates for the country and its economic, social, political, scientific, cultural, and other domains. However, in the Codru Quest II project, we truly felt the negative effects it has on doing anything meaningful and important for the country and its natural environment.

For a start, it is mostly capable and engaged people, who found opportunities abroad and went to pursue them. The ones, who remain in the country, are largely aged or unconcerned members of society, who do not see and/or do not care about Moldovan forests (and natural environment in general) or are not influential and capable enough to do anything about it. Hence, it was difficult for us to identify, find, connect with, and engage relevant stakeholders for research and educational activities of the project.

Nevertheless, as the progress on our objectives show, we managed to attract a good number of people, organisations, and companies, who got actively involved in one or several phases of the Codru Quest II. This was done mainly through our personal network of contacts (from the first edition of the Codru Quest and other projects of MEGA), through our partner environmental organisations (EcoVisio, Plantam fapte bune in Moldova, etc.), and through other supportive entities (Generator Hub, DNT, etc.).

- Political and institutional reorganizations as an obstacle to involve state authorities as one of the key stakeholders

Unfortunately, we were less successful in involving state authorities and policymakers into the project due to political and institutional reorganisations in the country.

From one side, the Ministry of Environment in Moldova no longer exists; it has been 'consumed' by the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development. Certainly, in this reorganised state institution, natural environment, especially the perceived-to-be-unproductive forests, has much lower priority than expansion of agricultural areas and development of transport infrastructure in the rural regions. We joined other environmental organisations in signing the petition against this reorganisation and discussing this with state authorities, but the undesirable change still happened.

From another side, 2018 – 2019 was the period of parliamentary elections. Obviously, before that the state officials and policymakers were focused only on getting their political parties through. In theory, that could be one of the intervention points to get attention to the issue of conserving natural environment and improving living conditions of people dependent on it. However, in the situation, when the government had been engulfed in the battle between joining the European Union and staying 'loyal' to the Russian Federation influence, there was no place for our concerns over forests in the country.

- Effects of 'brain-drain' and the resulting difficulty in finding collaborators with sufficient capacities

The diminishing Moldovan population dynamics are connected with one more unpleasant event, the so-called 'brain-drain'. Due to this phenomenon, it becomes increasingly difficult to find and involve capable collaborators into a project, since the latter become increasingly scarce. We experienced this, when we were searching for creative filmmaker and video editor for the online course, developers for the MEGA platform and app, and additional trainers and educators for the training programme.

For instance, in relation to the course, we could not find a suitable filmmaker from the beginning. Therefore, we had to film the videos for the 'closed' stage of the course ourselves in a 'quick-and-dirty' way. Only by the end of the project, we succeeded in getting the right person for the job and managed to produce quite professional video trainings for the 'public' course.

Similar situation happened in relation to the MEGA platform and app. The first developer we involved made more harm than good by creating errors in the platform. It took him 2 months of attempts to fix the errors, yet he could not do it. Only the second developer was able to get the platform back into functional shape within several weeks.

Overall, only through our personal contacts and recommendations of our partners, we were able to connect with people with the right capabilities and get the project going forward.

- Underestimation of time (and therefore insufficient time) to prepare everything according to the timeframe of the action plan

The challenge of finding and engaging capable collaborators affected the timescale to implement each stage of the project. Specifically, we underestimated the time needed to film, edit, and release the online course, to organise the research expeditions, to deliver the training programme, and to develop and prepare the MEGA platform and app.

For instance, we were not prepared for the fact that professional filming of one video training of 10 min takes about half a day. Then, the entire week is spent on editing the video and another one on adding learning points, translating it into Russian, and introducing subtitles. This affected the delivery of the 'public' version of the on-line course, which is still ongoing.

The modification of the platform and development of the app took even more time than originally expected. The errors mentioned above did not allow the app to synchronise with the platform. Therefore, we had to wait for several months for the errors to be fixed before resuming work on the app. As a result, the app was used very little during the platform, and it is still being tested and updated.

