



The economics of nature-based solutions.

Report on the Outcomes of Regional Nature-based Entrepreneurship Strategies including a Report on the Outcomes of NbE Showcases

WP5, Task 5.3

Date of document

17/08/2026

Deliverable Version: D5.2, V.4

Dissemination Level: Public

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Funded by
the European Union

Document History

PROJECT ACRONYM		INVEST4NATURE	
Project Title		Promoting investments in NbS and accelerating market uptake by gaining a better understanding of the economic performance of NbS, considering climate mitigation and risk reduction	
Project Coordinator		Andreas Türk andreas.tuerk@joanneum.at JOANNEUM RESEARCH Forschungsgesellschaft (JR)	
Project Duration		48 months	
Deliverable No.		5.2	
Diss. Level		PU	
Deliverable Lead		HNUA	
Status		Working	
		Verified by other WPs	
	X	Final version	
Due date		30/04/26 Extension granted to 30/09/26	
Submission date		17/08/26	
Work Package		5	
Work Package Lead		ENG	
Contributing beneficiary(ies)		Horizon Nua (HNUA), Poznan Municipality (UMP), Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), Klimabündnis Tirol (KBT), Aarhus Municipality (AAKS), Cascais Municipality (EMAC).	
DoA		A report on the establishment of enterprise accelerator programmes in the user test site regions, and recommendations for uptake in other regions. The report will also include a review of the NbE showcases in each user test region.	
Date	Version	Author	Comment
29/05/2026	1	HNUA, UMP, NIVA, KBT, AAKS, EMAC	First draft of deliverable
20/07/2026	2	HNUA, UMP, NIVA, KBT, AAKS, EMAC	Second draft of deliverable
28/07/2026	3	HNUA, UMP, NIVA, KBT, AAKS, EMAC	Internal review of deliverable draft
07/08/2026	4	HNUA, UMP, NIVA, KBT, AAKS, EMAC	Final version of the deliverable

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Suggested citation

D5.2 Brophy, M., Fletcher, I., Dziubala, A., Bronikowska, M., Nørgaard Telling, L., Holm, M., Coelho, B., Mourits-Andersen, S. & Chen, W. (2026). Report on the Outcomes of Regional Nature-based Entrepreneurship Strategies including a Report on the Outcomes of NbE Showcases. Invest4Nature Deliverable 5.2. Zenodo. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21837114

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our gratitude to all the stakeholders associated with the Living Labs that contributed to the development of a Nature-based Entrepreneurship strategy in Cascais, Aarhus, Tirol, Poznan and Norway. We would also like to thank all of the Nature-based Enterprises that partook in training and attended the NbE showcases in Brussels and London.

We would also like to thank Lucia Hörner, Steinbeis Europa Zentrum, and Ingrid Kaltenegger, JOANNEUM RESEARCH, for reviewing this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report relates to WP5 Task 5.3: Towards NbS Readiness Assistance – Skills Development and Capacity Building. The purpose of this task is to work with the Living Labs and their funded partners in Invest4Nature to support the development of a regional nature-based economy, which in turn will support the startup and growth of Nature-based Enterprises.

The objectives of this report are firstly, to support each Living Lab to develop a customised approach to supporting Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) and stimulating the Nature-based Economy in each region. Secondly, Nature-based Enterprises are supported in their skills development and enabled to develop sustainable business models and finance plans for start-up and growth.

The key results/findings of this report are as follows:

- Each Living Lab produced its own nature-based entrepreneurship support strategy. Key highlights include:
 - Poznan's proposed identification and engagement of NbEs to deliver nature-based interventions in the Główna neighbourhood (underway since May 2026);
 - Aarhus' strategy for supporting farmers to convert to nature-stewards (future implementation based on funding);
 - Norway's mapping and strategy for future testing of business models for ecosystem restoration in the Oslofjord;
 - Cascais' early efforts at stakeholder mapping and engagement;
 - Tirol's (Klimabuendnis - KBT) delivery of internal workshops and a survey to establish the opportunities for scaling up NbS and NbEs.
- Whilst much more can and needs to be done to foster Nature-based Entrepreneurship in the Living Labs, the groundwork has been laid by the Living Labs for future initiatives to promote the emergence and growth of this vital business sector.
- Living Labs contend with key challenges that hamper the uptake of nature-based entrepreneurship strategies, including:
 - lack of recognition/awareness of NbE as a distinct business sector,
 - limited scalability and investment prospects of NbEs,
 - procurement barriers to NbEs tendering contracts, and limited supply or pool of NbEs.
- There are, however key enablers that can be used to leverage the uptake of NbE strategies, including:
 - a strong public or political appetite for NbS/green transition,
 - existing partnerships and pilots between Living Labs and Nature-based Enterprises,
 - and knowledge sharing activities that promote NbS and the market demand for products and services of NbEs.

- Thirteen Nature-based Enterprises were selected to participate in an investment readiness training programme with the following results:
 - 5 took part in EU Green Week's Marketplace organised by DG ENV.
 - 3 were selected through a competitive process to pitch at EU Green Week's ReInvest in Nature.
 - 1 prize winner in their pitching category at EU Green Week.
 - 3 received detailed feedback and questions from the jury on their pitches.
 - At least 3 are building investor relationships and/or pursuing opportunities for collaboration resulting from their presence at EU Green Week.
 - 8 selected to pitch at a specially tailored event at London Climate Action Week, bringing investors and NbEs together.
 - At least 6 are following up on leads (i.e. potential investment, collaborations) resulting from their presence at London Climate Action Week.
- Based on the experience of these two Nature-based Enterprise showcases, the following set of recommendations for future editions have been provided:
 - The value proposition for NbEs – “What’s in it for me?” – should be prominent in the design and delivery of a NbE showcase.
 - Matchmaking success is enhanced by the declaration of investors and their investment interests in advance of the event and a formal panel of investor judges offering feedback is a necessary component of the pitches.
 - Preparatory pitch and investment readiness training is essential to the success of the pitching event. Constructive feedback and peer-to-peer learning enhance the effectiveness of training provision.
 - There is no one-size-fits-all showcase for NbEs. If the showcase is geared towards more innovative and scalable offerings, ensure that growth ambitions, stage of investment and Technology Readiness Levels are reflected both in the criteria for NbE participation and in the invitee list of investors and funders.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF REPORT

One of the main goals of Task 5.3 was to work with the Living Labs to co-create regional nature-based entrepreneurship strategies to promote wider uptake of NbS and to identify those NbS delivery experts active at local or regional level. This report shares the outcomes of these strategies. Since many cities/municipalities are responsible for the delivery of environmental goals¹, it was vital that they conducted the following:

- A review of current NbS provision, delivery and maintenance (and whether this can be supplied in-house through municipalities or should be sought externally).
- Challenges associated with NbS provision, delivery and maintenance e.g. insufficient expertise, time lags, resource constraints, lack of awareness of or limited current supply of NbS providers/enterprises (NbEs).
- Engagement with NbEs (who are they, what sectors they operate in, what challenges they face).
- Strategy - how to improve current position in terms of engaging NbEs/building nature-based entrepreneurship in the region.

Each pilot site co-produced an entrepreneurship support strategy to develop and strengthen the nature-based economy in the region. Each strategy addressed two main questions:

- 1) How can Nature-based Enterprises support public bodies in managing NbS? and
- 2) How can NbS drive the Nature-based Economy in each region through the creation, sustainability and upscaling of Nature-based Enterprises involved in areas such as ecosystem services, sustainable forestry, urban planning, and water management?

Following an assessment of the Living Labs, and the low level of awareness of nature-based entrepreneurship in their regions, it was determined that enterprise accelerator programmes would not be feasible. Such programmes rely on an already established base or network of Nature-based Enterprises, as well as a business support ecosystem that recognises this sector and its unique characteristics, needs and challenges. Rather than implementing a costly and intensive accelerator programme, which might not generate sufficient return on value, it was deemed more impactful to create and provide an investment readiness and pitch training programme for NbEs and organise Nature-based Enterprises to pitch and exhibit at two major international events, EU Green Week and London Climate Action Week.

Originally the concept of the NbE showcase was proposed as a series of individual showcases in each Living Lab, but following discussions with the Coordinator and the Living Labs, it was agreed given the low level of NbE awareness in each LL that the showcases would be more impactful as part of larger external events where NbEs could gain more exposure to investors and potential clients and collaborators. It was decided to target two events with large brand recognition that could draw a big audience and enhance access to impact investors looking to

¹ National Restoration Plans (which all EU member states must finalise by September 2026 under EU Nature Restoration Law) and [Urban Nature Plans](#) for those cities implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy which requires all cities with over 20,000 inhabitants to develop the UNP development process.

invest in natural capital and NbS related businesses. Thus, showcases were selected and devised on the basis of their potential for investment opportunities for participating NbEs.

1.2. BACKGROUND: NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The need for Nature-based Solutions is widely recognised by countries and policymakers since its initial introduction by the World Bank and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in the late 2000s. NbS is formally defined as:

“actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human wellbeing, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits.”²

Nature-based Enterprises are key actors in the transition to what was once termed a Nature-based Economy, and is now more aptly named the Nature-Positive Economy. According to the GoNaturePositive! Project, a Nature-Positive Economy (NPE) means that “the net result of all economic activities combined leads to an absolute increase in nature, to the point of full recovery, and prosperity for all of society”³.

Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) are private sector businesses that are responsible for the planning, delivery and/or maintenance of Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem services, and are a key lever in the transition to a NPE. Nature-based Enterprises can be formally defined as:

“an enterprise, engaged in economic activity that uses nature sustainably as a core element of their product/service offering. Here, nature may be engaged directly by growing, harnessing, harvesting or sustainably restoring natural ecosystems, and/or indirectly by contributing to the planning, delivery or stewardship of nature-based solutions. A nature-based enterprise must contribute positively to biodiversity and ecosystem services.”⁴

In terms of nature-based economic activities, Nature-based Enterprises can contribute to nature either directly through, for instance, ecosystem restoration, NbS for green buildings, NbS for public and urban spaces, or indirectly through, for instance, advisory services or smart technology, monitoring and assessment for NbS.⁵

² UNEA (2022). Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development (English Version)- Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 2 March 2022 [UNEP/EA.5/Res.5]. Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/39864>

³ Koh, N. S., Zandersen, M., Bull, J., Desair, J., Kupilas, B., McQuaid, S. (2025). Framing the Nature Positive Economy (Deliverable 1.1). GoNaturePositive! Horizon Europe Grant Agreement No. 101135264., European Commission. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15746656> Available at: <https://www.gonaturepositive.eu/resources>

⁴ McQuaid, S., Kooijman, E. D., Mary-Lee, R., & Cannon, S. M. (2021). Innovating with nature: factors influencing the success of nature-based enterprises. *Sustainability*, 13(22), 12488.

⁵ Kooijman, E. D., McQuaid, S., Rhodes, M. L., Collier, M. J., Pilla, F., & Pagano, A. (2021). Innovating with Nature: From Nature-Based Solutions to Nature-Based Enterprises. *Sustainability* (2071-1050), 13(3).



Figure 1 The range of economic activities that a NbE can carry out that directly and indirectly impact nature.

Based on a 2024 survey of NbEs across 34 countries (see Invest4Nature Deliverable 3.3⁶), the following characteristics were identified:

- The vast majority of Nature-based Enterprises are SMEs (97%), with most having less than 10 employees.
- Almost 70% of NbEs report hybrid goals, balancing economic and non-economic (social and environmental) objectives.
- They can be classified as an emerging sector with over 60% of NbEs having been established within the last 10 years.
- The vast majority (89%) have seen an increase in market demand driven by increased awareness and regulatory change.
- NbEs are more likely to resort to personal finance during start-up before turning to institutional funds.
- “Measuring impact” and “financing and business models” are the top two most important capacity and skill gaps experienced by this particular sector.

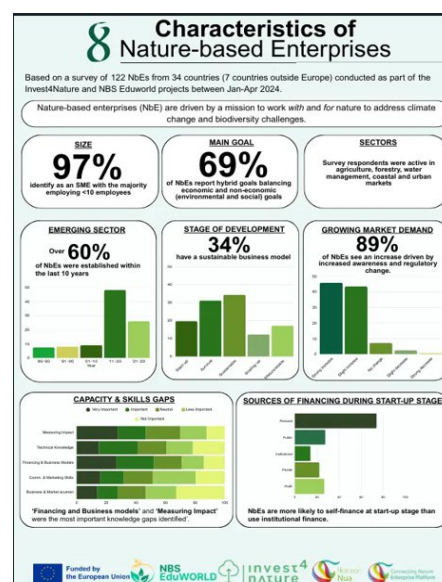


Figure 2 Infographic of Nature-based Enterprises.

1.2.1. SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Nature-based Enterprises are a key player in the transition to a Nature-Positive Economy. They deliver economic goals through job creation, business opportunities and stimulating innovation and creating new skills for local economies. In tandem, they offer social benefits, such as increased health and wellbeing for the residents of a locality, and environmental

⁶ Tedeschini, F.R., Tuerk, A., Blaettner, D., Klinkenbergh, O., Brangan, E., Romanovska, L., Chen, W., Chakravorty, D., Furuseth, I. S. & McQuaid, S. (2024). Markets, financing and incentives for NbS. Invest4Nature Deliverable 3.3. Invest4Nature. Horizon Europe Grant No. 101061083. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13997980>

benefits, such as halting the loss of biodiversity, reducing air pollution, combatting urban heat stress and other benefits. Cities, regions and municipalities can thus benefit from the place-based NbS that Nature-based Enterprises can offer to solve local environmental challenges. There is a three-step, holistic approach (devised by the Connecting Nature project⁷) that can stimulate the start-up and support the growth of Nature-based Enterprises to a region.

- **Step 1 – Raising Awareness & Strategic Alignment:** A lack of awareness of NbS and their benefits often corresponds with low support for NbS across local government departments. This has a knock-on effect by limiting the market growth and demand for NbEs and their products/services. The first step is thus to raise awareness amongst departmental heads, and political leaders, of the value generated by NbS, and the role of NbEs in delivering such value. To begin, municipalities are advised to consider how NbS may support the strategic goals of the city/region (e.g. municipality plans) and beyond (national policy, EU policy, UN Sustainable Development Goals), and how NbEs may help to deliver on their social, environmental and economic value.
- **Step 2 – Taking Stock & Building Alliances:** This next step is about mapping the innovation ecosystem and building alliances. Taking stock of existing local NbEs and cross-checking them with the city's needs is an important start. Mapping out the NbEs which could deliver NbS and assessing the internal and external barriers faced by them. To address these barriers, those developing the entrepreneurship strategies may need support and expertise from a broad coalition of experts. These alliances could be internal by for instance, connecting the local government department responsible for NbS/environment with the one for enterprise. External alliances could come in the form of connections with financial institutions/enterprise support networks that can help to address barriers of funding/skill gaps in Nature-based Enterprises.
- **Step 3 – Plan and Deliver a Customized NbE (Pilot) Support Programme:** The specific measures to put in place to support NbEs will depend on Steps 1 and 2. In local government departments, responsibility for enterprise will differ to that of environmental issues, and so decisions must be made as to who will be responsible to plan, lead and implement an NbE support programme. Any such support programme (an accelerator, incubator programme, training programme etc.) should be co-created with the eco-system actors in Step 2, especially NbEs, to ensure the support measures address actual needs.

⁷ McQuaid, S., Kooijman, E., Fletcher, I., Collier, M. J., Connop, S., García-Espina Adank, C., Müller, J., Quartier, M., & Vos, P. (2022). *Nature-based Enterprises: a Connecting Nature Guidebook (Final)* [Computer software]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7503772>

1.3. METHODOLOGY

The process of initiating nature-based entrepreneurship strategies amongst the Living Labs kicked off in April 2025. The methodology was as follows:

1.3.1. ESTABLISH THE CURRENT STATUS OF AWARENESS OF NBS/NBES ACROSS LIVING LABS

At the Invest4Nature Annual General Meeting in Cascais (June 3rd - 4th 2025), there was an 1.5 hour breakout session hosted by Horizon Nua with the Living Labs to discuss nature-based entrepreneurship and pinpoint how engaged the Living Labs were with Nature-based Enterprises; to identify capacity building needs of NbEs/delivery of NbS; and to begin the process of mapping stakeholders in the innovation/enterprise ecosystem of the five Living Labs.

It was determined at this session that there is a general low level of awareness of Nature-based Enterprises across the Living Labs. Aarhus and Poznan Municipalities described their experience of working with SMEs, but very few of these were nature-based. Of those interactions with NbEs, Aarhus described some limited interactions with SMEs in green solutions and water management. Limited interactions between regional partners and NbEs can be explained, in part, given that municipality led Living Labs were not enterprise facing. For regional partners that were not municipalities, but rather intermediaries for Living Labs, it was challenging to establish direct connections with NbEs.



Figure 3 Brainstorming session on nature-based entrepreneurship at the Cascais I4N AGM in June 2025.

Challenges and enablers for engaging Nature-based Enterprises were also discussed. A major barrier was the lack of awareness/knowledge of NbS and/or Nature-based Entrepreneurship amongst municipalities. Engaging Nature-based Enterprises in capacity building or training opportunities was also considered challenging due to the limited capacity of NbEs, which are mostly micro enterprises, and are often time and resource constrained. Some enablers of engaging NbEs were identified, including raising awareness about NbEs among local innovation ecosystem actors (e.g. business associations/networks) as well as municipalities.

Another enabler to engage NbEs in enterprise training was to deliver the training in local language/hybrid or online format and through local education/training providers with established credentials.

1.3.2. TRAINING AND AWARENESS-RAISING OF NBS/NBES ACROSS LIVING LABS

Nature-based Entrepreneurship was a topic that featured as part of the Nature-based Solutions Business Model Canvas (NbS-BMC) Workshops for Living Labs (see Deliverable 5.1⁸). During these workshops, Living Labs were supported to consider and identify Nature-based Enterprises, NbS market sectors, and the role that NbS/NbEs can play in enabling municipalities to meet their environmental/climate adaptation commitments. Living Labs were asked to consider the role of NbEs in the delivery and implementation of NbS locally and to map out the types of suppliers needed in the deployment of NbS (across planning, implementation and stewardship phases). The workshops took place with Poznan Municipality during 8th-9th April 2025, followed by Cascais on 5th-6th June 2025, and Tirol on 23rd-24th June 2025. Since the Klimabundnis Tirol (KBT) Living Lab is not a municipality, the emphasis of their workshop was on training the KBT consultants to deliver a NbS BMC workshop, using the Climate Smart Mountain Forest as a test case. Aarhus did not have a BMC workshop, due to their already advanced level of nature financing through public-private sector cooperation models. It was arranged instead to have an online hour-long presentation on nature-based entrepreneurship on 28th November 2025.

As part of Task 5.1, a Train-the-Trainer programme was devised for Living Labs and other organisations to deliver independent Business Modelling and Financing workshops to municipalities (see Deliverable 5.1⁹). The final segment of the training content was focused on Entrepreneurship in NbS. The coaching manual and/or powerpoint slide decks are available in three different languages: English, Norwegian and German. The translations into Norwegian and German allowed for the training to be tested and delivered to local audiences by NIVA and KBT. NIVA delivered an adapted version of the BMC training to participants in their local language. The adapted content for the Norwegian workshop was to accommodate its shorter agenda (i.e. ½ day workshop versus 1½ day workshop) and to appeal to its audience, which consisted mostly of industry representatives.



Figure 4 Sample train-the-trainer material on nature-based entrepreneurship

⁸ Brophy, M., Fletcher, I., Dziubala, A., Bronikowska, M., Nørgaard Telling, L., Holm, M., Coelho, B., Mourits-Andersen, S., Chen, W., With Fagerli, C. & Rinde, E. (2026). Funding Mechanisms to realise NbS adopting alternative finance and business models. Invest4Nature Deliverable D5.1. Invest4Nature. Horizon Europe Grant No. 101061083. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20068961>

⁹ Brophy, M., Fletcher, I., Dziubala, A., Bronikowska, M., Nørgaard Telling, L., Holm, M., Coelho, B., Mourits-Andersen, S., Chen, W., With Fagerli, C. & Rinde, E. (2026). Funding Mechanisms to realise NbS adopting alternative finance and business models. Invest4Nature Deliverable D5.1. Invest4Nature. Horizon Europe Grant No. 101061083. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20068961>

Horizon Nua also developed and shared awareness raising materials that could be utilised within the Living Labs to elevate the status of Nature-based Enterprises, and enhance understanding of their distinct characteristics and challenges, within their city/region. The materials included the Invest4Nature Report Brief on Nature-based Enterprises¹⁰, [a Nature-based Enterprise infographic](#), and six one-pager leaflets (designed by Horizon Nua specifically for Task 5.3) that detail why municipalities should care for nature/NbS and how Nature-based Enterprises can deliver NbS for a city/region (see images below). Given the importance of local language delivery, as emphasized by the Living Labs during the Cascais Annual General Meeting, it was decided to translate all materials into the languages of the Living Labs. Once the materials were reviewed and approved, they were available to Living Labs to share amongst their networks.



Figure 5 The series of Municipality leaflets.

1.3.3. DOCUMENTING NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGIES ACROSS LIVING LABS

Following the previous two phases of scoping out and gathering knowledge on Nature-based Enterprises, Living Labs were ready to develop and document specific goals and tasks for accelerating regional nature-based entrepreneurship. During an online workshop in early 2026, Horizon Nua talked through the template for the entrepreneurship strategy, which was shared in advance. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss the different sections of the template and for Living Labs to ask questions and seek advice over any concerns. The template was structured in order to capture the current status of NbE support in the Living Lab as well as the planned strategy for NbE support in the region. To aid understanding, certain questions were given a drop-down menu of possible answers (i.e. what are the sectors of NbEs within your region?) while other questions were left open, allowing Living Labs to answer unprompted. In Tirol, the template (which was mainly geared to municipalities) was adapted to address KBT's networks, including municipalities, enterprises and educational institutions dedicated to climate efforts.