- Missing evaluation of impact of the project activities

Although the monitoring of the project progress and results was done according to the plan (via MEGA's online platform and offline observations and feedback during the training and events), we have not done the complete evaluation of the project's outcomes and impact yet. This is largely the consequence of insufficient time for the evaluation stage and of the fact that the open-access online course and stakeholder networking and engagement events are still running.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

I. The e-learning course Forest Ecosystem Services with its resources and inputs:

The most valuable and long-term-oriented ‘product’ of the project is the open-access version of the MOOC (Massive Open On-line Course) entitled “Forest Ecosystem Services: Valuation, Conservation, and Sustainable Management”. The course is available for anyone to watch and learn from at the e-learning website <http://fes.megageneration.com>, on the MEGA Game platform and app, as well as via YouTube channel of MEGA at <https://www.youtube.com/user/megainmoldova>.

The online course together with the course manual (https://issuu.com/megageneration/docs/fes_manual) and the research article, which are also available at the e-learning website, summarise all the information from the first edition of the Codru Quest, the research expeditions from the second edition, and our experience of engaging relevant stakeholders into conservation and sustainable management of the Codru forest so far. The first ‘closed’ version of the course has been delivered to 134 MEGA Game users and Codru Quest participants, while the ‘public’ version has already accumulated 100 views and subscriptions (and counting). Furthermore, the e-learning course is going to continue delivering educational value on a long-term basis not only in Moldova, but also in other countries, since it is available in English and Russian. For example, we already have subscribers from Germany, Mexico, and Tajikistan, who are local environmental researchers, conservationists, and foresters.

II. Proposal for sustainable forest management based on fieldwork research and stakeholder interest mapping:

With the help of our expedition participants, we were able to conduct additional interviews with different stakeholders of our targeted forest and to identify their interests, needs, positions, and uses of the forest ecosystem. We then added all these data to a Google map and identified areas of conflict and cooperation among the stakeholders. Finally, by using the same Google map, we created a desirable proposal for conservation and sustainable management of the forest with possible mediation of existing conflicts. The proposal has been submitted to the relevant state authorities, and the most concerned forest users and most active project participants are now pushing it forward.

III. Community of educated stakeholders, which is maintained connected and engaged through the e-learning course, MEGA Game, and networking events:

The third very important outcome of the Codru Quest II project is that there is now a consolidated, educated, and engaged community of at least 30 relevant stakeholders to work with. Its members have already gone through the ‘closed’ version of our course and the training programme. They have also participated in the afforestation campaign and together with rural residents, environmental organisations, and companies planted over 2000 trees in a buffer area between the forest and a local village (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WjMh2k8f2U>). Lastly, they have discussed interests, needs, and next steps with each other during the final event of the project organized based on the concept of a Green Drinks event originated in the UK (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Drinks). Now, many of

these community members are taking the ‘public’ version of the e-learning course, proposing their own topics to discuss during further Green Drinks events, and generally start involving into our nature conservation initiatives. Furthermore, some of them expressed willingness to become partners and sponsors within future research expeditions, conservation projects, MEGA’s Eco-hackathons, and community events.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

The most interested, active, and engaged beneficiaries of the Codru Quest II project were coordinators and members of local environmental organisations. Nevertheless, local communities were still involved at different phases of the project.

In the online course, the opinions, positions, interests, and needs of residents of villages around the Codru forests were part of practical learning materials. In such way, through the educational process of the course, we allowed the ‘voices’ of direct forest users dependent on its natural resources and ecosystem services to be heard and considered.

In the research expeditions, we talked with members of local communities directly and then integrated their needs and ideas into the map of stakeholder interests over the targeted forest. Based on the interviews conducted, we prepared the sustainable forest management proposal. Furthermore, in the first expedition, we had community members guiding us through the forest and explaining its current state, ongoing trends in its use, existing threats and their sources, and ideas on how the forest should be managed from the community. These concerned members were then consulted regarding the preparation of the proposal and later its review and approval.

Last but not least, the most active representatives of local communities participated in both the training programme and the final networking event. Although there were few of them, there is still hope that those people would be able to act as leaders and opinion makers regarding sustainable forest use and management in their communities. In addition, we hope that the local community members met other stakeholders during the training programme and the networking event and that there is real possibility of strong alliances for nature conservation to be forged. Our further work with the stakeholders and next networking and discussion events will show whether our hopes are justified.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Indeed, there are. Practically all outputs and outcomes of the Codru Quest II project are going to be used further on to advance conservation and sustainable management of the Codru forest and other forest ecosystems. They will also connect the efforts and results of the second edition of the project to the third one to be implemented after 2019.

Specifically, this is how the work started during the Codru Quest II is going to continue:

- The open-access online course "Forest Ecosystem Services: Valuation, Conservation, and Sustainable Management" will be permanently available online for interested people and organisations to participate in and learn from. We will manage its practice component for about half a year and then, after evaluating its results, will decide what to do with it further and how to automate the report-approval-and-feedback process. At the same time, students accomplishing our missions will help us gather more useful research data and engage more people into protection of forests.
- The training experience and inputs of working with stakeholders from both the online course and the training programme will be invested into improving our further educational activities in Moldova and beyond. For instance, we already have a contract to deliver similar training programme on integrating ecosystem services into development planning for environmental NGOs, local communities, and policymakers in Tajikistan. The training practice, video materials, and the course manual will go into enhancing that training programme.
- The afforested territory in the buffer area near the targeted forest ecosystem will be monitored and maintained by residents of the nearby village and the environmental organisation Plantam fapte bune in Moldova that largely made the afforestation event possible. Together we will continue organising tree plantations in the buffer area around the forest and involving local community members into them.
- The consolidated community of stakeholders will be maintained through the e-learning course, further trainings and workshops, and networking and discussion events, such as Green Drinks. The latter type of events are going to be organised every month, each edition focusing on specific topic related to forest management, nature conservation, and sustainable development. Furthermore, due to the success of the first edition, we now have partners and sponsors to provide venue, catering and funds for having other editions taking place in Moldova.

All this work will then lead to the Codru Quest III project, which will be focused on more extensive research on socio-economic value of the Codru forest, on implementation of the forest conservation and sustainable management proposal, and on much more active engagement of the now educated and prepared stakeholders into it.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

The learning materials, research results, events, and other outcomes of the project are already being shared with other relevant stakeholders, civil society in Moldova, scientific communities, and communities of environmentalists in other countries via diverse channels. These channels are going to be used further on.

Specifically, communication of the outcomes is being done in the following ways:

- The primary channel for sharing educational resources is the e-learning website for the Forest Ecosystem Services course: <http://fes.megageneration.com>. When each new video training or practice mission is 'unlocked' there, the subscribers are going to be notified about it via an e-mail message. Additionally, a post about it is going to appear on the Facebook page of MEGA at <https://www.facebook.com/megamoldova>, as well as at MEGA's Twitter account at <https://twitter.com/megamoldova>.
- The detailed summary of all video trainings and our personal experience in forest research, conservation, and management are shared via the course material uploaded to MEGA's Issuu page at https://issuu.com/megageneration/docs/fes_manual. This page is both embedded into the e-learning website and shared as a link within our social media communication regarding the project outputs.
- Besides the e-learning website, the video trainings of our course are distributed via the Trainings page in MEGA Game at <http://megagame.megageneration.com/Training> and via YouTube channel of MEGA at <https://www.youtube.com/user/megainmoldova>.
- Besides online channels, the educational materials and video training of the course are going to be used in the upcoming training programmes on integrating ecosystem services into development planning in Moldova, Tajikistan, and other countries.
- The results of the afforestation campaign are shared via the recorded video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WjMh2k8f2U> and via social network pages of the organisation Plantam fapte bune in Moldova and the campaign Million Trees Moldova.
- News about upcoming networking and discussion events in the Green Drinks style are going to be published on the newly created Facebook page Green Drinks Chisinau at <https://www.facebook.com/chisinaugreendrinks>. Photos from the last event have already been shared there.
- Further updates about the e-learning course, learning materials, events, and impact of the Codru Quest II project are going to be included in MEGA Newsletters and published on the MEGA Blog. The article about the release of the open-access course is already posted there <http://blog.megageneration.com/mega-goes-into-e-learning>.
- All research data and results continue to be shared via the main Codru Quest webpage at <http://megaimpact.md/the-codru-quest>.
- The article "*Economic valuation of the ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation in the Codru forest in the developing country of Moldova*" based on the Codru Quest research results is going to be presented at the conference "*Environmental Knowledge and Policy Innovation between East and West – Lessons Learned and not?*" (<https://west2east.pskgu.ru>) happening in Belarus in May 2019. This article published in the proceedings of the conference will then be used to raise awareness about the state of the Codru forest, value of its ecosystem, threats to it, and existing proposal for its conservation and sustainable management. Through the article, we will also share the concept of ecosystem services and the methods of economic valuation among the scientific community of Eastern Europe.