First drafts of the templates were gathered throughout February and March 2026. Both Cascais and Poznan shared drafts of their entrepreneurship strategy templates. Aarhus' preference was for their planned strategy to be delivered in oral presentation form and a meeting was scheduled on 4th of March 2026. A written strategy document entitled *"The Farmer as Nature*

¹⁰ Brangan, E., McQuaid, S., Klinkenbergh, O., Lienhart, L. M., Pratlong, M., & Amarty, C. D. (2025). Brief: Nature-based Enterprises Analysis. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16950528>

Steward: A support strategy for a Nature-based Enterprise” was later shared in June 2026. In the Tirolean case, the adapted template was converted into an internal survey and was distributed among the KBT consultants in Spring 2026. A collective reflexive monitoring session with all the Living Labs was scheduled on 29th of May 2026 to determine progress regarding each Living Lab’s regional nature-based entrepreneurship support strategy development and implementation. Separate reflexive monitoring sessions took place with Norwegian and Austrian Living Labs on the development of their Nature-based Entrepreneurship strategies on 24th of June and 30th of June, respectively.

Another key element of this work was the identification of Nature-based Enterprises in each Living Lab that could be potentially suitable for participation in pitching and exhibition events. Living Labs were approached during the recruitment of both *ReInvest in Nature* as part of EU Green Week and London Climate Action Week (see Section 3 of this report) with requests for identifying suitable candidates, and four Living Labs (Poznan, Cascais, Aarhus and Norwegian LL Northern case) put forward nominees.

2. SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND NBES IN LIVING LABS

2.1. DESCRIPTION OF LIVING LABS’ NBE AWARENESS

The first step for public bodies and municipalities when aiming to stimulate start-up and growth of Nature-based Enterprises within a region is to work on increasing awareness¹¹. Living Labs should begin by raising awareness and securing support for Nature-based Solutions among different department heads for example, health, education, economic, and transport. This includes enhancing understanding of the economic, social and environmental value that NbS can generate and emphasising the role of Nature-based Enterprises in delivering such value.

Fortunately, all of the Living Labs, as partners in the Invest4Nature project, had undertaken efforts to promote and raise awareness of Nature-based Solutions among their colleagues and at interdepartmental level. There was still, however, a considerable amount of additional awareness-raising required around Nature-based Enterprises, where the level of awareness was low across all Living Labs / municipalities. This can be partly attributed to the fact that the term “Nature-based Enterprise” is relatively new¹² and each LL has their own established or traditional concepts for private business which engage in economic activities that use nature sustainably as a core element throughout the NbS value chains.

¹¹ McQuaid et al. (2021). Final report on the establishment of enterprise accelerator programmes in front-runner cities and fast-follower cities and recommendations for uptake in multiplier cities. Connecting Nature, Deliverable 24.

¹² Despite its newness, the term “Nature-based Enterprise” is gaining traction in EU and international research and policy (Horizon Europe Funding Call HORIZON-CL6-2027-01-BIODIV-05; [IPBES, 2026](#); [European Commission, McQuaid, Zandersen et al., 2025](#); [European Commission, 2022](#) [ILO, UNEP & IUCN, 2022](#)).

2.2. DESCRIPTION OF NBE SUPPORT STRATEGIES

2.2.1. POZNAN

In the Poznan Living Lab, awareness raising and engagement is a key pillar of their strategy to support and promote Nature-based Solutions and Nature-based Entrepreneurship. Poznan has much experience in successfully implementing NbS projects, such as the Schoolyard Greening Project and Nature-based Playgrounds undertaken in schools and kindergartens across the city (see Deliverable 5.1¹³). Poznan has a record of successful EU funded NbS projects, including the Connecting Nature project. Their involvement in this project sparked interest and action in public-private partnerships, forging the pathway to a trilateral model for afforestation between two private companies, Reforest Action (investor) and Green-Up (project leader responsible for planting), and Poznan City (landowner responsible for forest maintenance). Their involvement in the Connecting Nature project also helped to raise awareness of nature-based entrepreneurship with Poznan developing local knowledge and skills through training programmes on NbS for landscape architects, gardening companies, local decision-makers, councillors, and contractors.

Nonetheless, there is still a low awareness of NbEs as a distinct business category, both among enterprises and public institutions of Poznan. There are difficulties scaling up NbS due to a small pool of specialised service providers (for example, landscape architects with co-creation skills, contractors with ecological expertise). There are also public procurement barriers where traditional procedures do not always favour Nature-based Solutions. There is, however, great potential for positioning NbS, and NbEs, as key enablers to achieving the municipality's strategic goals. NbS and NbEs are being gradually embedded into key city frameworks, including the "City Development Strategy 2040+" and the "Climate Change Adaptation Plan", where references to climate resilience, biodiversity enhancement, and small-scale green interventions are becoming more visible. The aim is to ensure that NbS and NbEs move beyond pilot projects and become part of everyday urban practice and long-term planning.

To achieve this, Poznan's NbE strategy will involve the following actions:

- Internal capacity building: run cross-departmental workshops for municipal staff on the value of NbS and the role of NbEs in delivery, maintenance, and innovation.
- Targeted awareness raising: develop and share practical guidance materials for SMEs and NbEs (Invest handbook).
- Market engagement: organise workshops with NbEs, designers, contractors, NGOs, and social enterprises to explore collaboration models and pilot opportunities.
- Institutional partnerships: collaborate with the local enterprise agency and business-support organisations to design targeted support instruments for NbEs (e.g. climate partnership, water partnership).

¹³ Brophy, M., Fletcher, I., Dziubala, A., Bronikowska, M., Nørgaard Telling, L., Holm, M., Coelho, B., Mourits-Andersen, S., Chen, W., With Fagerli, C. & Rinde, E. (2026). Funding Mechanisms to realise NbS adopting alternative finance and business models. Invest4Nature Deliverable D5.1. Invest4Nature. Horizon Europe Grant No. 101061083. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20068961>

In addition, as part of the planned NbS Academy (this is an internal, municipality led initiative to promote and raise awareness of NbS in the city of Poznan; please refer to Deliverable 5.1¹⁴ for a full description of this initiative), the city could:

- Deliver in-house training for officials on NbS and NbE models.
- Commission hands-on workshops in schools and kindergartens (e.g. willow weaving, water retention features, nature-based play).
- Organise study visits to NbS implementation sites in Poznań.
- Use educational settings as demonstration spaces linking learning, community engagement, and market development.

The actions outlined above, and the progress to date in operationalising the Nature-based Entrepreneurship strategy of Poznan, are elaborated on in Section 2.3.

2.2.2. CASCAIS

Cascais has a strong track record in environmental protection, climate adaptation and ecosystem restoration, demonstrated through initiatives such as the Ribeira das Vinhas ecological restoration project, the restoration of the Guincho-Cresmina dune system and the implementation of several climate adaptation measures across the municipality. These initiatives have contributed to increasing local awareness of environmental challenges and the value of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in addressing climate, biodiversity and water management issues.

Despite this favourable context, the concept of Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) as economic actors that design, deliver, maintain and monitor NbS remains relatively unknown among public authorities, businesses and the wider community. Several factors contribute to this situation. Firstly, NbEs are not yet widely recognised as a distinct economic sector, resulting in limited visibility and dedicated support mechanisms. Secondly, responsibilities related to NbS are often distributed across different municipal departments, making coordinated engagement with NbEs more challenging. Thirdly, the NbE market in Portugal is still emerging and is largely composed of micro and small enterprises with limited capacity to scale their services. Finally, existing public procurement procedures are not always adapted to the innovative and multidisciplinary nature of NbS, creating barriers for smaller NbEs to access public contracts.

Nevertheless, Cascais has a long-standing tradition of collaborating with organisations, experts and businesses involved in the planning, implementation and maintenance of NbS, even if these actors have not been formally recognised as Nature-based Enterprises. Support for NbS is embedded in several strategic and policy frameworks, including the Cascais Municipal Master Plan (PDM), the Municipal Climate Adaptation Strategy and broader national commitments related to ecosystem restoration and the implementation of the European Nature Restoration Law. Achieving these objectives will require a stronger and more structured NbE ecosystem capable of supporting the full lifecycle of Nature-based Solutions, from project conception and implementation to long-term maintenance, monitoring and impact assessment.

¹⁴ Brophy, M., Fletcher, I., Dziubala, A., Bronikowska, M., Nørgaard Telling, L., Holm, M., Coelho, B., Mourits-Andersen, S., Chen, W., With Fagerli, C. & Rinde, E. (2026). Funding Mechanisms to realise NbS adopting alternative finance and business models. Invest4Nature Deliverable D5.1. Invest4Nature. Horizon Europe Grant No. 101061083. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20068961>

Within the framework of Invest4Nature, Cascais aims to strengthen the local NbE ecosystem by increasing awareness, improving stakeholder engagement and creating favourable conditions for NbEs to contribute to municipal environmental objectives. The regional NbE support strategy therefore focuses on three complementary areas:

- Awareness raising and capacity building, through targeted sessions for political representatives, municipal technicians and key stakeholders to increase understanding of the role and value of NbEs in delivering environmental, climate and biodiversity objectives.
- Identification and engagement of Nature-based Enterprises, including the mapping of local and regional NbEs, the creation of opportunities for dialogue between NbEs and municipal departments, and the promotion of collaboration among ecosystem actors.
- Promotion of innovative financing and business opportunities, through the dissemination of Invest4Nature tools, pilot actions and blended finance approaches, helping NbEs to access new markets, funding opportunities and potential partnerships.

Through these actions, Cascais seeks to improve the visibility and recognition of Nature-based Enterprises, strengthen collaboration between the public sector and NbEs, and create the conditions necessary for scaling up Nature-based Solutions that contribute simultaneously to climate resilience, biodiversity enhancement and sustainable local economic development.

2.2.3. AARHUS

In the Aarhus Living Lab, there is a high level of awareness of Nature-based Solutions within the political sphere and across departmental heads of Aarhus municipality (see Deliverable 5.1¹⁵ for Aarhus case study on co-financing/co-funding nature projects). The ambition under the Aarhus Municipality Climate Plan 2025-2030 is to increase nature areas to occupy close to one third of the municipality (32%) by 2045, increasing from 13% in 2022. This will be complemented by the future roll-out of 11 Water and Nature Parks. The Water and Nature Parks scheme is voluntary for landowners, and the compensation for converting from farming to forest/nature (they get 50% of the market price of the land if they convert arable land to nature/forest, and they keep the land) is substantial but not necessarily sufficient to recover the loss of revenue from discontinued agricultural production.

For this to happen, it is vital that Aarhus Municipality identifies feasible financing models for farmers who want to make the transition from farming to “nature-management” and conversion of land to nature and forest. Farmers are key stakeholders in the success and effectiveness of the full roll-out of the water and nature parks in Aarhus. Thus, the goal of Aarhus Municipality’s nature-based entrepreneurship strategy is to identify financing models for farmers to become nature managers, and communicate and educate farmers to make the leap towards more sustainable and nature-positive practices, such as plant-based farming, cultivating clean drinking water, enhancing biodiversity and sequestering CO₂.

¹⁵ Brophy, M., Fletcher, I., Dziubala, A., Bronikowska, M., Nørgaard Telling, L., Holm, M., Coelho, B., Mourits-Andersen, S., Chen, W., With Fagerli, C. & Rinde, E. (2026). Funding Mechanisms to realise NbS adopting alternative finance and business models. Invest4Nature Deliverable D5.1. Invest4Nature. Horizon Europe Grant No. 101061083. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20068961>

The challenges and barriers to engaging farmers to become nature stewards include:

Financial barriers

- Lack of stable financing models, that can take the loss of converting farmland to nature
- Uncertainty regarding income from nature-based solutions
- High initial investment costs
- Limited access to green finance
- Investor and bank expectations regarding returns per hectare

Organizational barriers

- Lack of coordination among stakeholders
- Limited knowledge of NbE models
- Lack of competencies and advisory services

Cultural barriers

- Farmer identity is centred on food production and as contributor to economic growth
- Traditional perceptions of nature and farming
- Cultural and economic intergenerational expectations
- Pressure to expand farms for succession
- Permanent land-use commitments

Regulatory barriers

- Complex legislation
- Dependence on EU agricultural schemes
- Lack of incentives
- Administrative burdens
- Nature development may limit future development opportunities for the farmer.

Aarhus Municipality aims to overcome these challenges through implementation of the NbE support strategy for Farmers to become Nature Stewards. The overall strategy objectives are as follows:

1. Support the establishment and scaling of farmers as nature stewards.
2. Contribute to municipal climate and nature goals.
3. Develop financing models enabling conversion of all or part of a farm from agricultural production to forest and nature management.
4. Create partnerships between public and private actors.

In order to overcome the barriers to engaging farmers to become nature stewards, Aarhus Municipality will put in place a number of mechanisms. First, they will ensure that external stakeholders, including farmers and landowners, Farmer Associations, Aarhus Water Planning Committee, Banks and Investors, and more, are invited into a partnership forum to guide and monitor the progress of the strategy. Second, they will identify and create financing models, such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), carbon and biodiversity credits and green investment funds, that will allow farmers to transition, either partially or fully, to the role of nature steward. Third, they will provide capacity building and communication through dissemination of good examples, workshops and demonstration sites, and training for farmers

and companies, including dissemination of climate action plans developed by Aarhus Municipality for 30 farmers.

2.2.4. TIROL

Tirol has many of the foundations required for a strong NbS and NbE ecosystem and at the same time there is great potential for creating visibility, coordination, and market conditions needed for NbS and NbEs to flourish. The work of Invest4Nature has shown that the Tirolean LL is uniquely positioned to contribute to the facilitation of this transition and become a connector within a resilient and nature-positive regional economy. The Tirolean LL/Klimabundnis Tirol is not a municipality, and thus, is different from the other LLs in Invest4Nature. It is, however, a network of municipalities, educational institutions, and companies dedicated to making an effort to address climate change. The organisation, which does not implement NbS, can play an additional or complementary role to local governments.

In general, Tirol has a long tradition of implementing NbS, as natural hazards pose significant risks to socio-economic activities in mountainous regions. Measures such as protection forests, flood management, and ecosystem-based risk reduction have been part of regional practices for decades. However, analyses of the Alpine region in general, as well as the assessment conducted as part of this strategy, show that the concepts of NbS and NbE remain largely unknown. This confirms a broader trend in the Alps whereby NbS measures are implemented in practice but are rarely recognized or communicated using the NbS and NbE terminology.

In Tirol, with its abundance of natural landscapes, protected areas, and nature parks, the economic potential of NbS and Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) may therefore currently be underestimated. One reason for this may be the absence of a clear overview of the sector and its contributions, as well as the lack of a strong network of advocates for NbS and NbEs. Many related activities remain niche initiatives or are not yet widely recognized as NbS or NbEs.

NbS are implemented across the region, but their application is often fragmented, and a coherent framework is not yet in place. Although interest in the implementation of NbS appears to be increasing, the limited visibility of NbS and best-practice examples presents a barrier to scaling up successful approaches and increasing awareness of their benefits. The lack of awareness can also be a challenge when it comes to institutional and political support for NbS, especially in economically difficult times when the benefits and best practices are not visible or well known. This, in turn, can reduce demand for NbS and NbEs and the products and services they provide.

Within the Tirolean LL's network, this challenge was exemplified during the strategy development process. As pointed out, companies that may be willing to invest in NbS often lack knowledge about the available options, the benefits these solutions can provide, and the NbEs or service providers they can turn to for support. This shows how the lack of awareness and access to relevant networks can represent a significant barrier to the wider uptake and implementation of NbS in the region.

The Tirolean LL is already involved in a range of activities that can be classified as NbS and has sporadic, project-dependent contact with NbEs. Although NbS currently represent only a

small part of the overall organisational portfolio, these activities cover a variety of areas within the different network groups:

- Municipalities, public authorities, and networks engage with green infrastructure, climate adaptation, and biodiversity projects, which are supported through advisory services, workshops, training programmes, and excursions.
- Within the business network, NbS are primarily addressed in the context of climate adaptation and urban greening through consulting and awareness-raising activities.
- In the education network, activities focus on environmental and climate adaptation awareness, particularly through workshops on topics such as ecological restoration and protection forests. The level of knowledge among students is generally good, although these activities are not identified as NbS. The actual implementation of NbS is less common and is primarily related to environmental education.
- The regional and circular economy network works directly with NbS and NbEs. Regional activities are closely linked to natural hazard management, regenerative agriculture, sustainable soil management, renaturation of alpine rivers, reforestation of climate-fit forests, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable land management. Existing activities are, however, fragmented and rarely connected through a common NbS or NbE framework.

Despite the potential of NbS, all target groups of the Tirolean LL seem to face barriers that limit the wider uptake of NbS and NbEs - a tendency which is seen in general. Municipalities, public authorities, and networks are challenged by budget constraints, political priorities, and a lack of awareness concerning NbEs, as well as a lack of evidence and best-practice examples demonstrating the success or economic value of nature and ecosystem services. As a result, the benefits of NbS are perceived as being underestimated in planning and investment processes or not considered at all.

Businesses face similar challenges. Awareness of NbS opportunities and NbEs remains limited, and many companies lack awareness about available measures, potential benefits, and suitable implementation pathways. Financial constraints, a changing policy climate, and a lack of accessible good-practice examples or NbE networks further reduce engagement.

Educational institutions encounter different but related challenges. Although students are often highly interested in environmental issues, they generally have limited influence on decision-making processes. Schools themselves frequently face financial limitations, contact with NbEs and awareness to implement NbS.

The regional and circular economy network faces challenges related to visibility, networking, financing, and scaling their activities. Many organisations operate within niche sectors and remain relatively unknown outside their immediate networks. Common barriers include difficulties in accessing finance, limited internal resources, challenges in measuring impact, a lack of investor alignment, and insufficient support structures. Furthermore, there is currently no comprehensive overview of NbEs in Tirol, making it difficult to build synergies and strengthen collaboration across sectors.

Overall, limited awareness of NbS, restricted financial resources, and the absence of a strong NbE network are common challenges across all target groups. Consequently, raising

awareness and building a network of NbE advocates has been identified as an important way forward to strengthen the role of NbS and NbEs within the strategy.

The strategy concept addresses these challenges through recommended strategic objectives. The strategy is structured around the four strategic pillars that reflect the KBT target groups, and recommends concrete action points that can support a NbE network in the region.

Strategic Objective 1: Build Awareness and Visibility

- Strive to develop a Tirol-wide NbS platform based on existing projects.
- Build a regional database of good practices and Nature-based Enterprises.
- Implement awareness campaigns and training activities.
- Organise stakeholder roundtables and collaborative projects.

Strategic Objective 2: Mainstream NbS and Strengthen Networks

- Conduct stakeholder mapping and identify existing and emerging opportunities.
- Integrate NbS into advisory services and educational programmes and explicitly frame them as NbS activities.
- Build strong networks based on existing contacts and partnerships.

Strategic Objective 3: Demonstrate Impact and Foster Learning

- Showcase and support pilot projects and Living Labs within the KBT network representing different target groups.
- Strengthen collaboration with research partners to improve impact measurement.
- Implement awareness campaigns and training activities.
- Develop guidance documents.
- Promote knowledge exchange among stakeholders and KBT Networks.

2.2.5. NORWAY

Both regions in the Norwegian Living Lab, Northern Norway and the Oslofjord, have long traditions in blue forest management and coastal ecosystem restoration. Coastal nature-based solution (NbS) initiatives, such as kelp forest restoration and integrated planning for the Oslofjord, have attracted attention at both regional and national levels. To support local municipalities and different types of stakeholders, a national kelp forest restoration plan led by the relevant ministries is currently under development.

“Bringing life back to the Oslofjord” has been one of the major focus areas of the Integrated Oslofjord Plan (IPO 2021). Coastal ecosystem restoration, including blue forest restoration, has also been included in the government’s draft of the new Oslofjord measure plan (IPO 2026). In addition, new guidance on blue forest ecosystem restoration has been developed for local actors in the Oslofjord (Kvile et al., 2026). A total fishing ban has been implemented both

in marine protected areas in the Outer Oslofjord and across the Inner Oslofjord. These NbS restoration measures not only contribute to raising local awareness of coastal ecosystem challenges and the value of NbS, but also enhance long-term ecosystem resilience and social resilience as co-benefits.

Although Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) are a relatively new concept in Norway, bio-based industries have long been an important tradition and pillar of the Norwegian economy. Private-sector actors of different sizes have actively contributed to bio-based industries such as fisheries, aquaculture and forestry. Recently, however, more SMEs have shown interest in investing in ecosystem restoration and regenerative business models. This growing interest is driven by increasing political attention to the impacts of land and sea area use on ecosystems, as well as the potential for future profit through emerging carbon, nature and biodiversity credit markets.

At the same time, NbS are increasingly being considered as a suitable approach for ecological compensation when coastal habitats, such as blue forests, are disturbed or lost due to coastal construction, including harbour development and real estate projects (Kvile et al., 2026).

Small-scale coastal blue forest restoration and NbS projects have been implemented by private SMEs in both Northern Norway and the Oslofjord. According to NIVA's definition, these SMEs can be considered NbEs. Their activities are mainly financed through public funding, public-private partnerships (PPPs) and impact investments, while the involvement of traditional financial institutions and venture capital remains limited.