7. Timescale: Over what period was The Rufford Foundation grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The period over which the Rufford Small Grant had been used was February 2018 – February 2019. This coincided with the timeframe of the Codru Quest II project, providing the necessary financial support for each of its phases when needed.

Most of the spending of funds occurred in April – May 2018, when we started updating the MEGA platform and app, in September – October 2018, when we organised the research expeditions and the training programme, and in January – February 2019, when we had to pay for filming and editing of video training and for the final networking and discussion event.

The only challenge in the timescale of the project was in February 2019, when we did not manage to finalise and put all the educational resources and outputs online. This caused a delay in writing and submitting the present report.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
OTHER: Banking and transaction fees related to financial management of the project, 12 months	48	84	+36	The banking and transaction fees were paid for having the dedicated bank account for managing the RSG, for the e-banking service, and for transferring money to local service providers. Individual fees were small, about 0.5 - 1 £ sterling. However, for 12 months, they had accumulated to a good sum. In addition, due to a corruption case opened for the bank in which we had the RSG account and the investigation there, we had to move to another bank and open an account there. This incurred additional costs for registration of signatures, opening e-banking service, etc. that we had not originally considered.
IT: Domain for the Codru Quest website	60	118	+58	This year we had to pay for both hosting and domain for 2 websites:

for 12 months				one is the previous www.megaimpact.md for the research component of the project and another one is the new website www.fes.megageneration.com for the e-learning course, which we had decided to have separately for clarity and convenience of course participants. The total invoice was 157.04 US dollars, which is about 117.91 £ sterling, giving a difference of -57.91 £ sterling.
COURSE: Professional recording and editing of 10 video trainings for the e-learning course on ecosystem services, their values, and ways of conservation	600	513	-87	The cost of filming and editing a video training was lower than we had originally estimated. We received this service at about 46.61 £ sterling per video. Even though we used it for producing 10 trainings and one extra summary, we still ended up with a positive difference.
IT: Software development for the MEGA Game platform: section maps and features of customizable maps with issue markers, areas, and trails	600	394	-206	Furthermore, the new developer also focused on improving map features specifically in the MEGA app, since it is the app, not the platform, that is needed for fieldwork areas and expedition trails. The sum of the entire contract was about 1684.28 £ sterling, which was split into two invoices of 842.14 £ sterling each. Finally, we also had to pay for maintaining and managing the MEGA platform and its databases on Azure hosting during the most active project period of 10 months. This cost us an additional 393.99 £ sterling.
IT: Software development for the MEGA Game platform: section Courses and features of combining trainings into courses and sharing them on social media	1200	1684	+484	Much of the platform development was focused on fixing errors and improving the functionality. We did not pay to the first developer, since he made more harm than good to the platform. Instead, we hired a new developer not only to help us resolve the problems, but also to set up API synchronization in trainings and missions between the platform and app, so that the course could be watched and practiced via app as well.

PROGRAMME: Printing of certificates of completion of the programme for the participants, 30 copies	3		-3	Similar environmental considerations guided our decision against printing of certificates. These are available in digital version, are distributed among the programme participants, and are going to be 'unlocked' for the e-learning course beneficiaries, when they complete all practice missions and the final challenge of the course.
PROGRAMME: Printing of the manual on ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation in the Codru forest for the participants, 30 copies	30		-30	We decided against printing the manual due to environmental considerations. Instead, we distributed it among our participants and beneficiaries electronically and integrated it into the e-learning website with the possibility for visitors either to read it online or to download it for personal use.
PROGRAMME: Transportation for the organizers, trainers, and invited participants to the Codru Nature Reserve, 1 return trip Chisinau <> Lozova / Codru PA	125		-125	The transportation of training programme participants to the Codru Nature Reserve did not happen, since the programme was organised in the city. This change was connected to not getting the Erasmus+ grant and to using our partners' support and venue in the city. Nevertheless, the most active of the participants still joined us in the first expedition. At the same time, travelling of the participants to the afforestation site was covered by the main organisers of the campaign, the organisation Plantam fapte bune in Moldova and the movement Million Trees Moldova.
RESEARCH: Tea / coffee breaks and snacks for the expedition participants, 3 trips, 3 full days	360	118	-242	The expenditures incurred were related to food and drinks for the 3 research expeditions and to the vegan groceries for the networking and discussion event Green Drinks. The difference of 241.58 £ sterling occurred because there were only 17 expedition participants and for the event, instead of ordering ready-made food and drinks, we bought ingredients in a supermarket and prepared vegan snacks and drinks

				ourselves. In relation to the training programme, no costs were experienced here, since our partners provided the venue and catering as an in-kind support.
RESEARCH: Transportation for the expedition participants to the Codru Nature Reserve and the Codru forest, 3 return trips Chisinau <> Lozova / Codru PA	375	105	-270	The cost reflected here is for 3 research expeditions to the Codru forest for a total of 17 participants. The difference of 269.97 £ sterling by two changes: instead of 50 participants, we went only with 17 people, and instead of hiring a big bus, we went to the forest with private cars. Hence, the cost incurred was only for petrol for the cars.
COMMUNICATION: Paid targeted advertising campaigns on social media to promote the e-learning course and the expeditions, 2 months	200		-200	We have not used social media ads, as there was no need for them. To promote our research expeditions, training programme, events, and the e-learning course, we used social network channels of MEGA and benefitted from support of our network of partners. Some of the partners connected us with relevant stakeholders directly, while others paid for on-line promotion themselves from their communication budget.
PERSONNEL: Remuneration for the research and training coordinator, 12 months, part-time, including taxes	465	473	+8	This was the remuneration for the project coordinator, Alexandr Iscenko, who was also the communication coordinator, the main trainer in the training programme, and the creator of the e-learning course with its manual and website. The payment covers 11 months, February – December 2018 of part-time work. It includes Alexandr's 'salary' and all the taxes according to the Moldovan legislation. The difference of -8.04 £ sterling is due to underestimation of the amount of taxes for both individual and organisation that needed to be deducted from the remuneration value.
PERSONNEL:	465	378	-87	This was remuneration for the project

Remuneration for the coordinator of volunteers and expeditions, 12 months, part-time, including taxes				team member, Mihail Cebanu, who was coordinating the organisation of research expeditions and events, as well as community engagement activities. The payment was done according to an individual contract for 7-month, May – November 2018, when his support was needed the most. The payment includes Mihail's 'salary' and all the taxes according to the Moldovan legislation.
PERSONNEL: Remuneration for the community engagement and communication coordinator, 12 months, part-time, including taxes	465	1128	+663	This is a remuneration for Larisa Popa, who acted as financial coordinator and accountant. The remuneration includes Larisa's 'salary' for all 12 months of the project and all the taxes according to the Moldovan legislation. The large difference between the planned and actual expenses here relates to the fact that Larisa had to do all the financial management, accounting, and reporting to state authorities. This was the consequence of not getting the Erasmus+ grant for the project, where administrative and accounting costs were introduced into the budget.
TOTAL	4996	4995	-1	Exchange rate on 28.02.2019: 1 £ sterling = 22.85 Moldovan Lei