- **Public-private partnerships:** Several SMEs in Northern Norway have focused on developing technologies for sea urchin harvesting for commercial urchin products, where kelp forest restoration is either a direct benefit or an important co-benefit. These companies often present kelp forest recovery as part of their business objectives, with the aim of collaborating with public authorities and research-funded projects. Eco-tourism combined with sea urchin harvesting for kelp recovery has also been tested by private tourism companies, for example through the EU A-AAGORA project, Research Council of Norway projects and funding from the Norwegian Environment Agency.
- **Impact investments:** As identified in the NbS Business Model Canvas workshop (see Deliverable 5.1¹⁶), many coastal ecosystem restoration NbS projects are funded through impact investments established by commercial bank affiliates or philanthropic actors. Examples include “underwater garden” initiatives linked to coastal sauna facilities and recreational coastal properties.
- **Emerging private finance:** Early trials of carbon credit initiatives have also received private financing, for example from energy companies. This indicates growing private-sector interest in blue forest restoration as part of future carbon and nature-positive investment opportunities.

¹⁶ Brophy, M., Fletcher, I., Dziubala, A., Bronikowska, M., Nørgaard Telling, L., Holm, M., Coelho, B., Mourits-Andersen, S., Chen, W., With Fagerli, C. & Rinde, E. (2026). Funding Mechanisms to realise NbS adopting alternative finance and business models. Invest4Nature Deliverable D5.1. Invest4Nature. Horizon Europe Grant No. 101061083. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20068961>

Although NbEs have focused on ecosystem restoration, few of them are aware of the climate and social resilience co-benefits of their activities, and have yet to incorporate the resilience value in their business model. Focusing on the resilience co-benefits will help to raise the awareness of long-term benefits NbEs could generate.

To achieve this, Norway's NbE strategy could involve the following actions:

- Support existing NbEs in moving from project-based financing to more stable and scalable business models. This means clearer value propositions around ecosystem restoration, long-term resilience benefits, job creation and tourism, restoration services and relevant product development.
- Create standards to ensure that ecological compensation-based NbE models are ecologically credible, socially legitimate and aligned with national restoration priorities.
- Develop spatial indicators for climate, biodiversity and social resilience co-benefits that can be used in NbE business plans and investment cases.
- Mobilise blended finance by combining public funding, research funding, impact investment, philanthropic capital and private-sector finance.
- Support SMEs in communicating restoration benefits to investors, municipalities and local communities.

2.3. PROCESS AND STATUS OF SUPPORT STRATEGIES

2.3.1. POZNAN

The development of the Nature-based Enterprise Strategy in Poznań follows a participatory and place-based approach, using the Główna neighbourhood as a pilot area within the Invest4Nature project. The strategy is currently at the planning stage, and initial implementation-oriented activities will be underway through the pilot in the Główna neighbourhood (by the end of this year). The process has so far focused on participatory analysis, stakeholder engagement and the identification of priorities for future nature-based investments and cooperation with Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs). Please find the Poznan NbE Entrepreneurship strategy in Appendix 1.

The first stage, implemented in May 2026, consisted of a nature exploration walk and participatory workshops with around 30 stakeholders, including residents, NGOs, academia, municipal departments and units, environmental experts, local businesses, project partners, and representatives of the Główna Estate Council. The objective was to identify local environmental challenges, opportunities for nature-based solutions (NbS), and potential areas for cross-sectoral cooperation. Key insights included the importance of protecting Główna's valuable natural areas, strengthening the ecological role of the River Główna, developing a local masterplan, implementing small-scale nature-based solutions (NbS), and supporting environmental education and long-term cross-sectoral cooperation.

Based on the outcomes of the workshops, a portfolio of potential NbS interventions and community initiatives has been developed. In the next phase, a selection of the most feasible and impactful ideas will be made together with stakeholders. These concepts will then be

further elaborated, including their scope, implementation requirements, budgets, governance arrangements, and resource needs.



Figure 6 Field walk along Główna Street with residents, business owners, experts and municipal representatives to assess local conditions and identify social needs, opportunities and challenges for nature-based solutions and blue-green infrastructure. Source: City of Poznań.

The subsequent stage will focus on engaging businesses and Nature-based Enterprises that can contribute to the implementation of selected actions. Depending on their capacities and interests, companies may provide financial support, technical expertise, products and services, or participate through employee volunteering and community engagement activities. This process will serve as a practical testbed for developing a long-term model of cooperation between the public sector, local communities, and private stakeholders around nature-based investments.



Figure 7 On-site workshops for the pilot project in the Główna neighbourhood, focused on strengthening blue-green infrastructure through nature-based solutions and developing a model for cross-sectoral cooperation. Source: City of Poznań.

Key partners involved in the process include the City of Poznań, the Poznań Science and Technology Park (PPNT), municipal units, NGOs, academic institutions, local businesses, and community representatives.



Figure 8 Brainstorm session during workshop in PPNT. Source: City of Poznań

Indicators of success will include the number and diversity of stakeholders engaged, the number of NbS concepts co-developed and refined, the establishment of partnerships with businesses and NbEs, resources mobilised for implementation, and the successful delivery of pilot nature-based interventions in the Główna neighbourhood. In the longer term, the process aims to create a replicable model for cross-sectoral cooperation supporting nature-based solutions and biodiversity enhancement in Poznań.

To support the implementation of the actions identified through the Poznań Living Lab process, the City of Poznań has recently submitted an application under the European URBACT programme, with the Główna neighbourhood included as a pilot area. The application builds on the work already carried out within the Invest4Nature project and the Poznań Living Lab process, where local needs and potential nature-based interventions have been identified, creating a basis for the future involvement of businesses and Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs).

If approved, the URBACT project will provide additional know-how, tools, and support for developing and implementing selected actions in the Główna neighbourhood. It will also create opportunities to involve businesses and NbEs in concrete nature-based activities and interventions. By working together on selected actions in the Główna neighbourhood, the project will provide practical experience on how businesses and NbEs can contribute to the implementation of nature-based solutions and support the further development of the Nature-based Enterprise Strategy. Subject to approval, activities under the URBACT project would start in Autumn 2026.

2.3.2. CASCAIS

The development of Cascais' Nature-based Enterprise (NbE) Support Strategy has followed a gradual and exploratory approach, reflecting the relatively low level of awareness and understanding of Nature-based Enterprises among local stakeholders. While Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are increasingly recognised within municipal policies and projects, the economic actors responsible for designing, implementing, maintaining and monitoring these solutions are not yet widely identified or recognised as part of a distinct Nature-based Enterprise ecosystem.

The strategy development process was initiated in the early phase of the Invest4Nature project, building on initial discussions held during the second-day HNUA workshop in Cascais and further developed through a combination of desk-based analysis, stakeholder meetings, workshops, and email exchanges with relevant municipal services and local stakeholders. The analysis indicated that, despite Cascais' significant experience in the implementation of Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem restoration initiatives, awareness of the NbE concept among municipal departments, decision-makers and external stakeholders remains limited. In addition, many organisations and businesses already delivering NbS-related services do not identify themselves as Nature-based Enterprises, which limits the visibility and maturity of the local NbE ecosystem.



Figure 9 Second day of HNUA workshop with Cascais team focused on nature-based entrepreneurship. Source: Horizon Nua

Given this context, the initial focus of the support strategy has been on awareness raising and capacity building. Activities carried out within the Invest4Nature project have sought to introduce the NbE concept, demonstrate its relevance for achieving environmental and climate objectives, and highlight the potential economic opportunities associated with the growing demand for Nature-based Solutions. These activities have also contributed to fostering internal discussions within the municipality regarding the role of NbEs in supporting local environmental priorities.

In parallel, efforts have been undertaken during the implementation of the Invest4Nature project to identify and engage organisations, businesses and other actors involved in Nature-based Solutions across the municipality. This has been carried out through stakeholder mapping activities and direct engagement with relevant municipal services and external stakeholders. This mapping exercise has helped to improve understanding of the existing ecosystem and has highlighted both the diversity of relevant actors and the need for stronger connections between them.

At present, the NbE Support Strategy remains at an early implementation stage (please see Appendix 2). While awareness of the concept has increased among key stakeholders involved in the project, further work is required to consolidate a shared understanding of Nature-based Enterprises, strengthen stakeholder engagement and promote the recognition of NbEs within local governance and economic development processes.

The next phase of implementation will focus on expanding outreach activities, deepening engagement with potential NbEs, promoting Invest4Nature tools and financing opportunities, and facilitating dialogue between municipal services, businesses and other stakeholders. These actions are expected to contribute to the gradual development of a more visible, connected and resilient Nature-based Enterprise ecosystem in Cascais, capable of supporting the municipality's long-term environmental, climate adaptation and biodiversity objectives.

Overall, the strategy has successfully initiated the conversation around Nature-based Enterprises in Cascais and established the foundations for future actions, while recognising that the development of a mature NbE ecosystem will require continued engagement, capacity building and institutional support beyond the lifetime of the project.

2.3.3. AARHUS

Aarhus Municipality held an internal workshop during April 2026 that focused on the Nature-based Entrepreneurship strategy for farmers as nature stewards. The participants were employees from the departments “Circular Resources”, “Business”, and “Nature & Environment”. Following the workshop, the results and insights from the participants were used as a basis for the strategy document: *“The Farmer as Nature Steward: A support strategy for Nature-based Enterprises”*. The strategy can be found in Appendix 3. The strategy is still in the planning phase and financing of the strategy is still to be clarified. Funding for the strategy may be secured through an EU-LIFE application in Autumn 2026. If the application is successful, the strategy will be executed during the timeframe of the EU-LIFE project. The application will focus on the realisation of the Water- and Nature-parks and in this the farmer plays a key role. The strategy will be organizationally anchored in the Climate Department.

The implementation of the strategy should be carried out in phases and be based on political support, cross-sectoral collaboration, and the development of concrete demonstration projects. The work will be organized as a process focused on establishing a solid foundation for the farmer as a nature steward and ensuring effective implementation in practice.



Figure 10 Montage of photos from the Aarhus internal workshop on their Nature-based Entrepreneurship strategy

Phase 1 – Organization and political anchoring

The first phase focuses on establishing the organizational structure and securing political ownership.

Key actions include:

- Establishment of a cross-departmental project organization
- Decisions regarding project management and governance
- Securing political support
- Identification of key stakeholders and partners

It is recommended that an internal project group be established with representatives from relevant departments, including Nature, Circular Resources, Business Development, and, where relevant, other departments.

Phase 2 – Mapping, analysis and alliance building

This phase aims to establish the necessary knowledge base and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders.

Key actions include:

- Establishment of a project group involving external stakeholders
- Mapping of existing initiatives and opportunities
- Identification of barriers to implementation
- Collection of knowledge on funding sources and financing models
- Analysis of international experience and best practices
- Formation of alliances with banks, investors, utility companies, and knowledge institutions
- Dialogue with farmers and industry organizations

At the same time, efforts should be made to identify the most significant barriers, including:

- Regulatory barriers at both EU and national levels
- Farmers' economic and operational challenges
- Barriers related to food production and land use
- Limited access to financing and risk capital

Phase 3 – Pilot projects and Living Labs

The strategy should be translated into practice through the establishment of pilot projects and demonstration sites.

Key actions include:

- Development of concrete pilot projects with farmers
- Testing of financing models
- Development of partnerships between public and private stakeholders

The pilot projects should demonstrate the opportunities available and serve as platforms for learning and knowledge generation.

Phase 4 – Capacity building and communication

A key part of implementation is strengthening competencies and creating a broad understanding that nature stewardship can be a viable business model and “production line” for farmers, either fully or partially.

Key actions include:

- Dissemination of knowledge to farmers and businesses
- Training programmes and workshops
- Exchange of experiences among stakeholders
- Communication initiatives targeted at citizens, businesses, and decision-makers
- Promotion of successful case studies

Communication efforts should support both political backing and local acceptance.

Phase 5 – Scaling and long-term integration

Based on the experiences gained from pilot projects and partnerships, the strategy should be scaled up.

This includes:

- Integration into municipal plans and strategies
- Expansion to larger geographical areas
- Development of long-term financing models
- Continued development of partnerships and investment models
- Integration into the municipality’s climate and nature initiatives

The objective is to establish a permanent framework for the development and support of the farmer as a nature steward.

Success criteria

The strategy will be evaluated based on:

- The number of established farmers who choose to become nature stewards, either fully or partially
- The area converted to nature-based solutions
- The amount of CO₂ stored and/or reduced
- The number of businesses and farmers involved
- The level of investment and external funding attracted

2.3.4. TIROL

Since Klimabundnis Tirol has until recently mostly been active on climate change measures and services, climate adaptation services are being developed more intensively in recent years, but the terms NbS and NbE are therefore relatively new in the region and the Tirolean LL. The Invest4Nature BMC Train-the-Trainer Workshop (covering topics including nature-based entrepreneurship), which took place on 23–24 June 2025, kick-started the process of working more intensively with the topic across the different target networks.



Figure 11 Isobel Fletcher (Horizon Nua) delivering the Invest4Nature BMC Train-the-Trainer workshop in Tirol, June 2025. Source: Horizon Nua.

The workshop included an interdisciplinary team and a representative from one of the Invest4Nature contributing partners, the Tirolean Regional Government Forest Division (involved in Climate-Smart Mountain Forest Tirol - CSMFT), and focused on gaining practical experience in developing and delivering an NbS Business Model Canvas (BMC) (Deliverable D5.1). In doing so the workshop also served a dual purpose by kick-starting the Tirolean LL's strategic concept process and facilitating a better understanding of NbS and NbEs across the different member networks i.e. municipalities, educational institutions, and companies.

The workshop took place before the Invest4Nature NbE Strategy kick-off in January 2026 and before the survey was conducted; however, it set the scene for the organisation's Invest4Nature work on NbS and NbEs across its member networks. In addition, the train-the-trainer guidelines developed by HNUA, as part of Invest4Nature, were presented at an online meeting in March 2026. At the meeting the participants of the NbS BMC workshop were presented with the material and had time to ask questions.

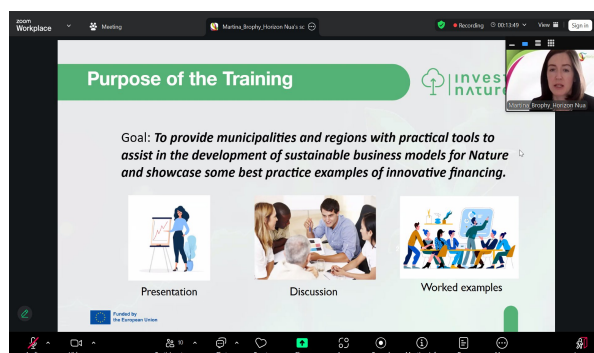


Figure 12 Martina Brophy (Horizon Nua) presenting at the KBT Train-the-Trainer online meeting. Source: Horizon Nua

The Tirolean LL survey took place in Spring 2026 with consultants representing the different networks. Due to KBT's role as an intermediary in the region, advocating for and supporting the wider uptake of NbS projects in Tirol rather than implementing NbS itself, the Invest4Nature NbE Strategy template had to be adjusted for the organisation. KBT took and adapted the NbE strategy template, on the guidance of HNUA, to better reflect the nature of KBT's consultancy experience on NbS and NbEs through its work with different target networks (i.e. educational institutes, municipalities). The basis of the strategy recommendations is, therefore, derived from the survey conducted in Spring 2026 together with the consultants' experience of working with their target networks.

This Invest4Nature NbS & NbE strategy can therefore be seen as a first step towards strengthening NbS and NbEs in Tirol through the different services the organisation offers its members.

Why a first step? Awareness of NbS is moderate across the organisation's target groups, while awareness of NbEs remains relatively low. When assigning a "low level of awareness", it is important to keep in mind that some NbS and NbEs are well known in the region, such as protective forests and *Natur im Garten*; however, they are not seen as NbS or NbEs. Thus, it is quite possible that the network is already working with NbS and NbEs. However, because these activities are not explicitly recognised or framed as such, they are often not identified as being relevant when working with the consultants. Instead, they are primarily perceived as biodiversity projects, which is, of course, entirely valid. However, this means that these measures are not necessarily taken into account when working with the KBT consultants. The present strategy is therefore a stocktaking exercise and review of the challenges, enablers, and possible measures for supporting the emergence and growth of regional NbEs, representing a first step in a future co-developed process.

2.3.5. NORWAY

The concept of Nature-based Enterprises is still relatively new although the bio-based industry which focuses on natural resource exploitation has a long history in Norway. In recent years more and more private actors have become interested in the regeneration nature-based business. We regard it very positively that the demand and initiatives for nature-based solutions such as coastal blue forest and ecosystem restoration come from the private sectors although most of them are still small-scale and are in the experimental stage. For example, several NGOs and private SMEs are actively removing sea urchins as a nature-based solution to facilitate kelp forest recovery or for the urchin products. They are actively restoring kelp forests and creating income through the sale of marine ingredients (i.e. urchins) (D5.1).

Development of the nature-based enterprise strategy for blue forest and coastal ecosystem restoration in our LL, both Northern Norway and the Oslofjord, rely on a participatory approach with local stakeholders.

Northern Norway

Co-create with stakeholders: In Northern Norway, in collaboration with several EU projects, Invest4Nature co-convened a large-scale workshop with about 100 stakeholders who are interested in kelp forest restoration in Northern Norway in November 2024, including national and local authorities, NGOs, research institutes, industries such as fisherman, urchin harvesters, tourist companies, local communities including schools who are engaging in urchin harvesting and kelp recovery education. The discussions are intended to help inform the government's national restoration plan by gathering stakeholder perspectives on:

- A shared vision and measurable restoration targets, practical and scalable restoration measures, governance and collaboration across sectors and levels of government, Scientific advice and knowledge integration;
- Sustainable financing mechanisms needed to support long term financing for restoration activities;
- Regulatory and permitting requirements and;
- Adaptive management based on monitoring, evaluation, and continuous learning.



Figure 13 Conference photo, source Norwegian Blue Forests Network, 2024

Directly involved in making the national plan: Led by the Ministry of Climate and Environment and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) is now working with other relevant research institutes and stakeholders to develop a national kelp ecosystem restoration plan for Norwegian LL.

Be part of new financing model together with NbEs: One of our NbE strategies is to support NbEs by actively participating in forest restoration projects that incorporate Nature-Based Ecosystem Solutions (NBES) and are financed through innovative funding mechanisms, including carbon credits, public-private partnerships (e.g. research grants and in-kind

contributions of technology or other resources from private partners), and grants from philanthropic foundations and private philanthropists.

The Oslofjord

Integrated coastal planning for the Oslofjord has been in place since 2021, and a revised version was released for public consultation in June 2026. The LL NbE strategy mainly focuses on assessing the current financing landscape and exploring feasible financing models and mechanisms for coastal ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions. This will support the overarching goal of the integrated coastal plan for the Oslofjord: to restore ecological health and “bring the Oslofjord back to life.”

In autumn 2024, a survey was distributed to relevant stakeholders in the Oslofjord region to map preferences for business models and financing mechanisms for coastal ecosystem restoration. Around 30 responses were collected, of which approximately 20% came from private businesses. The survey provides an overview of financing preferences and perceived barriers related to coastal ecosystem restoration in Norway (Chen et al., ongoing manuscript).

In October 2025, on behalf of Invest4Nature, NIVA organised a group work session during the “Knowledge Day on Green and Blue Solutions in Practice”, hosted by Råde Municipality. The session focused on identifying feasible mechanisms and business models for financing ecosystem restoration activities in the Oslofjord, with the aim of supporting climate adaptation in the Oslofjord area. Participants included municipal representatives from across Østfold County.

The discussion focused on how municipalities could support private sector actors and NbEs. Municipalities were generally positive towards supporting private sector and NbE engagement in ecosystem restoration and other relevant activities that could function as climate adaptation measures. Rather than providing direct funding, municipalities mainly saw themselves as playing a coordinating role, bringing together relevant actors to facilitate ecosystem restoration activities and other blue-green nature-based solutions.



Figure 14 Group work on mapping potential feasible mechanisms and business models for financing blue and green infrastructures to support climate adaptation in the Oslofjord area. Event: “Knowledge day on Green blue solutions in Practice” Råde municipality, Østfold County Council, October 2025. (Photo: Wenting Chen NIVA)

In March 2026, a dedicated workshop was organised by NIVA with private actors and NGOs engaged in coastal ecosystem restoration activities in the Oslofjord LL. Participants included harbour owners, recreational housing owners, sauna associations, diving associations and fishers. The workshop focused on mapping existing business models for ecosystem restoration measures in the Oslofjord, as well as participants' preferences and the perceived drawbacks of current models.

The discussion showed that almost all current funding comes either from public sources or from impact-investment grants provided through branches or foundations established by commercial banks. Business models based on private investment, such as credit-based systems for eutrophication reduction, carbon sequestration or other ecosystem services, were identified as desirable by several private actors, although such mechanisms are not yet well established.



Figure 15 Workshop to map the business models to support coastal ecosystem restoration in Oslofjord with NGOs and private sectors, March 2026 Oslo. (Photo: Wenting Chen NIVA)

Future strategies to support NbE and financing needs.

The timing is good as both the national kelp restoration plan and the new Oslofjord Action Plan for 2026-2030 is under way. We propose the following steps to further support coastal ecosystem restoration NbE in the near future in the Norwegian LL.

- Link NbE activities directly to the plans.
- Develop investment ready restoration measures.
- Move from mapping business models to test pilot models. And use public grants to de-risk private participation.
- Strengthen links between restoration and local value creation.
- Prepare a roadmap for future financing models.

2.4. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results of the preceding sections 2.2 and 2.3 with regards to Living Labs' regional nature-based entrepreneurship strategies. As described in Section 1.2, we followed a three-pronged approach to developing said strategies: Step 1 – Raising Awareness & Strategic Alignment; Step 2 – Taking Stock & Building Alliances; and Step 3 – Plan and Deliver a Customized NbE (Pilot) Support Programme. It was found that, overall, despite having a low to moderate awareness of Nature-based Enterprises, the five Living Labs believed it important to support the emergence and growth of Nature-based Enterprises and viewed them as important contributors to NbS within their regions.

All five Living Labs, with a low to moderate awareness of Nature-based Enterprises, proceeded from *Step 1 - Raising Awareness & Strategic Alignment*. It is important to acknowledge, as part of this step, that some Living Labs had an established tradition or track record of working with private suppliers of NbS or Nature-based Enterprises. Such entities were represented, for instance, in the array of suppliers or contractors, such as landscape gardeners and architects, that worked with municipalities to plan, implement and monitor NbS initiatives in the region (i.e. Cascais and Poznan). Other entities formed part of the local economy's transition to greener, more regenerative business models and practices, such as aquaculture businesses, farmers and the sponsorship of climate-fit mountain forest (i.e. Norway, Aarhus and Tirol). Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the “low level awareness” of the NbE term, or its limited adoption by local enterprises, did not necessarily equate to a low prevalence or unsupportive environment for Nature-based Enterprises. It is recognised that the NbE market is mostly emerging and fragmented across the Living Labs.

There were significant barriers to the uptake of regional nature-based entrepreneurship strategies across the Living Labs. Some of these barriers were external to any organisation, for instance, the general low-level awareness of NbEs within the region, and the limited investment, funding and scaling prospects of Nature-based Enterprises due to their size and scaling potential (i.e. small, local, place-based). There were, however, intra-organisational factors that impeded the emergence and growth of Nature-based Enterprises. For instance, municipalities encountered budgetary constraints and public procurement barriers that precluded the services of Nature-based Enterprises. Limited awareness of NbS benefits among clients, investors and some decision-makers was also a major barrier. In Aarhus, where the aim is to support farmers to transition to more regenerative business models (i.e. transitioning to nature stewards), the sets of challenges are unique to that particular sector i.e. dependence on EU agricultural schemes, lack of stable financing models for converting farmland to nature.

Despite these challenges, there were also distinct enablers that allowed the uptake of nature-based entrepreneurship strategies across the Living Labs. Some of these enablers were external to any organisation, for instance, growing public demand or political appetite for NbS which in turn drives demand for NbE services, while other enablers were specific to an organisation, such as strong existing partnerships with NbEs, and knowledge sharing activities that promote the awareness of NbS and NbEs. For instance, Klimabuendnis Tirol (KBT) has an established network of businesses, municipalities, educational institutes and circular

economy actors, thus their capacity to shape practice and raise awareness of NbS and NbEs in the Tirolean region has great potential.

Strong political commitment to climate/environmental goals and the green transition were also deemed vital to a supportive regional environment for Nature-based Enterprises. For municipalities, in particular, where departments have specific remits and responsibilities (i.e. environment/climate enterprise), collaboration between functions can be fragmented and complex. It is vitally important to bust silos and achieve cross-departmental cooperation as well as partnerships with the external business support ecosystem (i.e. chambers of commerce, accelerators). Of the Living Labs, Aarhus and Poznan recognised their potential role in “connecting” or “anchoring” efforts between key stakeholders, but equally acknowledged that an appropriate level of funding, planning and endorsement is needed to fulfil this role. KBT, whilst not a municipality, recognised its role as a connector and knowledge hub for regional stakeholders committed to building a climate resilient and regenerative region.

Regarding the three steps of the NbE support programme, all five Living Labs have remained in Step 1 or Step 2. While there may be ambitions to plan and deliver a customised NbE support programme in the future, none were in a position to plan or deliver such a programme during the timeframe of Task 5.3. Living Labs are not necessarily following the 3-step process in a linear fashion, but are rather identifying bottom-up opportunities for NbE support, which is consistent with findings from the NbE support strategy pilot in Connecting Nature. We recognise that the process of supporting nature-based entrepreneurship is iterative and that Step 1 (Awareness raising) is continuously needed to ensure NbS is reflected in new political cycles and priorities, whilst Steps 2 & 3 come later once support for NbS is secured and stable. Examples of how this process unfolded for the different Living Labs of Invest4Nature should be used to inform future roll-outs of the Nature-based Entrepreneurship strategies.

Step 1 – Raising Awareness & Strategic Alignment

All Living Labs recognised the need to raise awareness of NbS, and the role of NbEs in delivering such value. It was acknowledged that without such recognition the market growth and demand for NbEs, and their products/services, would be limited. A key feature of Poznan’s strategy was capacity building and targeted awareness raising for SMEs and NbEs through the creation of the Invest Handbook (in design as of July 2026), which offers practical guidance for private-public sector cooperation. For Cascais, awareness raising of NbS/the role of NbEs among decision makers and political/municipality figure heads was considered to be a high priority in their strategy. For Aarhus, awareness raising was to take the form of capacity building and communication to enhance understanding among farmers of nature stewardship as a viable business model. There were light-touch references to strategic alignment with existing policies, and the need for any NbE strategy to be integrated with existing policies and strategies to allow for long-term scaling. For most of the Living Labs, the focus of the strategy was on short-to-medium term action-oriented wins.

Step 2 – Taking Stock & Building Alliances

Mapping out existing NbEs and cross-checking them with regional needs is recognised as a key element of developing a nature-based entrepreneurship strategy. Many Living Labs struggled to apply the concept of NbE to their local businesses, and did not have the scope or resources to carry out a full mapping exercise of NbEs and how they can serve municipal

needs. Mapping work, however, is already underway in Poznan, with the Główna neighbourhood pilot, where potential NbS initiatives have been identified. Subsequent efforts are required to engage businesses and Nature-based Enterprises that can contribute to the implementation of selected actions. Aarhus, as part of their NbE strategy, have already identified some 30 farmers and will develop for each a specific climate action plan. In Norway, though there are many NbEs contributing to urchin harvesting and kelp forest restoration, there is a need to develop more explicit ties between these NbE activities and the national kelp restoration plan and the new Oslofjord Action Plan for 2026-2030. Building internal and external alliances is another vital element of any successful nature-based entrepreneurship plan. While some Living Labs are already proactive in this space – building cross-departmental cooperation as well as engaging external stakeholders – all Living Labs will be tasked with developing their alliances across a broader coalition of expertise (e.g. business support services, financing/investment sectors) before NbE strategies could be fully realised.

Step 3 – Plan and Deliver a Customized NbE (Pilot) Support Programme

Developing and delivering a full scale NbE support programme is the most highly evolved, sophisticated stage of NbE support. Usually, the overall goals of the NbE support strategy are broken down into support programmes with specific goals (i.e. enterprise accelerator programme, skills development programme). None of the Living Labs were in a position to fulfill Step 3 in the timespan of the Invest4Nature project, however some have expressed future ambitions. For instance, Poznan intends to work with the local enterprise support ecosystem to design targeted supports for NbEs, which could emerge as a dedicated NbE support programme. Phase 4 of the Aarhus NbE strategy revolves around Capacity building and communication where dedicated training programmes and workshops will be devised and delivered for farmers to convert to nature stewards. It is recommended that any support programme be evaluated in line with the key criteria of success of the overall NbE strategy. For Aarhus, any support programme should contribute to the number of established farmers who choose to become nature stewards, either fully or partially. For Poznan, any support programme should contribute to the number of established partnerships with NbEs to deliver on nature-based interventions in the Główna neighbourhood.

The following table provides a summary breakdown of the key elements of each Living Lab's nature-based entrepreneurship strategy.

Table 1 Summary of NbE Support Strategies in I4N Living Labs

Living Lab	Awareness		Goal of NbE Strategy	Type of NbE	Key Actions Identified	Partners (from departments, organisations, public bodies, etc.)	Status (concept, planning, execution)
	NbS	NbE					
Poznan	High-Medium	Low ¹⁷	The Poznań NbE Action Plan sets out goals to integrate NbS into urban planning, promote a nature-based economy, and strengthen participatory governance. It highlights the need for mixed financing models and deeper cooperation between the public and private sectors to sustain NbS.	NbS for public spaces, water management, landscape architecture and gardening services. NbEs are mainly represented by landscape architects, ecological and environmental consultancies, water management and green infrastructure providers, gardening and horticultural companies, and manufacturers of nature-based products and infrastructure for public spaces.	- Internal capacity building to understand the value of NbS and the role of NbEs in delivery, maintenance, and innovation. - Targeted awareness raising for SMEs and NbEs (Invest handbook in design as of July 2026). - Market engagement with NbEs, designers, contractors, NGOs, and social enterprises i.e. identify and engage NbEs that can deliver NbS in the Główna neighbourhood (work underway since May 2026). - Institutional partnerships with the local enterprise agency and business-support organisations to design targeted support for NbEs.	Municipal units (in Poznań City Hall): The Project Coordination and Urban Regeneration Office (KPRM); The Department of Economic Activity and Agriculture; The Department of Climate and Environment; The Department of Municipal Economy; The Investor Relations Office. External: The Poznań Science and Technology Park (PPNT), NGOs, academic institutions, local businesses, and community representatives.	Primarily planning, with initial implementation-oriented activities underway, including NbE engagement and preparatory work for delivery in the Główna neighbourhood.

¹⁷ Poznań LL: Although awareness of Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) varies across municipal departments, some units have developed substantial knowledge of the concept, particularly through their participation in the NbE programme implemented within the Connecting Nature project.

Living Lab	Awareness		Goal of NbE Strategy	Type of NbE	Key Actions Identified	Partners (from departments, organisations, public bodies, etc.)	Status (concept, planning, execution)
	NbS	NbE					
Cascais	High-Medium	Low	The Cascais NbE Action Plan sets out goals to further consolidate a shared understanding of NbEs and their role in delivering NbS, aligning environmental, economic and financial perspectives. Following this, we can progress to subsequent stages of NbE support, positioning Cascais as a frontrunner in nature-positive entrepreneurship.	NbS for water management, ecosystem restoration, urban green infrastructure, environmental monitoring and nature-based tourism. NbEs in Cascais are primarily represented by actors in landscape architecture, water management and green infrastructure, horticulture, ecology, and nature-based tourism. This classification is indicative and based on the current understanding of the local NbE ecosystem developed within the Invest4Nature project.	- Awareness raising & capacity building sessions for political and technical decision-makers. - Mapping and engagement of NbEs operating in Cascais and promotion of collaborative opportunities. - Promotion of Invest4Nature tools, pilot projects and blended finance opportunities.	Municipal departments across environment, innovation, economic development, strategic planning, spatial planning, biodiversity and ecosystem services. Águas de Cascais (municipal concessionaire); Quinta do Pisão.	Execution – The Cascais NbE Action Plan is being implemented. Awareness-raising and capacity-building sessions for political and technical decision-makers have been delivered, local Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) have been mapped and engaged, and Invest4Nature tools, pilot projects and blended finance opportunities have been promoted. These actions support the implementation of the strategy and strengthen the local ecosystem for nature-based entrepreneurship.

Living Lab	Awareness		Goal of NbE Strategy	Type of NbE	Key Actions Identified	Partners (from departments, organisations, public bodies, etc.)	Status (concept, planning, execution)
	NbS	NbE					
Aarhus	High	Medium	The Aarhus NbE Action Plan sets out goals to identify financing models for farmers to be nature managers, and communicate and educate farmers to make the leap to nature managers.	NbS for ecosystem restoration and water management - high focus on multifunctionality. NbEs in Aarhus, for the purposes of this specific strategy, are agricultural farmers that are transitioning, or have already transitioned, to agroecology, sustainable or regenerative agricultural practices.	The strategy is divided in 5 action-phases: 1. Organization and political anchoring 2. Mapping, analysis and alliance-building 3. Pilot projects and living labs 4. Capacity building and communication 5. Scaling up and long-term integration	Internal project group with participants from following dpt.: "Circular Resources", "Business", Nature & Environment. Co-creation with the following stakeholders: Farmers and landowners interested in developing "The farmer as a nature steward" Farmers associations Aarhus Water Planning Committee Banks and investors Central Denmark EU Office Danish Agricultural Agency SEGES Innovation Farmers already transitioning to nature stewardship – both partly and full transition	Planning and clarification of financing of the strategy

¹⁹ Awareness of NbS among the mainstream population may be low but the operational reality tells a different story as many NbS initiatives are happening on the ground in Tirol.

Living Lab	Awareness		Goal of NbE Strategy	Type of NbE	Key Actions Identified	Partners (from departments, organisations, public bodies, etc.)	Status (concept, planning, execution)
	NbS	NbE					
Tyrol	Low ¹⁹	Low	The KBT NbE Strategy for Tyrol is a first step for strengthening NbS and the presence of NbEs in Tyrol by building awareness and visibility, mainstreaming NbS, demonstrating impact and fostering learning.	NbS for green infrastructure, climate adaptation and biodiversity, and in particular restoration of alpine rivers and reforestation. NbEs in Tyrol are primarily represented by actors in landscape architecture, urban greening, sustainable forestry and sustainable land management.	- Strive to develop a Tyrol-wide NbS and platform based on existing projects. - Build a regional database of good practices and Nature-based Enterprises. - Implement awareness campaigns and training activities. - Organise stakeholder roundtables and collaborative projects. - Conduct stakeholder mapping and identify existing and emerging opportunities. - Integrate NbS into advisory services and educational programmes and explicitly frame them as NbS activities. - Build strong networks based on existing contacts and partnerships. - Showcase and support pilot projects and living labs within the KBT network representing different target groups.	Municipalities and public authorities 'and Networks Businesses Education sector Regional and circular economy actors	Early draft, further consultation required

¹⁹ Awareness of NbS among the mainstream population may be low but the operational reality tells a different story as many NbS initiatives are happening on the ground in Tirol.

Living Lab	Awareness		Goal of NbE Strategy	Type of NbE	Key Actions Identified	Partners (from departments, organisations, public bodies, etc.)	Status (concept, planning, execution)
	NbS	NbE					
					- Strengthen collaboration with research partners to improve impact measurement. - Implement awareness campaigns and training activities. - Develop guidance documents. - Promote knowledge exchange among stakeholders and KBT Networks.		

Living Lab	Awareness		Goal of NbE Strategy	Type of NbE	Key Actions Identified	Partners (from departments, organisations, public bodies, etc.)	Status (concept, planning, execution)
	NbS	NbE					
Norway	High	Low	NbE strategies aim to strengthen private-sector engagement in NbS projects, enabling the scaling up of nature-positive activities and supporting the achievement of biodiversity targets in both the short and long term.	NbS for coastal ecosystem restoration. NbEs in Norwegian living labs are primarily represented by fisheries & aquaculture that have moved into ecosystem restoration and regenerative business models e.g., blue forest restoration.	- Co-create with stakeholders. - Directly participate in the making of kelp restoration and Oslofjord ecosystem restoration plan. - Experimenting new financing models together with NbE. - Move from mapping business models to test pilot models. And use public grants to de-risk private participation. - Strengthen links between restoration and local value creation. - Prepare a roadmap for future financing models.	Fishermen and fish associations; Sauna associations; Coastal recreational estates; Harbor owners; Diving associations; SMEs interested in urchin harvesting; Relevant municipalities and county councils; MPA authorities; Tourist companies; Other regenerative NGOs and SMES. Norwegian Ministry of climate and environment; Norwegian Ministry of industry and fishery. Research institutes.	Primarily planning, with initial interests from private sectors.

3. NBE SHOWCASES

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This section of the report details the outcomes of the Nature-based Enterprise showcases hosted as part of EU Green Week Brussels and London Climate Action Week, which both took place in June 2026. Originally the concept of the NbE showcase was proposed as a series of individual showcases in each Living Lab, but following discussions with the Coordinator and the Living Labs, it was agreed given the low level of NbE awareness in each LL that the showcases would be more impactful as part of larger external events where NbEs could have face-to-face time with potential investors and municipalities seeking NbS. It was decided to target two events with large brand recognition that could draw a big audience and enhance access to impact investors looking to invest in natural capital and NbS related businesses. Thus, showcases were selected and devised on the basis of their potential for investment opportunities for participating NbEs.

The first of these events was *ReInvest in Nature*, a new startup-investor matchmaking event at EU Green Week, the EU's largest annual environmental conference. The theme for 2026, which marked the 26th edition of EU Green Week, was Investing in a Nature-Positive Economy. The high-level conference event is organised by the Directorate-General for Environment and draws a large annual attendance of policymakers, environmentalists, businesses and civil society. The second event was *Changing Mindsets: Mobilising More Private Investment for Nature in Europe*, which was part of the programme of events for London Climate Action Week. LCA Week was founded in 2019 to harness the unique power of London for global and local climate action. It has grown to over 700 in-person and virtual events, attracting over 45,000 attendees across the week's programme of events. Both events were open to SMEs, start-ups and projects in the field of nature and biodiversity. LCA Week was also open to investors, whilst EU Green Week was open to investors, venture capitalists, public funding bodies and corporates.

Horizon Nua was responsible for identifying, training and providing subsidies for participation (through Invest4Nature) to a cohort of Nature-based Enterprises to attend *ReInvest in Nature* and the *London Climate Action Week* event. This cohort comprised both Nature-based Enterprises put forward by Living Lab partners of I4N, as well as start-ups/SMEs that were identified through the Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform and I4N related networks. This diverse cohort increased opportunities for networking, exchange of experience and cross-fertilisation of ideas between NbEs and SMEs from different countries and sectors. One of the chief purposes of Task 5.3 (sub-task 5.3.2: Skills development of NbEs) was for NbEs to be supported to develop sustainable business models and finance plans for start-up and growth. This was achieved through the mechanisms of investment readiness training and organisation of NbE pitching and expos.

The following sections describe the recruitment process and training of the participants, and the outcomes of the NbE showcases. It describes how the participants were recruited and gives a short profile of each participating company. This section also describes the preparatory training that each NbE experienced in order to enhance their investment readiness at the

events. The report concludes with the outcomes of the showcases and pitches, as well as a series of short recommendations for NbE showcases.

3.2. NBE SHOWCASE EVENTS

ReInvest in Nature

The first of the NbE events took place in Charlemagne Building in Brussels on 3rd of June 2026 at *ReInvest in Nature*, as part of EU Green Week. *ReInvest* attracted an audience of investors, including Venture Capitalists, Institutional Investors and Global Asset managers, public funding bodies and corporate stakeholders.



Figure 16 EU Green Week 2026 Banner image

This platform brought high visibility and traction to Nature-based Enterprises operating in the spheres of nature-positive production systems (e.g. regenerative agriculture), nature for risk reduction (e.g. flood mitigation), nature intelligence and measurement (e.g. biodiversity monitoring), and nature as a financial asset (e.g. carbon and biodiversity credits). The event afforded a great opportunity for NbEs to network with investors, customers and collaborators, and for a select few to pitch their business services to a jury of investors.

The event took place in the morning of June 3rd and began with 1 hour of pitching and feedback, 1.5 hours of speed networking, a further 1 hour of pitching and feedback, followed by an awards ceremony for the winners of the four competing categories and a networking lunch. Three of the five NbEs supported by Invest4Nature were chosen to pitch (i.e. Reef Circular, Fold Ecosystemics and Natural Business Intelligence).

Reef Circular won their pitching category “Nature for Risk Reduction”. Please refer to the sub-section “Showcase Participant Profiles” for a full description of each NbE. The pitching was subject to a highly competitive selection process, with only 16 chosen to pitch out of approximately 80 eligible attendees (i.e. NbEs or NbS projects). The event organisers, Directorate-General for the Environment (DG-ENV), made the final selection for the pitching competition. A panel of investor judges decided the winner per category based on a judging scorecard, with scores of 1-5 across eight criteria (see Fig. 22). The other two NbEs, MGGP Aero and NursiTree (not chosen for pitching), had exhibition stands, participated in the speed networking session and the networking lunch where they had opportunities to meet investors.



Figure 17 Reef Circular wins award for their category.

London Climate Action Week

The second of the NbE events took place in Hylo in London on 24th of June 2026. The event titled *Changing Mindsets: Mobilising More Private Investment for Nature in Europe* took place as part of London Climate Action Week. The event was coordinated by UNEP-WCMC (Network Nature) and Horizon Nua (Invest4Nature) and attracted in excess of 40 participants, among whom were impact investors, NbS projects and Nature-based Enterprises. The aim of this invitation only event was to help move the dial from talking to stimulating private sector investment in nature. The event provided a space for investors, project developers and nature entrepreneurs to meet, exchange views, and build relationships. The event was open to impact investors and NbEs operating in Europe and involved in sectors focused on nature/biodiversity conservation and restoration (e.g. regenerative agriculture, agroforestry, land-use innovation, blue economy). Importantly, businesses needed to be investment ready and demonstrate an ability to grow and scale up.



Figure 18 London Climate Action Week Banner image.

The event took place in the afternoon of 24th of June and began with a panel discussion, then a quickfire pitching round of 3-minute pitches, followed by breakout sessions and a final quickfire pitching round before close/wrap-up. There were ten NbEs in total that were supported to attend, including Green Account GmbH, Irish Trees Ltd., Viridian Logic, Daphne Water Solutions, Marine Spark X, Zoometrics, Biotonomy, Swarmlab, Reef Circular and Nursi Tree. Eight of these companies pitched, with the exception of Swarmlab and NursiTree.

3.3. NBE RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

The NbE support package for *ReInvest in Nature* was opened to a selection of Nature-based Enterprises nominated by the Living Lab partners, members of the Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform and other NbEs recruited through Invest4Nature networks and channels. Horizon Nua had a connection with the event organisers from DG-ENV, and were able to secure five places for NbEs at the event. Horizon Nua had to guarantee the suitability of the NbEs for the event and vouch for their investment readiness. Thus, it was vitally important that Horizon Nua a) recruited only NbEs that were viable and scalable, and b) offered the NbEs training to ensure they were ready for investment. Priority was given to NbEs from Invest4Nature Living Labs, however they needed to also meet the criteria of the event (i.e. operating in one of the four specified categories, investment ready, fully or majority owned by EU nationals), thus their acceptance was not guaranteed.