As it can be seen above, in some budget categories the grant was used cost-efficiently, while in others we had to cover the unforeseen costs. These extra costs were mostly the consequences of not winning the planned Erasmus+ grant, of additional IT needs, and of the need to change the bank. Nevertheless, the 'savings from other budget categories allowed us to cover the negative differences. These 'savings' were the result of having supportive partners offering assistance with communication and in-kind contributions throughout the project. It is also due to the partners' support that we were able to organize the training programme even without the additional grant.

Overall, the actual expenditures of RSG almost exactly matched the total budget of the project.

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

While the 'official' part of the Codru Quest II project is now completed, its educational and stakeholder management activities will continue for at least half a year. Namely, we have planned the following immediate next steps:

1. Continue delivering and managing the online course "Forest Ecosystem Services: Valuation, Conservation, and Sustainable Management" in English and Russian via its e-learning website. This includes gradually releasing the pre-filmed video trainings and scheduled practice missions, approving students' mission reports via MEGA Game, writing them feedback based on their performance and results, answering their questions via embedded Disqus forums for each training, and managing the Facebook group Forest Ecosystem Services Agents (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/566685687178259>) created specifically for students and alumni of the course.
2. Coordinate the final challenge of the e-learning course in May – June 2019, which includes verifying and approving students' reports, giving them final feedback, and awarding them with certificates of completion of the 'public' course.
3. Proceed with organising Green Drinks events every month to stimulate further networking and discussions among key stakeholders. This includes inviting additional speakers on different topics of nature conservation and forest management to these events and managing the establishment of possible beneficial alliances among the participating stakeholders.
4. Monitor the state of our sustainable forest management proposal and work with local communities and environmental organisations concerned about the state of the forest ecosystem to push it forward in the policy making agenda.
5. Continue the afforestation activities in the buffer area in the spring season of tree planting together with our partners, Plantam fapte bune in Moldova, Million Trees Moldova, and Seed It Forward.
6. Deliver the improved training programmes on integrating ecosystem services into development planning in Moldova and Tajikistan in April and September 2019 based on the learning materials of the Codru Quest II project and according to the agreement with our partners.
7. Present the article "*Economic valuation of the ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation in the Codru forest in the developing country of Moldova*" at the conference "*Environmental Knowledge and Policy Innovation between East and West – Lessons Learned and not?*" in Belarus in May 2019. Afterwards, consult with the scientific community on what else should be done in terms of research and conservation of the Codru forest ecosystem.
8. Evaluate the final results and impact of the Codru Quest II project and all the activities beyond its timeframe after finalization of the final challenge of the online course.
9. Present and discuss the impact of the project with key stakeholders at one of the Green Drinks events in summer 2019.
10. Initiate strategic planning, partnership building, and fundraising for the third edition of the Codru Quest series of projects to be implemented after 2019.

- 10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did The Rufford Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

The Rufford Foundation logo and the mention of the Rufford Foundation as a sponsoring partner of the Codru Quest II project was included in all online

communication and education materials throughout the project. Here are the examples:

- E-learning website <http://fes.megageneration.com>, where the Rufford Foundation is mentioned at the home page (<http://fes.megageneration.com/index.html>) and in the About section (<http://fes.megageneration.com/about.html>).
- Video trainings of the course available on the e-learning website, in the Trainings section in MEGA Game (<http://megagame.megageneration.com/Training>), and on the YouTube channel of MEGA (<https://www.youtube.com/user/megainmoldova>). Each video training has the logo of the Rufford Foundation shown in the credits sequence in the end.
- Video about the afforestation campaign (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WjMh2k8f2U>), which is also available on MEGA's YouTube channel, has the Rufford Foundation logo displayed in the beginning.
- Course manual available at the e-learning website, at MEGA's Issuu page (https://issuu.com/megageneration/docs/fes_manual), and downloadable from http://fes.megageneration.com/FES_Manual.pdf, where the Rufford Foundation is mentioned in the introductory description and in the Acknowledgements.
- Articles about the project on the MEGA Blog, where the Rufford Foundation logo and mention as a sponsoring partner is included (for example <http://blog.megageneration.com/mega-goes-into-e-learning>).
- MEGA Newsletters, where the Rufford Foundation was mentioned in the news about the Codru Quest II project (for example <https://mailchi.mp/8cfcf707a044/gsiel3m0im-2825217>).
- MEGA's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/megamoldova>) and Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/megageneration>), where the Rufford Foundation was mentioned and hashtags in posts / tweets about the project and the on-line course.
- Event page of the first edition of Green Drinks in Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/events/238619357019655>), where the Rufford Foundation logo was displayed on the event banner.
- Partners sections of the MEGA Website (<http://megageneration.com/partners>) and the existing Codru Quest website (<http://megaimpact.md/partners-and-friends>) that had also been displayed during the training programme and where the Rufford Foundation continues to be displayed as a partner for the Codru Quest series of projects.

Besides all that, the Rufford Foundation had been presented as a project partner during the research expeditions and the training programme.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

The composition of the core team has slightly changed during the Codru Quest II project implementation period. These people had been involved into the project:

Alexandr Iscenko- (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexandriscenco>). Besides leading the project team, he also contributed to the on-line communication with stakeholders and participants, partnership building, e-learning course and website development, and writing of the course manual. Alexandr was also the main trainer in both the on-line course and the off-line training programme.

Elena Ungureanu- She helped with writing and editing of the research article and contacting the potential participants of the expeditions and the training programme at the beginning of the project. However, later on Elena had to drop out of the team due to her intense final year of Master studies.

Felicia Cretu- (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/cretu-felicia-3244407b>). She helped with initial on-line communication and promotion of the project, as well as with community engagement activities. However, like Elena, Felicia had to leave the team later due to her full-time work at a local news portal.

Mihail Cebanu- (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/mihailcebanu>). He was engaged into organising research expeditions, holding meetups with partners and other project stakeholders, and making the events of the project happen. Additionally, Mihail took Felicia's responsibility for community engagement and management after she left the team. Besides all that, Mihail helped finding the new developer for MEGA Game and the filmmaker for the video trainings, assisted in the afforestation campaign, and provided his personal car and his driving skills for all research expeditions.

Larisa Popa- (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/larisa-popa-163a92a1>). She took the responsibility of financial management, accounting, and official reporting throughout the project, so that the rest of the team could focus on execution of the project activities.

Pavel Popovciuc- (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ppopovciuc>). Although he does not work in MEGA anymore, he still assisted the development of MEGA Game and fixing of its bugs and errors as the original developer of this on-line platform.

Andrei Garbuz- The new developer of the MEGA platform and app, who joined the project team in May 2018. He was the one to improve both the on-line platform and app, fix most of its errors, and add the necessary features.

Tanya Levodyanskaya- (<https://www.facebook.com/lt.creations.md>). She is the filmmaker, who helped us record video trainings for the on-line course, edit them, introduce key learning points and special effects into them, and generally prepare the video materials for the e-learning website.



12. Any other comments?

We, the organising team of the Codru Quest II project, would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to the team of the Rufford Foundation. It is because of your kind support we are able to realise all the planned activities of the project. Furthermore, with the Rufford Small Grant at our disposal, we were able to experiment with combination of e-learning and nature conservation and to launch the open-access course "*Forest Ecosystem Services*" with its learning materials. Finally, yet importantly, experience of managing the Codru Quest II project has taught us new things in project management and stakeholder engagement, which we then shared through our video trainings and the course manual.

We hope for similarly productive and successful collaboration with you further on. Until then, we wish you MEGA great success and positive reports from other supported projects!