Figure 19 ReInvest in Nature recruitment poster.

The offer to the Nature-based Enterprises included:

- Guaranteed space at ReInvest in Nature
- One-to-one meetings with investors (organised by the individual through B2Match platform).
- Consideration for pitching.
- Preparatory investment readiness and pitch training.

A bursary for travel and subsistence to a maximum of €1,200 was available to participating organisations. There were 22 applications in total, and five NbEs were put forward for the guaranteed space at the event, pitch training and travel package. Two NbEs, Natural Business Intelligence (Portugal) and MGGP Aero (Poland), were choices from the Portuguese and Polish Living Labs, respectively. The other three picks, Reef Circular (Denmark), Fold Ecosystemics (France) and NursiTree (the Netherlands), came from CNEP and Invest4Nature affiliated networks.

A very similar recruitment approach was applied to the event for London Climate Action Week. The criteria for participants differed marginally, with LCA Week accepting European businesses to include UK business as opposed to Green Week which accepted only EU based businesses. Applicants to EU Green Week needed to belong to one of four specific categories of nature-related activities, whereas LCA Week did not specify categories of nature-related business.

A bursary for travel and subsistence ranging from €500 to €1,200 was available to participating organisations. There were 29 applications in total, and ten NbEs (including two EU Green Week participants with surplus budget to travel) were put forward for the guaranteed space at the event. Eight were chosen to pitch and all ten were in receipt of a travel support package. One NbE, Marine Spark X (Norway) was a choice from the Norwegian Living Lab. The other nine picks came from CNEP and Invest4Nature affiliated networks. For instance, Viridian Logic and Biotonomy are long-time active members of the CNEP.



Figure 20 ReInvest in Nature recruitment poster.

Notwithstanding the high bar for acceptance to both events, Living Labs were provided with ample support and encouragement to put forward nominees, of which four out of the five did. Three NbEs came from Living Lab choices (Poznan, Cascais and Norway), and a fourth emerged from the same country as another Living Lab (Denmark). The value to Living Labs of the NbE showcases was as follows:

- The opportunity for local practitioners to develop their confidence and experience of applying for a competitive process to pitch and showcase their product/service.
- Regardless of their suitability to pitch, NbEs were given access to HNUA's capacity building and support network.

- Those NbEs from LLs that participated had an opportunity to learn from other businesses operating in different geographical markets, allowing for the sharing of knowledge & best practices, as well as broadening of networks and new partnerships.

Table 2 Showcase Participant Profiles

NbE Name	NbE Description
 REEF CIRCULAR	Reef Circular is a Nature-based Enterprise in Denmark that produces artificial reefs from lower-CO₂ materials engineered specifically to encourage rapid marine colonisation. Their reefs have achieved significant environmental results, with a 400% increase in fish abundance and a 200% increase in species diversity in a four month period. Each reef is tailored to the ecosystem and species at its deployment site. For further details about the company, check out this case study. Reef Circular presented both at ReInvest in Nature and London Climate Action Week. The company is raising a pre-seed round of €300,000 investment in order to grow to the next stage i.e., hire a new salesperson, larger facilities, more 3D printers and hire a 3D print technician.
 NBI	Natural Business Intelligence is a company in Portugal that provides consultancy and training to companies, municipalities and investors to generate nature-positive impacts. The company created the tool, Radici, for use by a wide range of stakeholders, from municipalities and landscape architects to farmers and community groups, to figure out which native species will thrive in a specific hedgerow, stream bank or urban canopy. Inspiration for the tool came following the devastating impact from Storm Kristin in January 2026, and the need to build more resilient environmental ecosystems. For further details about the tool, check out this case study. Natural Business Intelligence presented at ReInvest in Nature. The company was asking for €1.2m grant investment to scale Radici EU-wide, and build out the team, technology and operations and enable market entry.

	Fold Ecosystemics is a Nature-based Enterprise in France that helps forest managers, landowners, city planners and ESG professionals make knowledge-based, data-driven decisions about the ecosystems in their care. Their SaaS-DaaS platform combines close-to-nature forestry planning tools with detailed cartography and, where needed, low-powered solar sensors that monitor everything from microclimate to birdsong in real time. For further details about the company, check out this case study. Fold Ecosystemics presented at ReInvest in Nature. The company was seeking a pre-seed investment round of €700,000 in blended finance (impact investors, angel investors, debt financing, public funding). They had just launched their software and were looking to make new hires in sales and marketing, backend operations and a forest GIS expert.
	MGGP Aero is a company in Poland that specialises in remote sensing and aerial and satellite data. The company is a partner of the EU-LIFE project, LIFE COOLCITY. As part of that project, MGGP Aero developed COOLCITY, a digital climate adaptation system. COOLCITY Index is a free, openly accessible tool that scores 11,000+ EU cities on a 0–10 scale, based on five adaptation challenges — surface permeability, vegetation state, biodiversity, water conditions and thermal conditions. Two complementary tools — COOLCITY View and COOLCITY Design — then help cities translate that diagnosis into concrete adaptation strategies, from priority intervention areas to scenario modelling for nature-based solutions. For further details about the company, check out this case study. MGGP Aero were given an EU Green Week stand to exhibit COOLCITY. The company was not looking for investment, but for technical assistance to scale out the tool EU-wide.
	NursiTree is a Nature-based Enterprise in the Netherlands that has developed a patented Urban Tree Pit system that allows municipalities and developers to relocate mature trees without damage, rather than remove them. The Urban pit provides the space and conditions for trees to grow even in places with limited

	room. The company works with municipalities, developers, and public space professionals to create greener, cooler, and more climate-resilient cities. For further details about the company, check out this case study. NursiTree were given an EU Green Week stand to exhibit. The company was looking for both investment and technical assistance in order to expand into a franchising model for the Urban Tree Pit across EU member states.
	3HUB is a start-up from Biotonomy, a Spanish based company that operates in nature-based architecture and green infrastructure. 3HUB is the world's first modular urban tree, built to bring nature to cities at a rapid pace. The 3HUB helps to address urban environmental challenges such as urban heat stress through its provision of shading, cooling and greenery properties. For further details about the company, check out this case study. 3HUB Founder, Moein Noedhi, sat on a speaker panel at the London Climate Action Week event and pitched 3HUB for an equity investment of €1m for 25% equity. The company was looking for capital plus experience in scaling manufacturing.
	Marine Spark X is a Norwegian Nature-based Enterprise that has developed a marine ingredient value chain for urchins. Marine Spark X supports urchin harvesters and processors, as well as ecological restoration of Norwegian kelp forests (that are damaged through urchin grazing). The urchin biomass is converted into a high value added product (i.e. nutraceuticals) for the South Korean market. For further details about the company, check out this case study. CEO of Marine Spark X, Martin Oddekalv, pitched at the London Climate Action Week event with an ask of £400k pre-seed round for first commercial deliveries and Asian market entry.
	Viridian Logic is a UK Nature-based Enterprise that uses natural flood management and ecosystem service solutions for valuation, planning and decision support. The group developed their HyrdoloGIS algorithms to assess what interventions should be done and where

	for such purposes as natural flood management, landscape planning, agricultural risk reduction and biodiversity compensation. For further details about the company, check out this case study. Technical Director, Leon Baruah, pitched at the London Climate Action Week event and sought £650,000 investment for 30% equity. Their ambitions for the funding is to convert HyrdoloGIS into an online platform that can be licensed.
	Daphne Water Solutions is a Nature-based Enterprise that uses proprietary Daphnia strains as living biofilters to strip persistent toxic chemicals, pharmaceuticals, microplastics, nutrients and other micropollutants from wastewater. The technology is a nature-based tertiary treatment that can be retrofitted into existing infrastructure or installed as an in-line end-of-pipe solution. For further details about the company, check out this case study. CEO and founder, Luisa Orsini, pitched at the London Climate Action Week event where she sought investment of £1m for scaling from TRL 7-8 (i.e. bringing the product to market).
	Zoometics is a Spanish based business with a mission to provide a comprehensive platform to govern urban biodiversity in Europe and around the world. Its flagship product, Meow Metrics®, is the first GovTech SaaS platform for community-cat colony management under the humane TNVR methodology (Trap–Neuter–Vaccinate–Return). The result is a shared data infrastructure where volunteers manage colonies for free through the platform, while municipalities pay for compliance, coordination and verified reporting. For further details about the company, check out this case study. CEO, Juan Manuel Taboada, pitched at the London Climate Action Week event where he sought €300,000 investment (€150,000 non-dilutive and €150,000 for 10% equity). The funding would be used to scale smart metrics for urban biodiversity across Europe.

	Irish Trees Ltd. have built on a decade of restoration work at Dunsany Estate in County Meath to develop a Heritage Estate Nature Recovery Model that they intend to expand to other heritage estates across Ireland. The model channels corporate partnerships, employee programmes, citizen science and education into woodland expansion, habitat restoration and ecological monitoring. More than 50 organisations have engaged so far. For further details about the company, check out this case study. Founder of Irish Trees, Bob Hamilton pitched at the London Climate Action Week event where he asked for €1.75m growth capital to scale the proven model across multiple heritage sites.
	Green Account Ltd. is a leading broker and planning office operating at national scale in the German nature restoration sector. It operates as a B2B and B2G service company on a commission fee model (from 10%), covering area identification, lease contracting, restoration planning and permitting. A proprietary data layer consisting of landowner-uploaded area data combined with public landscape datasets powers the platform, increasingly enhanced by AI. The long-term goal is to become Germany's largest nature restoration platform, with potential international expansion where policy allows. For further details about the company, check out this case study. CEO of Green Account, Max von Sandrart, pitched at the London Climate Action Week event where he asked for €5m for 20% equity to automate Green Account's planning engine.
	SwarmLab is a nature-based enterprise in Germany that helps its clients to strategically integrate biodiversity into real estate and facility management. SwarmLab supports the integration of biodiversity into real estate projects, thus enabling clients to meet their ESG goals and reduce costs. This is achieved through a five phase process of portfolio analysis, concept development, team building, supplier integration and system integration. Founder and CEO, Moritz Lohmann, participated at the London Climate Action week event where he engaged in conversation and exchanges with fellow enterprises,

	projects and investors.
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3.4. SUMMARY REPORT ON PITCH TRAINING

Prior to the *ReInvest in Nature* event in Brussels, and *London Climate Action week* event, all participants took part in an online training programme to enhance their readiness for pitching and investment at the event. The training followed an updated format to the pitch training programme devised by HNUA and delivered in the Go Green Routes project (see Deliverable 4.6²⁰). A 40-minute pre-recorded lecture was shared with participants one week prior to the first training session. The session contained instructions for developing a 3-minute pitch (incidentally this was also the time allotted for pitches at *ReInvest in Nature* and *London Climate Action Week*). A suggested template, which prescribed the number of slides and topics to cover off was provided.

The first round of training was with EU Green Week participants. Two online training sessions of 90 minutes duration took place on 6th and 13th of May respectively. All participants presented their pitches in a group setting that was timed and moderated by personnel from Horizon Nua. Pitches were critiqued in the first week using the NbE pitching scorecard (developed in Go Green Routes), and in the second week, using the jury scorecard for *ReInvest in Nature*. In that second week, the group was joined by Désirée Lecluse (PwC Luxembourg Office), who offered constructive feedback. Désirée provided a valuable perspective given her involvement in *BlueInvest*, providing investment readiness assistance for start-ups in the blue economy, as well as pitching preparations for *ReInvest in Nature*.



The image shows a 'NbE Pitching Workshop Scorecard' form. It has a green header with the title and the Invest4Nature logo. Below the header is a table with two columns: 'Element' and 'Comments / Observations'. The table has five rows for evaluation criteria. At the bottom left is the 'Funded by the European Union' logo, and at the bottom right is a green box with the number '8'.

Element	Comments / Observations
Was the problem clearly identified? And those impacted by the problem?	
Was the solution and value proposition/USP clearly explained?	
Pricing? Impact ? Competitors? Target Market? Business model? Team?	
Was there a clear ask? Were the next steps outlined?	
Delivery Visuals Timing (3 mins max.)	

Figure 21 The NbE scorecard from GoGreenRoutes

²⁰ Fletcher, I. & McQuaid, S. (2024). NbE Showcase - Report on Outcomes. Invest4Nature Deliverable D4.6. GoGreenRoutes. Horizon Europe Grant No. 869764.

Awards | Jury Scorecard

Problem	Significance of the problem or challenge that the solution addresses, in relation to nature loss, biodiversity degradation, and/or the transition to a nature-positive economy *	1	2	3	4	5
Value Proposition	Clarity of the solution's value proposition and its competitive advantage in relation to the need being addressed *	1	2	3	4	5
Target Market	The pitch demonstrates a good knowledge of the target market (size and potential) *	1	2	3	4	5
Competition	The pitch demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the competitive landscape *	1	2	3	4	5
Impact	The solution clearly demonstrates measurable and credible nature-positive and/or biodiversity impact *	1	2	3	4	5
Business Model	The business model is viable and scalable *	1	2	3	4	5
Team	The team reflects relevant competencies and a strong track record *	1	2	3	4	5
Your Ask & Next Steps	The resources asked for clearly address the next steps needed by the business *	1	2	3	4	5
Comments*:						

Figure 22 The Jury scorecard from ReInvest in Nature

The second round of training was with London Climate Action Week participants. Two online training sessions of 90 minutes duration took place on 10th and 17th of June respectively. The pitches were timed and given constructive feedback by personnel from Horizon Nua. The jury scorecard from EU Green Week was utilised in order to structure the feedback appropriately.

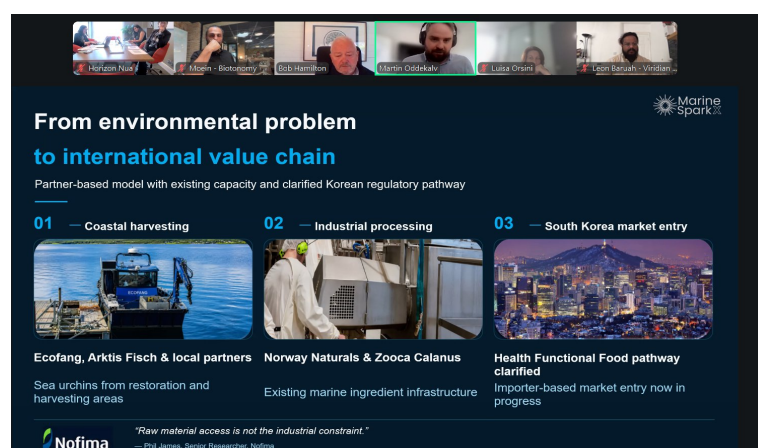


Figure 23 Screenshot of a pitch by a LCA Week participants.

There were 12 NbEs in total that underwent training, pitched and received feedback. The three chosen to pitch at *ReInvest in Nature* were particularly strong and the constructive feedback they received in the first week was incorporated into their pitches by the following week. Similarly, the 8 chosen to pitch at *London Climate Action Week* took the feedback received in the first week and incorporated it into their presentations in the second week.

Feedback was used to flag missing elements in the pitch (i.e. pricing, revenue models, competitor landscape, target market), busy or unclear slides, time-keeping, content finessing, as well as general investor questions they may encounter during a Q&A. The sessions were of huge value to participants who learned from and applied feedback, engaged in peer-to-peer learning, and offered each other support and advice before, during and after the pitching events.

Anonymous feedback was sought after both sets of online training sessions were completed. There were nine responses in total. Seven participants were extremely satisfied, one was satisfied with the training, and one was neutral.

There were some requests for improvements, specifically around the timing and scheduling of sessions, the instructions and preparatory materials, and the video conferencing platform used. One suggestion for improvement was to offer more transparency around the recruitment and training process for NbEs.

All nine answered “yes” as to whether they would recommend Horizon Nua as a training provider for NbEs to enhance their investment readiness. Individual feedback included:

“Thank you a lot for your time! This was very useful and the feedback provided was constructive. 100% would do it again.”

“I thought the way the feedback was delivered was really well done. We received constructive feedback, and we were also told the good things about our pitches.”

“Appreciate everything Horizon Nua has done for us, very supportive team!”

“Very good initiative and would highly recommend other ventures to take part”

“Fantastic to be made sweat on the training ground versus bleeding on the battle ground!”

3.5. NBE SHOWCASE – PITCHES AND OUTCOMES

3.5.1. OUTCOMES & REFLECTIONS FROM EU GREEN WEEK

At ReInvest in Nature, three Nature-based Enterprises pitched. The first was Reef Circular, represented by CEO, Shannon Hanson. Questions were asked in relation to the cost structure of the product and how it compares with cement solutions. Another question related to the 3D model manufacturing of artificial reefs and whether the process is easily scalable.

Based on the jury scorecard, Reef Circular scored high across the board, and particularly on the criteria of “Significance of the problem/challenge” and “Measurable/credible nature-positive/biodiversity impact”. Reef Circular was awarded the winner of their pitching category “Nature-based Risk Reduction”. As a result of their participation in the event, Reef Circular arranged a meeting with Starquest Capital regarding investment.



Figure 24 Reef Circular's presentation. Source: Horizon Nua.

The second company to pitch was Natural Business Intelligence, represented by Sustainability Management Specialist, Flávia Canastra. Flávia's three-minute pitch took place during the pitching category of “Nature as a Financial Asset”. The types of questions raised by the investor jury included queries regarding the Business Model, the motivation of customers and ensuring consistent quality of service across other contexts. NBI's top scoring criteria were “Measurable/credible nature-positive/biodiversity impact” and “Clarity of value proposition & competitive advantage”. Whilst they did not win best in their category, NBI had an overall very positive experience, and had meetings with potential collaborators through the B2 Match platform.



Figure 25 Flávia Canastra (Nature, Finance & Ecosystem Manager) presented for Natural Business Intelligence. Source: Horizon Nua

The third company to pitch was Fold Ecosystemics, represented by Alicia Charennat (CEO). Alicia was pitching her business in the category of “Nature Intelligence and Measurement”. The investor jury Q&A led with queries regarding the pricing model, the validation of its USP and the use of funds. Fold Ecosystemic's top scoring criteria were “Measurable/credible nature-positive/biodiversity impact”, “Significance of the problem/challenge”, “Knowledge of the competitive landscape”, “Team” and “Resources needed”. Whilst they did not win overall best in their category, Fold Ecosystemics had a number of interactions with potential investors and partners through the event.



Figure 26 Alicia Charennat (CEO) presented for Fold Ecosystemics. Source: Horizon Nua

MGGP Aero's COOLCITY had an exhibition stand both at ReInvest in Nature on 3rd of June, and at EU Green Week, as part of the CINEA - European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency - stand on 4th of June. There were three representatives of COOLCITY present, Maciej Jurzyk, Zuzanna Kunert and Robert Migas. The placement of their stand on the second day, in particular, generated lots of visitor traffic to their stand where the COOLCITY Index was being demonstrated. According to Maciej Jurzyk, who works on Strategic Climatetech Partnerships in the LIFE COOLCITY project at MGGP Aero: *"We are delighted by the strong interest and positive feedback our project received from the LIFE Programme and visitors throughout the event. The enthusiasm for our project supporting urban climate resilience confirms the importance of working together towards more climate-adaptive cities."*



Figure 27 Martina Brophy (Horizon Nua), Maciej Jurzyk, Zuzanna Kunert and Robert Migas (MGGP Aero) Source: Horizon Nua and COOLCITY/MGGP Aero

NursiTree's EU Green Week stand ran for 3rd of June only. There was one representative from the Nature-based Enterprise present, Tony Hoekstra. Tony had a number of interactions and exchanges, including with representatives from governmental organisations, which are among their key partners/target customers. He described speaking with a member of the city council of Leuven, who was very enthusiastic and indicated that she would take their ideas forward within her organization. He also connected with a business operating in a similar space in Germany. They plan to stay in contact and provide mutual support by introducing each other to relevant individuals in their context. Tony spoke with one investor who indicated that although the company is still too early-stage for her investment portfolio, NursiTree may trigger

her interest at a later stage. There were also conversations with possible collaborators, including a landscape architect in Bulgaria.



Figure 28 Martina Brophy (Horizon Nua, Invest4Nature) and Tony Hoekstra (NursiTree). Source: Horizon Nua

Table 3 Feedback and reflections from some of the participants of EU Green Week.

NbE Representative	Testimonial
Shannon Hanson, Reef Circular  REEF CIRCULAR	"ReefCircular won the Invest in Nature award in our category, which was brilliant. It helps people take us seriously, have more trust in us as a business, and raise awareness of what we're doing. The team at HNua did a great job of preparing us for participation at EU Green Week. We had the opportunity to rehearse our pitches twice, and their feedback was very helpful; it was constructive, and I also noticed they pointed out the things they liked, which a lot of people don't do but I think is also important! The communication was very good too; overall, they were a pleasure to work with, and I would highly recommend the program."
Flávia Canastra, Natural Business Intelligence  NBI	"Attending EU Green Week 2026 was a genuinely valuable experience, both for the quality of the conversations and for the visibility it gave Radici and NBI at exactly the right moment. The event confirmed that the nature finance space is moving fast — key insights included the growing consensus around blended finance and nature credits as scaling instruments, and the clear message that voluntary demand alone won't build these markets without regulatory incentives. We pitched Radici to a panel of investors and had some very interesting conversations with other projects. Even though Radici may not yet grow to EU level, I think this event allowed us to reach new people and start the process to grow it little by little. None of this would have been possible without Horizon NUA's support — covering our participation costs and providing two dedicated pitch preparation sessions, with structured feedback that meaningfully sharpened how

	we communicated Radici's value proposition to an investor audience."
Tony Hoekstra, NursiTree 	"Overall, I found it to be a very interesting and valuable day. It was particularly interesting to see the wide range of developments and innovations presented during the pitching sessions. The most important insight from the event was the strong willingness to work together to make Europe, and consequently the world, greener. In the Netherlands, there is often a strong focus on regulations and compliance. At the European level, however, the general feeling was more about joining forces and taking action, with a shared understanding that certain investments are simply necessary. The opportunity to have an exhibition stand was excellent as well. Especially during the morning session, we welcomed quite a large number of visitors. Unfortunately, visitor numbers were somewhat lower in the afternoon, mainly because the rest of the event activities were taking place on another floor. We are very grateful to HNUA for providing us with this opportunity. As a start-up, it is often difficult to find suitable events where we can share our story and showcase our work. HNUA also helped us significantly in refining our three-minute pitch. Through two training sessions, we received valuable guidance on what makes an effective pitch and how we could improve our own presentation. There was plenty of opportunity to receive feedback and to ask additional questions afterwards, which we greatly appreciated. The financial support [from Invest4Nature] made it possible for us to participate. Furthermore, the opportunities to connect with other individuals and companies have been extremely beneficial for us."
Maciej Jurzyk, MGGP Aero 	"Participating in EU Green Week was a very valuable experience for our project. Having an exhibition stand gave us the opportunity to present our solution to a broad audience of sustainability professionals, policymakers, and innovators from across Europe. We received positive feedback on our concept and had several promising conversations with potential partners and stakeholders interested in future collaboration. The event also provided useful insights into current trends and priorities within the nature-based solutions and sustainability sectors. HNUA's support was absolutely key in making our participation possible. Without their guidance, preparation support, and commitment throughout the process, attending and exhibiting at such a high-profile European event would have been significantly more difficult for a small innovative project like ours. Their assistance enabled us not only to be present at EU Green Week, but to fully benefit from the opportunities the event offered. We are sincerely grateful to Martina and the HNUA team for their dedication, professionalism, and continued support."

3.5.2. OUTCOMES & REFLECTIONS FROM LONDON CLIMATE ACTION WEEK EVENT

Changing Mindsets: Mobilising More Private Investment for Nature in Europe was co-organised by UNEP-WCMC and Horizon Nua under the [NetworkNature](#) and [Invest4Nature](#) projects respectively as part of London Climate Action Week in an effort to help move the dial from talking to forging alliances needed to get deals done. The context was about the need to increase private investment in nature to meet global targets and reverse nature loss by 2050 acknowledging that the public sector cannot do it alone. While good progress has been made in developing greater private finance interest in nature and nature-based solutions, there is still often a gulf in expectations between private investors and nature entrepreneurs and project developers.

What more do nature projects need to do to unlock private sector investment, and what do private investors look for when investing in nature projects? This was the question tackled at *Changing Mindsets* in London. *Changing Mindsets* provided a space for investors, project developers and nature entrepreneurs to meet, exchange views, and build relationships. The agenda featured a panel discussion, breakout groups to dive into key issues, and pitches from project developers, Nature-based Enterprises and investors as well as opportunity for individual networking.

Held on one of the hottest days in London during the June Heatwave, with temperatures in excess of 36C and ground temperatures of 45+C, the effects had consequences for locally based attendees who had to deal with school and creche closures, public transport closures from the effects of extreme flooding the day before, the irony of why we had gathered in London was not lost on those of us who made it. Despite the lower numbers, *Changing Mindsets* provided for a useful exchange of view from project developers, investors and entrepreneurs on what more is needed to mobilise investment in nature.

Key takeaways from the day across the different panels and breakout discussions included:

- Nature-based Enterprises need to learn to build business models that help their clients cut costs.
- Investors don't want to pay for sustainability. Pitching more tech and smart solutions as intelligent, not sustainable, is far more likely to attract investment.
- You cannot scale a CSR style grant, you can scale an investment - we need to reframe the CSR dialogue as a business strategy leading to ongoing scalable investment.
- Get corporate partners onboard early in the process - allow them to co-design solutions.
- When working with upstream nature restoration, don't undermine a nascent opportunity with a grant. Pay for the benefit - write a contract. Nature can be cheaper...

Eight Nature-based Enterprises pitched their solutions during the afternoon with different investment asks. As is common, the pitches were opening salvos to instigate conversations with potential investors and since *Changing Mindsets* at LCAW, Aviva has come back seeking to speak with six Nature-based Enterprises. The enterprise pitch decks have also been circulated to all of the investors registered for the event. Horizon Nua continues to stay in touch

with all of the NbEs to follow their progress and monitor successful developments.



Figure 29 Martin Oddekalv pitching Marine Spark X and Moein Noedhi pitching 3HUB Source: Horizon Nua



Figure 30 Leon Baruah pitching Viridian Logic and Lars Basset pitching Green Account Source: Horizon Nua



Figure 31 Shannon Hanson pitching Reef Circular and Juan Manuel Taboada pitching Zoometrics. Source: Horizon Nua



Figure 32 Lusía Orsini pitching Daphne Water Solutions and the four pitchers sitting through audience Q&A, L-R: Juan Manuel Taboada, Bob Hamilton, Max von Sandrart and Shannon Hanson. Photo credits: Horizon Nua



Figure 33 (L-R; Front Row): Leon Baruah (Viridian Logic), Luisa Orsini (Daphne Water Solutions) and Isobel Fletcher (Horizon Nua) (L-R; Back Row): Shannon Hanson (Reef Circular), Bob Hamilton (Irish Trees), Tony Hoekstra (Nursi Tree); Martin Oddekallv (Marine Spark X); Juan Manuel Taboada (Zoometrics); Moein Noedhi (3HUB); Max von Sandrart (Green Account).
Photo Credit: Horizon Nua

Table 4 Feedback and reflections from some of the participants of London Climate Action Week.

NbE Representative	Testimonial
Bob Hamilton, Irish Trees Ltd. 	"Participating in the London Climate Action Week event was an extremely valuable experience for Irish Trees and our work at Dunsany Estate. The application process, mentoring, pitch preparation and feedback all helped sharpen our proposition and communicate our vision more clearly. While we did not expect investment decisions to be made on the day, the event provided an exceptional opportunity to connect with like-minded organisations, investors and nature-finance practitioners from across Europe. We had a number of encouraging conversations that have led to follow-up discussions and new introductions, while also expanding our network within the growing nature investment ecosystem. The quality of the speakers, participants and peer cohort created an environment where ideas and experiences could be openly shared, and hearing the other finalists reinforced both the opportunities and challenges facing nature-positive enterprises. We are grateful to Horizon Nua and Invest4Nature for their support in making our participation possible.

	The experience has strengthened both our investment proposition and our confidence as we continue to develop scalable, measurable models for financing long-term nature restoration through heritage landscapes such as Dunsany Estate.”
Moritz Lohmann, SwarmLab 	“The London Climate Action Week event was a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas with people working across nature finance, regulation, research and nature-based enterprises. A key insight for me was the growing recognition that biodiversity challenges are increasingly understood and measured, but that practical implementation on the ground remains hard. The conversations our pitch sparked reinforced our view at Swarmlab that there is a significant gap between biodiversity assessment and real-world action — exactly the gap we are building to close. The workshop sessions and informal exchanges were especially valuable and led to several promising conversations with organisations working on nature data, finance and implementation, which we intend to follow up on as potential collaborations and pilot opportunities. The support provided by Horizon Nua and Invest4Nature made it possible for an early-stage nature enterprise like Swarmlab to take part in an important international dialogue, build new connections and gain valuable feedback that will directly inform the next stage of our development. We are very grateful for their role in bringing nature enterprises and the wider nature-finance community together.”
Luisa Orsini, Daphne Water Solutions 	“Attending the London Climate Action Week event, Changing Mindsets: Mobilising More Private Investment for Nature in Europe, was a valuable experience. The pitch preparation sessions and feedback provided by HNUA and Invest4Nature helped refine how I communicate Daphne Water Solutions' value proposition to an investment audience, and the event itself offered useful insights into the current landscape for nature investment. While the anticipated investor engagement did not materialise on the day, the event provided an excellent opportunity to connect with fellow entrepreneurs, exchange experiences, and build relationships with others developing nature-positive solutions. I am very grateful to HNUA and Invest4Nature for supporting my participation. Their backing enabled me to attend an event that I would likely not have participated in otherwise, and I look forward to building on the skills, connections, and opportunities that emerged from it.”
Moein Nodehi, Biotonomy/3HUB	“It was a great experience overall. The location was brilliant and the whole thing was well run. Pitching there, and

 BIOTONOMY THE DESIGN LANGUAGE OF NATURE 3HUB MODULAR URBAN TREES	hearing the other pitches, gave me a lot to think about. The main feedback I heard from a few of us was that there weren't many investors in the room - however, we all know that the heatwave was the main reason. For a future event, it would also help if the investors introduced themselves and shared what they're looking for. That would make it much easier for us to connect with the right people on the day. Being part of the London Climate Action Week was a great experience. The support from HNUA and Invest4Nature made it possible for us to be in the room, share our work, and meet people we would not have reached otherwise. Thank you for backing us."
Tony Hoekstra, NursiTree 	"The event was particularly valuable because of the conversations with other start-ups and organisations working on nature and climate adaptation. As we did not pitch during the event, we did not receive direct pitch feedback. The start-ups who did pitch were really interesting. One key insight was that many start-ups are in a similar phase: a lot of effort is being put into networking and creating opportunities, while the number of concrete projects and investments is still relatively limited. Unfortunately, I did not have concrete conversations with investors or receive direct expressions of investment interest during the event. The main value for me was the exchange with other start-ups and gaining a better understanding of the market. As a next step, we will keep relevant contacts warm and continue looking for concrete opportunities for collaboration and application. The support from HNUA was very valuable again. HNUA helped us think through the possibilities for participating in the event in London and supported us through networking and preparation. As we were not pitching, we did not take part in the pitch training this time. The opportunity to exchange ideas and benefit from the network was especially valuable for us."

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of key insights have emerged from the two NbE showcases that ran as part of Invest4Nature. The first of these insights is that Nature-based Enterprises are resource and/or time poor and therefore must prioritise those events that will generate the highest return/value for their business. It is recommended that the “what is in it for me?” factor must always be at the forefront of such events. It was also clear that the travel subsidy and training support package were vital incentives for Nature-based Entrepreneurs to attend.

Recommendation: The value proposition of any NbE showcase must answer the key question “*what’s in it for me?*”. The needs and interests of the NbE, and the investor, must be prominent in the design and delivery of the event.

The second key insight is that Nature-based Entrepreneurs want as much exposure to investors as possible, and welcome any opportunity to research investors in advance and pre-arrange one-to-one meetings prior to an event (as per EU Green Week). A key piece of feedback from the London Climate Action Week event is that Nature-based Entrepreneurs want to pitch in front of a formal investor panel with declared names and interests (and not the general audience Q&A as per the format for that event).

Recommendation: Advance knowledge of investors and their investment interests is vital for matchmaking success at a NbE showcase. Whilst investment can never be guaranteed, events should simulate a “dragon’s den” type format where a panel of investors pose questions and offer feedback.

The third key insight is that Nature-based Enterprises, due to typically being small in scale and perhaps unaccustomed to pitching for investment, greatly benefit from investment readiness training. For many, it was an opportunity to stress-test their business model, hone and carefully deliver their business messaging and build confidence that they are delivering a pitch that investors want to hear.

Recommendation: Pitch training is an essential preparatory component. The constructive feedback from facilitators and the sense of camaraderie and support generated from a peer-to-peer learning setting should be an integral part of all pitch training provision.

The fourth key insight is that events that attract an array of audiences, including investors, public bodies, corporates, funders, customers, partners/collaborators from a wide array of geographies/markets are most attractive to Nature-based Enterprises with ambitions to scale and grow internationally. Events such as EU Green Week which generate a large turn-out EU wide are the most appealing for those that seek exposure to different kinds of funders, want to learn about latest developments and market trends, and seek opportunities for expansion across the EU. Further, there is no one-size fits all showcase for NbEs. Less innovative, local and place-based enterprises may be better suited to sectoral, regional or national level support and certain types of funding (i.e. non-repayable or debt financing), whereas highly innovative, scalable business models are often more internationally geared and may suit equity investment and specialist expertise.

Recommendation: If showcases are geared towards innovative, scalable offerings than important considerations, such as growth ambitions, Technology Readiness Levels and type/stage of investment, should be reflected in the criteria of NbEs chosen to participate. Equally, these considerations should be reflected in the stakeholders and funders invited to attend.

5. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – POZNAN LOCAL NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY

APPENDIX 2 – CASCAIS LOCAL NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY

APPENDIX 3 – AARHUS: *“THE FARMER AS NATURE STEWARD: A SUPPORT STRATEGY FOR NATURE-BASED ENTERPRISES”*.



The economics of nature-based solutions.

***LIVING LAB* POZNAŃ**

**LOCAL NATURE-BASED
ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY**



Funded by
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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. WHAT ARE NATURE-BASED ENTERPRISES?

The need for Nature-based Solutions has become widely recognised by countries and policymakers since its initial introduction by the World Bank and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in the late 2000s. NbS is formally defined as:

“actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human wellbeing, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits.” (UNEA, 2022, p.2).

Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) are private sector businesses that are responsible for the planning, delivery and/or maintenance of Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem services, such as regenerative farming, eco-tourism and green buildings. Nature-based enterprises are key actors in the transition to a Nature-Positive Economy (Koh et al., 2025), and can be formally defined as:

“an enterprise, engaged in economic activity that uses nature sustainably as a core element of their product/service offering. Here, nature may be engaged directly by growing, harnessing, harvesting or sustainably restoring natural ecosystems, and/or indirectly by contributing to the planning, delivery or stewardship of nature-based solutions. A nature-based enterprise must contribute positively to biodiversity and ecosystem services.” (McQuaid et al., 2021, p.1; Koojiman et al., 2021).

In terms of nature-based economic activities, Nature-based Enterprises can contribute to nature either directly through, for instance, ecosystem restoration, NbS for green buildings, NbS for public and urban spaces, or indirectly through, for instance, advisory services or smart technology, monitoring and assessment for NbS (Koojiman et al., 2021).



Figure 1. The range of economic activities that a NbE can carry out that directly and indirectly impact nature.

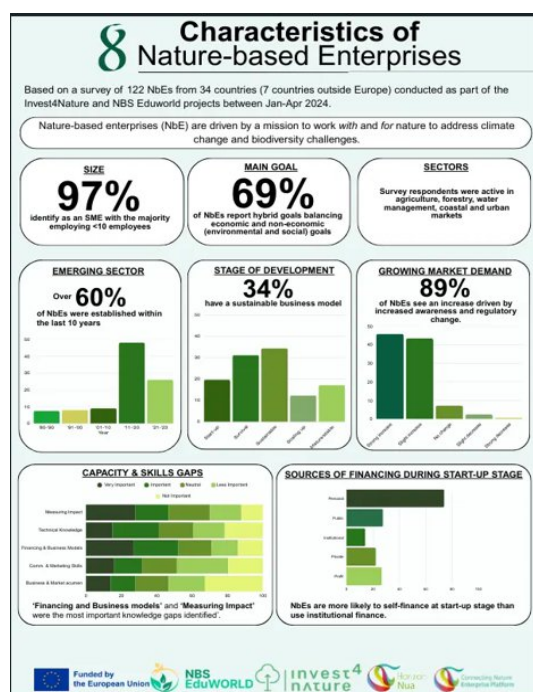


Figure 2. Infographic of NbE characteristics.

1.2. SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Nature-based Enterprises are a key player in the transition to a Nature-Positive Economy. They deliver economic goals through job creation, business opportunities and stimulating innovation and creating new skills for local economies. In tandem, they offer social benefits, such as increased health and wellbeing for the residents of a locality, and environmental benefits, such as halting the loss of biodiversity, reducing air pollution, combatting urban heat stress and other benefits. Cities, regions and municipalities can thus benefit from the place-based NbS that Nature-based Enterprises can offer to solve local environmental challenges. There is a three-step, holistic approach (devised by the Connecting Nature project) that can stimulate the start-up and support the growth of Nature-based Enterprises to a region.

Step 1 – Raising Awareness & Strategic Alignment - A lack of awareness of NbS and their benefits often corresponds with low support for NbS across local government departments. This has a knock-on effect by limiting the market growth and demand for NbEs and their products/services. The first step is thus to raise awareness amongst departmental heads, and political leaders, of the value generated by NbS, and the role of NbEs in delivering such value. To begin, consider how NbS may support the strategic goals of the city/region (e.g., municipality plans) and beyond (national policy, EU policy, UN Sustainable Development Goals), and how NbEs may help to deliver on their social, environmental and economic value.

Step 2 - Taking Stock & Building Alliances - This next step is about mapping the innovation ecosystem¹ and building alliances. Taking stock of existing local NbEs and

¹ An innovation ecosystem is a network of interconnected individuals, teams and entities that co-evolve to

cross-checking them with the city's needs is an important start. Map out the NbEs which could deliver NbS and assess the internal and external barriers faced by them. To address these barriers you will need support and expertise from a broad coalition of experts. These alliances could be internal by for instance, connecting the local government department responsible for NbS/environment with the one for enterprise. External alliances could come in the form of connections with financial institutions/enterprise support networks that can help to address barriers of funding/skill gaps in Nature-based Enterprises.

Step 3 – Plan and Deliver a Customized NBE (Pilot) Support Programme - The specific measures to put in place to support NbEs will depend on Steps 1 and 2. In local government departments, responsibility for enterprise will differ to that of environmental issues, and so decisions must be made as to who will be responsible to plan, lead and implement an NbE support programme. Any such support programme (an accelerator, incubator programme, training programme etc.) should be co-created with the ecosystem actors in Step 2, especially NbEs, to ensure the support measures address actual needs.

2. CURRENT STATUS OF NBE SUPPORT/NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE REGION

Background for Poznań NbE Strategy – the concept of NbS & NbE Strategy for Poznań (actions needed and how they align with the four pillars)

For the purposes of the Invest4Nature project, the team has developed an initial concept for a strategy on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and Nature-based Enterprises (NbE) in the city. This concept will continue to evolve in line with future directions and actions. Three key focus areas have been identified within the concept:

1. Integrate nature into urban planning for climate resilience and biodiversity

Goal: Enhance urban resilience by embedding nature-based solutions (NbS) into city planning and infrastructure to address climate risks such as heat islands, flooding, and biodiversity loss.

Why? This positions NbS as a practical tool for adaptation and sustainability, not a "green extra," but a core element of urban design.

2. Foster nature-based economy and innovation

Goal: Support and scale nature-based enterprises (NbE) as drivers of green jobs, social innovation, and sustainable economic development.

Why? Nature not only protects but also creates opportunities for entrepreneurship and community well-being.

3. Promote inclusive, participatory governance of urban nature

Goal: Co-create NbS with local communities to reflect their needs, knowledge, and values,

facilitate shared innovation conception and delivery. Can include industry, government, academic and civil society stakeholders.

ensuring equitable benefits across social groups.

Why? Social inclusion and co-creation are key to gaining long-term support for NbS.

Opportunities and challenges for NbE

Nature-based enterprises that are deeply committed to NbS tend to deliver more impactful results. Yet, eligible costs for NbS often remain unattractive to investors, posing a challenge for scaling up. Supporting a culture of nature-based entrepreneurship contributes directly to planning, implementing, and sustaining NbS in cities. To facilitate this, Poznań aims to foster green entrepreneurship that could scale up eco-investments, such as natural playgrounds and green schoolyards. *alternative sentence* Poznań aims to foster green entrepreneurship that could scale up eco-investments, such as natural playgrounds and green schoolyards, through the **four-pillar concept** outlined below: awareness and engagement, bridging knowledge gaps, innovative trends and pilot projects and governance and policy integration.

Challenges: there is still low awareness about the role of NbEs in developing NbS.

Therefore, the strategy needs to start with the **Awareness & Engagement pillar**, which focuses on raising awareness within Poznań City Hall by promoting the benefits of NbS and sharing as well as evaluating relevant case studies. This awareness-raising stage serves as the foundation for further actions aimed at strengthening the local NbE ecosystem.

Another challenge is identifying and connecting NbE actors with municipal needs requires targeted matchmaking initiatives. In addition, the limited pool of service providers, e.g., landscape architects with co-creation skills, contractors with gardening expertise, poses additional barriers, particularly for large-scale or simultaneous eco-investments (e.g., transforming multiple schoolyards at once).

Finding mixed funding sources and creating financial mechanisms for implementation and maintenance remains difficult. While the Invest4Nature project offers the chance to explore public-private cooperation models, this work is still in the analysis phase. Further complicating matters are the city's budgetary constraints and planned cost-saving measures.

Additional challenges include:

- ❖ **Nature-based entrepreneurship is still an emerging concept in Poland.** The NbE market is only beginning to develop and demand for NbS-related services is currently driven mainly by the public sector, which limits the number of specialised companies and slows the development of the sector.
- ❖ **Public procurement frameworks are not yet fully adapted to NbE services.** Procedures often prioritise price over quality and long-term ecosystem benefits. Public officials are also still developing the knowledge and tools needed to formulate procurement criteria that reflect the value of NbS and NbE services.
- ❖ **Limited collaboration and networking among NbE actors.** Many NbE companies are small enterprises focused on maintaining their core business activities, and sector-wide cooperation mechanisms such as clusters or knowledge-sharing platforms remain underdeveloped.

Enablers:

- ❖ growing citizen demand for green spaces, reflected in participatory budgeting and grassroots initiatives (e.g., community gardens, food cooperatives).

- ❖ the proactive stance of school directors and bottom-up initiatives that encourage companies to enter the NbS service sector.
- ❖ existing partnerships with landscape architects and gardening contractors gained through earlier NbS projects.
- ❖ the successful implementation of pilot NbS projects in schools and kindergartens, which provides a strong basis for scaling up green schoolyards and school gardens, while also creating opportunities for educational NbE activities based on these gardens, such as nature-based learning programmes and outdoor environmental education.
- ❖ As a medium-sized city, Poznań has a broad base of landscaping and gardening companies that are not yet operating as Nature-based Enterprises but could gradually transition toward NbE services with targeted awareness-raising, training and knowledge exchange. The development of green schoolyards and nature-based playgrounds in kindergartens can serve as a practical entry point for this transition. At the initial stage, local companies would primarily build knowledge and skills rather than implement the projects themselves, for example through training programmes, study visits and knowledge exchange supported by the city.

Strategic steps

Poznań's next steps include:

- ❖ identifying NbEs through market analysis and awareness-raising.
- ❖ launching consultations with companies and NGOs to explore joint ventures, sponsorship, and CSR activities.
- ❖ considering the development of an SME information platform to support networking and knowledge exchange.
- ❖ encouraging new skills development and innovation.

The current strategy focuses on understanding barriers (e.g., insufficient demand, lack of support for social enterprises or NbE) and enablers (e.g., eco-education, public procurement challenges). Collaboration with economic departments will be key to aligning NbS with the city's development goals.

Flexibility as a guiding principle

Our extensive experience positions us to scale up selected NbS. However, each case is unique, with varying and sometimes unexpected benefits. A flexible, well-monitored approach is essential for upscaling success, especially in a changing financial landscape.

Remaining Risks

- ❖ limited political alignment and absence of a senior champion/ green ambassador for NbS,
- ❖ capacity and regulatory barriers to public-private cooperation,
- ❖ internal resource constraints and lack (or demanding) of cross-departmental collaboration culture.
- ❖ as NbE is still a new concept in Poland, there is limited experience and few examples to follow, which makes strategic planning more difficult. Current efforts focus mainly on building awareness of NbS as a foundation for future NbE development.

- ❖ Limited alignment with national and regional policies may weaken the implementation of the municipal NbE strategy, particularly in terms of funding, regulatory support and long-term continuity.
- ❖ Changes in political priorities over time. Long-term NbS and NbE initiatives may be influenced by electoral cycles and changing policy priorities.

Enablers and Innovations

Despite challenges, Poznań has achieved:

- ❖ success in EU funding, demonstrating NbS benefits,
- ❖ development of hybrid financing models (e.g., cost-sharing for nature-oriented playgrounds),
- ❖ proactive efforts to build legal frameworks for public-private partnerships,
- ❖ testing of innovative funding mechanisms (e.g., "crowd-planting" urban forest project):
 - like many cities, Poznań faces pressure to use land efficiently, often leading to changes in original land-use plans. Until 2010, the Krzyżownicy area served as a forestry nursery, with production ending around 2005. The site was then designated for a golf course, but without investors the land remained unused and degraded until 2019, when the City decided to establish an urban forest. Although ideal for reforestation, no municipal funding was available initially. In 2020–2021, the Poznań Forestry Plant planned tree planting on 5 hectares in the northwest, but the pandemic shifted priorities. The 2021 Connecting Nature Enterprise Summit, led by our Project Coordination Office, helped raise awareness and sparked action. This paved the way for collaboration with Reforest'Action (FR) and Green-Up (PL). Reforest'Action, a certified B Corp, co-finances tree planting through crowd-planting, having planted 12 million trees in 35 countries. They sought partners with land designated for afforestation. Our trilateral model addressed public-private partnership challenges, with Reforest'Action as investor, Green-Up as project leader, and the City as landowner and maintainer. Pre-designated land and prepared procedures enabled immediate planting, vital given Poland's narrow spring and autumn planting windows. Poznań now plans to replicate this model in future nature-based projects, recognising the importance of alternative financing beyond municipal and EU funds.

How has this shaped Poznań's support strategy for NbEs?

The Invest4Nature project provides a unique opportunity to advance new models of collaboration and build effective, efficient bridges between the public and private sectors in delivering Nature-based Solutions (NbS). For our team, this marks both a new direction and a significant challenge. We are actively examining how to embed NbS and Nature-based Enterprises (NbE) more firmly within Poznań's strategic frameworks, to strengthen their role and amplify their impact.

As outlined earlier, two key documents, „Strategy for the Development of the City of Poznań until 2040+” and the „City Climate Change Adaptation Plan”, offer important entry points. References to NbS, small-scale green solutions for climate adaptation, and biodiversity enhancement are beginning to appear. Our goal is to seize these opportunities, ensuring that NbS and NbEs are not only integrated into daily practice but also explicitly recognised in

long-term strategic planning. Achieving this will require both political will and the engagement of decision-makers at the highest levels.

Conclusion

The strategy's success depends on sustained flexibility, cross-sectoral partnerships, and innovative financing. While current political and administrative conditions pose hurdles, citizen support and creative workarounds have driven progress. The team's commitment to collaboration and transparency provides a solid foundation for future scaling.

The Poznań NbE Action Plan sets out goals to integrate NbS into urban planning, promote a nature-based economy, and strengthen participatory governance. It highlights the need for mixed financing models and deeper cooperation between the public and private sectors to sustain NbS. While challenges include limited political backing and internal capacity constraints, citizen engagement and creative financing models have proven valuable enablers. The plan outlines strategic next steps including market analysis, partnerships, and pilot financing mechanisms.

*This is a living document that will be continuously updated in the coming months as new insights, models, and opportunities emerge.****

The concept of **Poznań's NbS & NbE strategy** is structured around four core pillars, each equally important, functioning in parallel, and continuously influencing one another.



Poznań's Strategy on NbS and NbE and Its Implementation	
Awareness & engagement Increasing awareness in Poznań City Hall - promoting benefits of NbS - sharing and evaluating case studies	Bridging knowledge gaps Knowledge transfer across stakeholders - internal: departments & units - external: district councils, City Council members. Channels: cyclical newsletter; internal city portal
Innovative trends & projects Trends, innovations & pilot projects	Governance & policy integration Governance integration

- business models - analysis, assessment & goal-setting - external feedback	- ensuring compliance - aligning with city strategies - integrating NbS & NbE into town planning
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2.1. MAPPING AND ENGAGEMENT WITH NBEs

Guiding questions *(please note that some of the information requested may not be readily available to your organisation/department and may require research/engagement with other departments or external bodies responsible for enterprise support and development)*.

Do you interact with NBEs in your role in the municipality / region?	Yes, regularly
Please provide some additional context to the above answer.	Yes. As the Project Coordination and Urban Regeneration Office (KPRM) in Poznań City Hall, we work regularly with enterprises that could be classified as Nature-Based Enterprises (NBEs). A key challenge is that the definition of an NBE is not always clear, both for us and for companies themselves. Often, enterprises do not recognise their activities as nature-based until the concept is explained. However, this situation is improving. The number of identified NBEs is gradually increasing as awareness grows on both sides, within the municipality and among companies.
If enterprise support does not come under your remit, then who / what department is responsible in your organisation?	Several departments cooperate with enterprises that may qualify as NBEs, including: ❖ The Department of Economic Activity and Agriculture ❖ The Department of Climate and Environment ❖ The Department of Municipal Economy In addition, the Investor Relations Office supports businesses across all sectors, mainly larger companies (their focus is not specifically on NBEs). Our Office (KPRM) contributes by sharing

	experience from working with identified nature-based enterprises and NbS-related projects.
What are the sectors of NbEs within your region?	NbS for public spaces
If more than one or other sectors, please state.	NbS including water management, as well as landscape architecture and gardening services.
Who are the NbEs operating in each of the relevant sectors to your region? Can you identify them, or if not, put N/A?	Studio Oles, Strefa Zieleni, Garden Art Studio, Ogrody Odnowa, Apak - Pracownia Architektury Krajobrazu. These companies have been classified as NbE according to our definition – they have also declared themselves as NbE, as several of them participated in our NbE surveys as part of WP3. However, it is worth noting that these are, firstly, very small private companies (micro and small, employing up to 10 people) and, secondly, companies involved in space design or gardening, or both. We collaborated with them in creating natural playgrounds and green schools. One of the companies also works in the field of environmental education.
What specific challenges do NbEs encounter in your region? <i>Examples: internal barriers to financing for NbEs include challenges measuring impact, lack of interest, investor alignment, support measures, internal resources and knowledge of options. Other external challenges may include challenges re public procurement (in the case of public sector clients) and lack of awareness/knowledge among clients, investors and other stakeholders of the benefits of NbS.</i>	NbEs in Poznań face several structural and market-related challenges: ❖ low awareness of NbEs as a distinct business category, both among enterprises and public institutions ❖ limited investor interest, as NbS-related costs are often seen as less attractive or harder to measure in financial terms ❖ difficulty scaling up, due to a small pool of specialised service providers (e.g. landscape architects with co-creation skills, contractors with ecological expertise) ❖ fragmented funding sources and lack of long-term financing models for implementation and maintenance ❖ public procurement barriers, where traditional procedures do not always favour NbS-based solutions ❖ municipal budget constraints,

	including current cost-saving policies Identifying and connecting suitable NBEs with municipal needs requires targeted matchmaking efforts. Large-scale or parallel investments (e.g. greening multiple schoolyards at once) are especially challenging due to limited market capacity. While the Invest4Nature project offers opportunities to test public-private cooperation models, these approaches are still in the development and analysis phase.
What specific enablers do NBEs encounter in your region? <i>Examples: targeted networks, creditations/standards for NbS, targeted funding/subsidies for NbS, capacity building & training, change in procurement procedures that are favourable to NbS/NBEs.</i>	Despite these challenges, several enabling conditions are emerging: ❖ growing citizen demand for green spaces, reflected in e.g. participatory budgeting ❖ strong engagement from schools and kindergartens, with proactive attitude and willing to implement nature-based solutions in their spaces ❖ existing partnerships/ collaborations with landscape architects and gardening contractors developed through previous NbS projects ❖ pilot projects, especially in schools and preschools, which help test and demonstrate new solutions ❖ knowledge-sharing activities, such as conferences, publications, and cooperation with universities and social enterprises (NGOs). These efforts have helped build early market confidence, improve skills, and reduce risk perception; although the NbE market remains relatively young and fragmented.
How would you describe the level of awareness of Nature-based Enterprises in your municipality/region?	Low
Please explain your answer to the above.	Awareness of NBEs is currently moderate but improving. Through interviews conducted under WP3 in Invest4Nature project, many businesses only recognised themselves as NBEs after the concept and criteria were explained. However, their understanding of

	NbS was generally stronger, which represents important progress compared to previous years. The municipality supports awareness-raising through workshops, publications, and project-based learning. While this is having a positive impact, broader outreach is still needed, both externally and internally within municipal departments and to ensure NbEs are better understood and integrated into urban policies and procurement practices.
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If engagement with/awareness of NbEs is low, then look at who in the region could be a first point of contact for nature-based enterprises:

Who are the main actors in the innovation ecosystem of each region/living lab?	Accelerators & incubators
If more than one or other innovation ecosystem actors are involved, please state or expand on the above answer.	Currently, there are no dedicated accelerators or incubators focused specifically on NBEs in Poznań. However, key ecosystem actors include: ❖ municipal departments involved in urban development, climate, and economic affairs ❖ universities and research institutions ❖ social enterprises and environmental NGOs ❖ small and medium-sized companies active in green infrastructure, landscape design, and ecological services Our office (KPRM), as a project coordination unit, could potentially act as a connector or “Green Ambassador” for NbS and NbEs, although such a role would require institutional endorsement aligned with the city’s strategic priorities.
How could multiple actors be empowered in building a common vision and plan for nature-based entrepreneurship? <i>Examples: awareness raising measures,</i>	Multiple actors can be empowered by creating shared learning spaces, cross-sector workshops, and pilot projects that bring municipalities, businesses, schools, researchers, and NGOs together around real challenges. Clear coordination roles (e.g. a

<i>capacity building</i>	municipal “Green Ambassador”), accessible guidance materials, and visible success stories help align goals, build trust, and translate ideas into joint action. This collective approach supports a common vision and a practical roadmap for nature-based entrepreneurship.
How can these actors be engaged to stimulate a culture of nature-based entrepreneurship and support the emergence and growth of NbEs? <i>Examples: silo busting, champions for NbEs, awareness raising events for NbEs</i>	Key engagement strategies include: ❖ education and awareness-raising, through workshops, training sessions, and guidance materials ❖ cross-sector cooperation, linking municipalities, businesses, schools, researchers, and NGOs ❖ e.g. knowledge platforms and communities of practice, to share experiences and tools ❖ visible leaders for NbEs, such as designated municipal coordinators or “Green Ambassadors” ❖ pilot projects and demonstrations, to reduce risk and showcase viable business models These approaches help break silos, increase trust, and gradually build a functioning NbE ecosystem. However, it should be emphasized that this is all still in the conceptual stage and will certainly require the involvement of many partners in order for the concept to be transformed into a realistic action plan.
What is the level of knowledge and skills of the I4N team in your region/living lab in terms of supporting the emergence and growth of NbEs?	Medium
If low, and there are skills gaps that have been identified, how do you plan to address them?	N/A
If knowledge is medium or high, what measures are being undertaken to support NbEs?	While our office does not directly fund or incubate NBEs, we actively: ❖ map companies that provide NbS-related services

	❖ encourage nature-based approaches in municipal projects, especially in schools and kindergartens ❖ introduce new NbS concepts (e.g. water retention, green infrastructure) during workshops and design processes ❖ support companies in experimenting with new services through consultation and inspiration As a result, many contractors have expanded their service portfolios, and a growing group of suppliers now specialises in green schoolyards and kindergarten environments. This contributes indirectly to market development and strengthens local NbE capacity over time.
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2.2. CURRENT NBS PROVISION, DELIVERY & MAINTENANCE

A review of current NbS provision, delivery and maintenance (and whether this can be supplied in-house through municipalities or should be sought externally).

Guiding questions:

What are the priorities for economic development in your region/living lab? <i>Examples: jobs growth, economic development, housing</i>	The Invest4Nature project offers Poznań a unique opportunity to explore new collaboration models and build stronger links between the public and private sectors in delivering NbS. For our team, this represents both a strategic shift and a learning process. NbS and NbEs are being gradually embedded into key city frameworks, including the „City Development Strategy 2040+” and the „Climate Change Adaptation Plan”, where references to climate resilience, biodiversity enhancement, and small-scale green interventions are becoming more visible. Our aim is to ensure that NbS and NbEs move beyond pilot projects and become part of everyday urban practice and long-term planning. Achieving this requires political commitment, cross-departmental cooperation, and innovative financing approaches. While current
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	institutional and budgetary constraints remain challenging, strong citizen engagement and experimental pilot projects have helped drive progress. This creates a solid foundation for scaling NbS and strengthening the local NbE ecosystem. Poznań's main economic development priorities include: ❖ job creation and skills development, especially in future-oriented sectors ❖ climate resilience and environmental sustainability, as core urban challenges ❖ quality of life improvements, including access to green spaces and healthy environments ❖ urban regeneration and inclusive development, particularly in schools, neighbourhoods, and public spaces These priorities increasingly intersect, positioning green infrastructure and NbS not only as environmental tools but also as drivers of economic and social value.
How can planned NbS contribute to these economic priorities? <i>Examples; green jobs, urban greening, sustainability and climate adaptation</i>	For Invest4Nature, Poznań has developed an initial concept for a city-level strategy on NbS and NbEs. This framework continues to evolve but currently focuses on three strategic pillars: I. Integrating nature into urban planning for climate resilience and biodiversity Goal: Embed NbS into spatial planning and infrastructure to address heat stress, flooding, and biodiversity loss. Impact: This supports climate adaptation while generating demand for ecological design, construction, and maintenance services. II. Fostering a nature-based economy and innovation Goal: Strengthen NbEs as drivers of green jobs, entrepreneurship, and social innovation. Impact: NbS become not only environmental interventions but also sources of economic growth, skills development, and local business creation. III. Promoting inclusive and participatory

	governance of urban nature Goal: Co-design NbS with residents, schools, and communities to ensure equitable access and long-term stewardship. Impact: This increases public ownership, improves social outcomes, and creates opportunities for NbEs specialising in facilitation, education, and engagement. Together, these pillars link NbS directly to employment, resilience, innovation, and urban quality of life.
What, if any, strategies exist in your municipality/living lab that mention support for NbS? <i>Think also of the Nature Restoration Law which requires, by September 2026, that all EU member states finalise their plans to meet the Nature Restoration Law targets i.e. to restore at least 20% of EU land and sea by 2030. How does this impact your municipality/region?</i>	NbS are increasingly embedded in Poznań's key policy documents, including the „City Development Strategy 2040+”, „Municipal Revitalisation Programme”, and spatial planning frameworks. These documents promote climate adaptation, biodiversity enhancement, and green-blue infrastructure, creating a supportive policy environment for NbS implementation. The municipality actively uses public procurement, pilot projects, and partnerships with universities, NGOs, and social enterprises to enable green innovation. National and EU regulatory developments, including the „Nature Restoration Law”, are continuously monitored and integrated into local planning processes. The requirement to restore ecosystems and improve biodiversity by 2030 strengthens the strategic relevance of NbS and increases long-term demand for NbE services in planning, delivery, and maintenance.
For your NbS Exemplar (see T5.1) please consider how could NbEs contribute to the planning, delivery, maintenance, and sustainability of these solutions?	NbEs can play a central role across the entire NbS lifecycle: ❖ planning & design: landscape architects and ecological designers can co-create solutions with municipalities, schools, and residents, ensuring NbS respond to local needs, site conditions, and long-term climate risks. ❖ delivery & implementation: gardening contractors and specialist green infrastructure providers can translate designs into high-quality, functional NbS, using nature-based materials and

	biodiversity-oriented practices. ❖ maintenance & stewardship: NbEs can offer long-term maintenance services, adaptive management, and seasonal care, ensuring NbS continue to deliver ecosystem services over time rather than degrading after installation. ❖ education & behaviour change: environmental educators and social enterprises can support awareness, stewardship, and community ownership, strengthening social sustainability and public support. ❖ innovation & scaling: more advanced NbEs could integrate monitoring tools, digital solutions, or nature-based materials, helping the city evaluate impact and scale NbS more effectively. By engaging NbEs throughout the full lifecycle, NbS shift from one-off projects to durable, adaptive, and economically viable urban systems. Additional info below*
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***What types of NbEs are active in your region, and in which sectors?**

Nature-based Enterprises in Poznań are mainly active in:

- ❖ landscape architecture and design: firms experienced in green-blue infrastructure, natural playgrounds, schoolyards, and participatory planning.
- ❖ Gardening and horticultural services: contractors delivering planting, soil improvement, and long-term maintenance of urban greenery.
- ❖ environmental education and eco-innovation: organisations offering ecological learning tools, nature-based play concepts, and awareness-raising installations.
- ❖ specialist green infrastructure providers: companies working on green roofs, floating gardens, and water-sensitive design, though these are less common locally and often sourced from outside the city.

Key insight: the local NbE market is strongest in small-scale NbS (e.g. schoolyards, playgrounds, community spaces), while capacity for large-scale or technically complex NbS (e.g. wetlands, floodplains, blue-green corridors) remains limited.

What skill levels do they have?

- ❖ Landscape architects: typically university-trained professionals in landscape architecture, urban design, or related fields. Some have strong skills in co-creation and participatory processes, though this remains a niche specialisation.

- ❖ gardening and maintenance contractors: practitioners with vocational training or long-term experience in horticulture and urban greenery. Ecological planting and biodiversity-oriented practices are growing but not yet standard across the sector.
- ❖ environmental educators and facilitators: professionals with backgrounds in ecology, education, or social innovation, skilled in community engagement and behavioural change.

Skill gaps include:

- ❖ limited capacity for large-scale, multifunctional NbS (e.g. wetlands, integrated water systems)
- ❖ weak integration of monitoring, digital tools, and impact assessment
- ❖ emerging but uneven skills in long-term maintenance planning, adaptive management, and co-governance models

The nature-based enterprises in Poznań are primarily active in sectors related to landscape architecture, gardening, and ecological education. Their skill levels range from vocational expertise in horticulture to professional qualifications in landscape design, with some emerging capacity in co-creation and participatory design. However, there are still gaps in scaling up NbS, particularly for complex green-blue infrastructure, and in integrating innovation and digital tools into NbS delivery.

2.3. CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH NBS PROVISION, DELIVERY & MAINTENANCE

Guiding questions:

What are the challenges from a region/living lab perspective in involving NbEs in the implementation of NbS?	lack of awareness
If more than one or other challenges are evident, please state or expand on the above answer.	The main and cross-cutting challenge is low awareness, both among enterprises and within public institutions, of NbEs as a distinct economic category and of NbS as a viable business opportunity, not only an environmental tool. This limited awareness affects market development, procurement practices, financing, and skills formation. As a result, Poznań faces several interconnected challenges: ❖ low recognition of NbEs, making it difficult to identify suitable partners and build a structured market ❖ limited investor interest, as NbS-related costs and benefits are harder

	to measure using traditional financial indicators ❖ scaling barriers, due to a small pool of specialised service providers (e.g. landscape architects with co-creation skills, contractors with ecological expertise) ❖ fragmented funding streams and lack of long-term financing models for implementation and maintenance ❖ public procurement constraints, where standard procedures do not sufficiently reward ecological performance or long-term value ❖ municipal budget pressures, including current cost-saving measures In practice, the biggest challenge has been the absence of a visible market: few suppliers, limited experience, and low awareness of NbS as an economic sector. This makes it difficult to deliver projects at scale or within tight timeframes. Additional risks include: ❖ difficulty sourcing qualified contractors for large or parallel investments ❖ lack of shared impact metrics for economic and environmental performance ❖ risk of green gentrification and over-commercialisation of public green spaces To respond, the city has organised conferences, publications, and knowledge-sharing platforms, built partnerships with universities, social enterprises, and innovators; used pilot projects, especially in schools and preschools to test and demonstrate solutions and embedded safeguards into planning processes to protect accessibility, inclusiveness, and public value.
What are the enablers from a region/living lab perspective in involving NbEs in the implementation of NbS?	Other
If more than one or other enablers are	Within Poznań City Hall, and particularly in

evident, please state or expand on the above answer.	the Project Coordination and Urban Regeneration Office, NbS have traditionally been approached from environmental and social perspectives, but increasingly also from an economic and market development lens. Several enabling factors are emerging: ❖ NbS projects such as open gardens and natural playgrounds are already creating new jobs in landscape design, gardening, education, social enterprises, and maintenance services. ❖ there is growing recognition that NbS contribute not only to climate adaptation but also to local economic development, neighbourhood attractiveness, and quality of life. ❖ pilot projects, partnerships, and co-creation processes are helping generate new services, skills, and business models related to green infrastructure, health, education, and public space. While Nature-Based Entrepreneurship as a formal concept is still new, these early signals indicate that NbS are already delivering socio-economic value. NbE represents the next logical step, an emerging but promising market with strong long-term potential. Additional info below*
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*To be transparent, Poznań started with NbS, not NbE. The concept of nature-based entrepreneurship is still new in Poland, including within public administration. Initial efforts therefore focused on raising awareness, identifying potential NbE actors, and building shared understanding among municipal departments and external stakeholders. Current support mechanisms include:

- ❖ embedding NbS in strategic documents (Development Strategy 2040+, Revitalisation Programme, spatial policies)
- ❖ using public procurement to create demand for nature-based solutions
- ❖ running pilot projects in schools and neighbourhoods
- ❖ partnering with universities, NGOs, and social economy actors to enable experimentation and learning

Concrete outcomes so far include:

- ❖ growth of specialised contractors in natural playgrounds and green public space design
- ❖ stronger cooperation between education, design, and environmental sectors
- ❖ new competencies emerging in local SMEs and social enterprises

Poznań is now moving towards a more intentional NbE approach, including matchmaking platforms, skills development programmes, and cooperation with business-support institutions. However, the city remains realistic: this is still a market in formation, not yet a mature ecosystem.

3. PLANNED STRATEGY FOR NbE SUPPORT/NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE REGION

Based on your region's CURRENT level of awareness/support for NbEs, what stage of the entrepreneurship support strategy process are you aiming to reach?	Stage 1: Raising Awareness & Strategic Alignment
Please offer an explanation to your above answer.	Poznań is currently at an early awareness and market-shaping stage in relation to NbEs. While understanding of NbS is growing, NbE as a business concept is still emerging. The city's immediate ambition is therefore to move from awareness-building towards structured engagement of SMEs, particularly in developing cooperation models between the public and private sectors. Through Invest4Nature, Poznań aims to co-create and test innovative finance, governance, and business models for different NbS typologies, supporting both public investment and private-sector involvement. This ambition is being operationalised through a place-based pilot in the Główna District, implemented jointly by the municipality, private partners, and NGOs. The pilot focuses on small-scale blue-green infrastructure combined with longer-term district action planning. It

	includes: ❖ district-level diagnosis of access to blue-green infrastructure and ecosystem services ❖ plot-level feasibility analyses for pilot interventions ❖ assessment of private-sector engagement and CSR investment potential ❖ development and validation of legal, organisational, and procurement frameworks for public-private cooperation Workshops will allow these analytical components to be translated into tested, implementable investment and governance models that are stakeholder-validated, transferable, and aligned with local planning and financing systems.
What key activities can you feasibly put in place to enhance the current level of awareness/support for nature-based entrepreneurship (based on the remaining timespan of the I4N project)? <i>Examples:</i> • <i>Carry out an internal workshop between departments on the value of NbS and the role of NbEs in delivering value;</i> • <i>Share awareness raising materials for NbEs at relevant departmental events/meetings;</i> • <i>Run a workshop with NbEs/NbS practitioners.</i> • <i>Collaborate/partner with the local enterprise agency on developing targeted supports.</i>	Poznań can realistically implement the following actions: ❖ internal capacity building: run cross-departmental workshops for municipal staff on the value of NbS and the role of NbEs in delivery, maintenance, and innovation. ❖ targeted awareness raising: develop and share practical guidance materials for SMEs and NbEs (Invest handbook) ❖ market engagement: organise workshops with NbEs, designers, contractors, NGOs, and social enterprises to explore collaboration models and pilot opportunities. ❖ institutional partnerships: collaborate with the local enterprise agency and business-support organisations to design targeted support instruments for NbEs (e.g. climate partnership, water partnerships). In addition, as part of the planned NbS Academy (internal budget task of the city), the city could:

	❖ deliver in-house training for officials on NbS and NbE models ❖ commission hands-on workshops in schools and kindergartens (e.g. willow weaving, water retention features, nature-based play) ❖ organise study visits to NbS implementation sites in Poznań ❖ use educational settings as demonstration spaces linking learning, community engagement, and market development These activities would strengthen awareness, build skills, expand demand for NbS services, and help move Poznań from early-stage market formation towards structured, „implementation-ready” NbE ecosystems.
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The economics of nature-based solutions.

CASCAIS, PORTUGAL

LOCAL NATURE-BASED
ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY



Funded by
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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. WHAT ARE NATURE-BASED ENTERPRISES?

The need for Nature-based Solutions has become widely recognised by countries and policymakers since its initial introduction by the World Bank and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in the late 2000s. NbS is formally defined as:

“actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human wellbeing, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits.” (UNEA, 2022, p.2).

Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) are private sector businesses that are responsible for the planning, delivery and/or maintenance of Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem services, such as regenerative farming, eco-tourism and green buildings. Nature-based enterprises are key actors in the transition to a Nature-Positive Economy (Koh et al., 2025), and can be formally defined as:

“an enterprise, engaged in economic activity that uses nature sustainably as a core element of their product/service offering. Here, nature may be engaged directly by growing, harnessing, harvesting or sustainably restoring natural ecosystems, and/or indirectly by contributing to the planning, delivery or stewardship of nature-based solutions. A nature-based enterprise must contribute positively to biodiversity and ecosystem services.” (McQuaid et al., 2021, p.1; Koojiman et al., 2021).

In terms of nature-based economic activities, Nature-based Enterprises can contribute to nature either directly through, for instance, ecosystem restoration, NbS for green buildings, NbS for public and urban spaces, or indirectly through, for instance, advisory services or smart technology, monitoring and assessment for NbS (Koojiman et al., 2021).



Figure 1. The range of economic activities that a NbE can carry out that directly and indirectly impact nature.

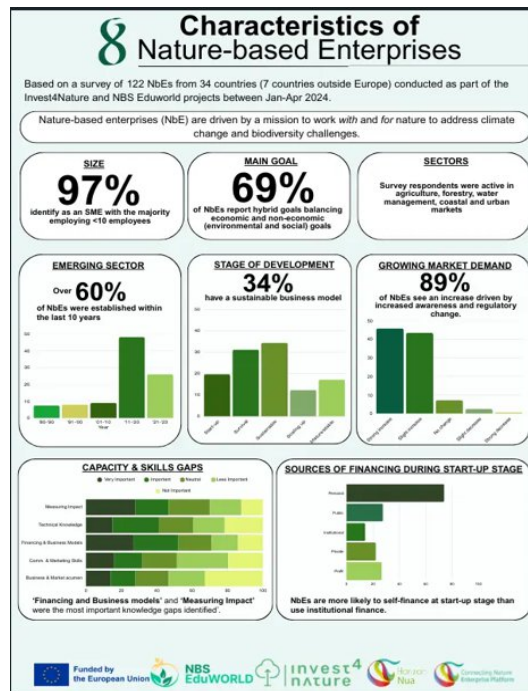


Figure 2. Infographic of NbE characteristics.

Based on a 2024 survey of NbEs across 34 countries, it was found that the vast majority of Nature-based Enterprises are SMEs (97%), with most having less than 10 employees. Almost 70% of NbEs report hybrid goals, balancing economic and non-economic (social and environmental) objectives. They can be classified as an emerging sector with over 60% of NbEs having been established within the last 10 years. The vast majority (89%) have seen an increase in market demand driven by increased awareness and regulatory change. NbEs are more likely to resort to personal finance during start-up before turning to institutional funds. "Measuring impact" and "financing and business models" are the top two most important capacity and skill gaps experienced by this particular sector.

1.2. SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Nature-based Enterprises are a key player in the transition to a Nature-Positive Economy. They deliver economic goals through job creation, business opportunities and stimulating innovation and creating new skills for local economies. In tandem, they offer social benefits, such as increased health and wellbeing for the residents of a locality, and environmental benefits, such as halting the loss of biodiversity, reducing air pollution, combatting urban heat stress and other benefits. Cities, regions and municipalities can thus benefit from the place-based NbS that Nature-based Enterprises can offer to solve local environmental challenges. There is a three-step, holistic approach (devised by the Connecting Nature project) that can stimulate the start-up and support the growth of Nature-based Enterprises to a region.

Step 1 – Raising Awareness & Strategic Alignment - A lack of awareness of NbS and their benefits often corresponds with low support for NbS across local government departments. This has a knock-on effect by limiting the market growth and demand for NbEs and their products/services. The first step is thus to raise awareness amongst departmental heads, and political leaders, of the value generated by NbS, and the role of NbEs in delivering such value. To begin, consider how NbS may support the strategic goals of the city/region (e.g., municipality plans) and beyond (national policy, EU policy, UN Sustainable Development Goals), and how NbEs may help to deliver on their social, environmental and economic value.

Step 2 - Taking Stock & Building Alliances - This next step is about mapping the innovation ecosystem¹ and building alliances. Taking stock of existing local NbEs and

¹ An innovation ecosystem is a network of interconnected individuals, teams and entities that co-evolve to

cross-checking them with the city's needs is an important start. Map out the NbEs which could deliver NbS and assess the internal and external barriers faced by them. To address these barriers you will need support and expertise from a broad coalition of experts. These alliances could be internal by for instance, connecting the local government department responsible for NbS/environment with the one for enterprise. External alliances could come in the form of connections with financial institutions/enterprise support networks that can help to address barriers of funding/skill gaps in Nature-based Enterprises.

Step 3 – Plan and Deliver a Customized NBE (Pilot) Support Programme - The specific measures to put in place to support NbEs will depend on Steps 1 and 2. In local government departments, responsibility for enterprise will differ to that of environmental issues, and so decisions must be made as to who will be responsible to plan, lead and implement an NbE support programme. Any such support programme (an accelerator, incubator programme, training programme etc.) should be co-created with the eco-system actors in Step 2, especially NbEs, to ensure the support measures address actual needs.

2. CURRENT STATUS OF NBE SUPPORT/NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE REGION

2.1. MAPPING AND ENGAGEMENT WITH NBEs

Guiding questions (*please note that some of the information requested may not be readily available to your organisation/department and may require research/engagement with other departments or external bodies responsible for enterprise support and development*).

Do you interact with NBEs in your role in the municipality / region?	Yes, regularly
Please provide some additional context to the above answer.	<i>The Municipality of Cascais has a long-standing tradition of engaging with actors that plan, deliver and maintain nature-based solutions, even if these actors are not always formally recognised as Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs). This engagement is rooted in Cascais' historical commitment to environmental protection, coastal management, water management and landscape valorisation, which has evolved alongside the municipality's development as a coastal, touristic and environmentally progressive territory. Interactions mainly occur through environmental projects, climate</i>

facilitate shared innovation conception and delivery. Can include industry, government, academic and civil society stakeholders.

	<i>adaptation initiatives, water management programmes, coastal protection actions, living labs and EU-funded projects, including Invest4Nature.</i> <i>Examples:</i> • <i>Ribeira das Vinhas project (stream renaturalisation, green corridors)</i> • <i>Guincho-Cresmina dune monitoring with ecological restoration firms.</i>
If enterprise support does not come under your remit, then who / what department is responsible in your organisation?	<i>Enterprise support responsibilities are shared across multiple municipal departments, including environment, innovation, economic development, strategic planning, spatial planning, biodiversity and ecosystem services. This transversal approach reflects the integrated nature of NbS, but also highlights the need for stronger coordination, which Invest4Nature helps to facilitate.</i>
What are the sectors of NbEs within your region?	<i>The main sector currently identified is water management, including sustainable urban drainage systems, water reuse, efficiency solutions and coastal resilience. Example: flood control solutions at Ribeira das Vinhas (water retention, 1m flood reduction)</i>
If more than one or other sectors, please state.	<i>Emerging sectors include ecosystem restoration, urban green infrastructure, environmental monitoring and nature-based tourism, ecosystem restoration (Cresmina Dune - sand traps, observation paths).</i>
Who are the NbEs operating in each of the relevant sectors to your region? Can you identify them, or if not, put N/A?	<i>Several organisations operate in Cascais' NbS sectors, though formal NbE classification is emerging. Key examples by sector:</i> <i>Water management (stream renaturalisation, flood prevention):</i> • <i>Águas de Cascais (municipal concessionaire): Implements Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and wastewater solutions (e.g., Ribeira das Vinhas stream restoration, Caparide Stream NbS). Provides NbS services like sustainable drainage and water reuse.</i>

	<i>Ecosystem restoration:</i> • <i>Quinta do Pisão: Natural grazing, habitat restoration (2300ha).</i>
What specific challenges do NbEs encounter in your region? <i>Examples: internal barriers to financing for NbEs include challenges measuring impact, lack of interest, investor alignment, support measures, internal resources and knowledge of options. Other external challenges may include challenges re public procurement (in the case of public sector clients) and lack of awareness/knowledge among clients, investors and other stakeholders of the benefits of NbS.</i>	• <i>Low recognition of NbEs as a distinct economic sector;</i> • <i>Difficulties in measuring, demonstrating and monetising environmental and social impact;</i> • <i>Limited access to finance adapted to hybrid business models;</i> • <i>Public procurement procedures not fully aligned with innovative NbS;</i> • <i>Limited awareness of NbS benefits among clients, investors and some decision-makers.</i>
What specific enablers do NbEs encounter in your region? <i>Examples: targeted networks, creditations/standards for NbS, targeted funding/subsidies for NbS, capacity building & training, change in procurement procedures that are favourable to NbS/NbEs.</i>	• <i>Strong political commitment to sustainability, climate action and biodiversity;</i> • <i>Experience in pilot projects and living labs;</i> • <i>Active local and regional networks (e.g. universities);</i> • <i>Participation in EU projects such as Invest4Nature, which provides tools, capacity-building and access to innovative financing mechanisms.</i>
How would you describe the level of awareness of Nature-based Enterprises in your municipality/region?	Low
Please explain your answer to the above.	<i>Although Cascais has high awareness of environmental issues and NbS, the concept of NbEs as economic actors delivering these solutions is not yet widely understood.</i>

If engagement with/awareness of NbEs is low, then look at who in the region could be a first point of contact for nature-based enterprises:

Who are the main actors in the innovation ecosystem of each region/living lab?	<i>Chambers of Commerce, business associations, incubators, universities and municipal units focused on innovation and sustainability.</i>
If more than one or other innovation ecosystem actors are involved, please state or expand on the above answer.	<i>Universities, research centres, start-up incubators, environmental NGOs, financial institutions and municipal departments.</i>
How could multiple actors be empowered in building a common vision and plan for nature-based entrepreneurship? <i>Examples: awareness raising measures, capacity building</i>	<i>Through awareness-raising actions, shared training programmes, cross-departmental workshops and alignment around Invest4Nature objectives and tools.</i>
How can these actors be engaged to stimulate a culture of nature-based entrepreneurship and support the emergence and growth of NbEs? <i>Examples: silo busting, champions for NbEs, awareness raising events for NbEs</i>	<i>By breaking down silos, identifying NbE champions, organising thematic events, and showcasing Invest4Nature pilot cases and financing opportunities.</i>
What is the level of knowledge and skills of the I4N team in your region/living lab in terms of supporting the emergence and growth of NbEs?	<i>Low</i>
If low, and there are skills gaps that have been identified, how do you plan to address them?	<i>Through Invest4Nature capacity-building activities, peer-learning with other regions, technical assistance, and exposure to innovative financing and impact measurement approaches.</i>
If knowledge is medium or high, what measures are being undertaken to support NbEs?	-

Please provide some additional context to the above answer.

The Municipality of Cascais has a long-standing tradition of engaging with actors that plan, deliver and maintain nature-based solutions, even if these actors are not always formally recognised as Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs). This engagement is rooted in Cascais' historical commitment to environmental protection, coastal management, water management and landscape valorisation, which has evolved alongside the municipality's development as a coastal, touristic and environmentally progressive territory. Interactions mainly occur through environmental projects, climate adaptation initiatives, water management programmes, coastal protection actions, living labs and EU-funded projects, including Invest4Nature.

2.2. CURRENT NbS PROVISION, DELIVERY & MAINTENANCE

A review of current NbS provision, delivery and maintenance (and whether this can be supplied in-house through municipalities or should be sought externally).

Guiding questions:

What are the priorities for economic development in your region/living lab? <i>Examples: jobs growth, economic development, housing</i>	Job creation, sustainable economic development, climate resilience, affordable housing.
How can planned NbS contribute to these economic priorities? <i>Examples; green jobs, urban greening, sustainability and climate adaptation</i>	NbS can create green jobs, stimulate local innovation, enhance climate adaptation, improve ecosystem services and increase the attractiveness of Cascais as a sustainable territory for investment and tourism.
What, if any, strategies exist in your municipality/living lab that mention support for NbS? <i>Think also of the Nature Restoration Law which requires, by September 2026, that all EU member states finalise their plans to meet the Nature Restoration Law targets i.e. to restore at least 20% of EU land and sea by 2030. How does the Nature Restoration Law impact your municipality / region?</i>	Municipal strategies related to climate adaptation, water management, coastal resilience and sustainability explicitly support NbS. These are further reinforced by EU policy frameworks, including the Nature Restoration Law, which requires significant ecosystem restoration by 2030. It increases the need for scalable, cost-effective NbS and opens opportunities for NbEs to contribute to restoration targets, supported by innovative financing mechanisms promoted through Invest4Nature. Examples of documents: • PDM Cascais (Municipal Master Plan): Stream green corridors. • Climate Adaptation Plan: Ribeira Vinhas as exemplar. • NRL (Nature Restoration Law): 20% restoration by 2030 → Guincho dunes via NbEs.
For your NbS Exemplar (see T5.1) please consider how could NbEs contribute to the planning, delivery, maintenance, and sustainability of these solutions?	Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) can play a structuring role across the full lifecycle of Nature-based Solutions (NbS), contributing to their planning, implementation, long-term maintenance and impact assessment. These entities can support the development of technically robust and financially viable

	solutions, assist with operational delivery, ensure long-term management and monitoring, and generate evidence on environmental, social and economic performance. In doing so, NbEs enhance the sustainability and scalability of NbS, in line with responsible investment principles and approaches that integrate environmental impact with financial viability.
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2.3. CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH NbS PROVISION, DELIVERY & MAINTENANCE

Guiding questions:

What are the challenges from a region/living lab perspective in involving NbEs in the implementation of NbS?	From a regional and municipal perspective, the main challenge is the insufficient internal expertise and practical experience in systematically involving Nature-based Enterprises in the planning, procurement, implementation and long-term maintenance of NbS. Although Cascais has strong technical capacity in environmental management, NbEs are not yet fully embedded in standard operational and procurement processes. Additional challenges include limited familiarity with innovative financing models, uncertainty around risk-sharing with private actors, and a lack of standardized frameworks for evaluating NbS performance and impact over time.
If more than one or other challenges are evident, please state or expand on the above answer.	Further challenges include: • [Resource constraints] Fragmentation across municipal departments, making coordinated engagement with NbEs more complex; • [Lack of awareness] Procurement procedures that are still largely oriented towards conventional grey infrastructure solutions; • [Limited current supply of NbS providers/enterprises (NbEs)] Limited market maturity of NbEs, many of which are small or emerging enterprises;

What are the enablers from a region/living lab perspective in involving NbEs in the implementation of NbS?	Key enablers include a strong policy and strategic commitment to sustainability, climate adaptation and biodiversity at municipal, national and EU levels. Cascais' experience in EU-funded projects and living lab approaches provides a solid foundation for experimentation and learning.
If more than one or other enablers are evident, please state or expand on the above answer.	Additional enablers include: • [Political support] Political leadership supportive of innovation and nature-based approaches; • [Subsidies and other incentives] Existing pilot projects that can act as demonstration cases; • [Market demand] Active local innovation ecosystems and partnerships;

3. PLANNED STRATEGY FOR NBE SUPPORT/NATURE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE REGION

Based on your region's CURRENT level of awareness/support for NbEs, what stage of the entrepreneurship support strategy process are you aiming to reach?	Stage 1: Raising Awareness & Strategic Alignment
Please offer an explanation to your above answer.	Cascais needs to further consolidate a shared understanding of NbEs and their role in delivering NbS, aligning environmental, economic and financial perspectives. Invest4Nature provides the ideal platform to achieve this alignment.
What key activities can you feasibly put in place to enhance the current level of awareness/support for nature-based entrepreneurship (based on the remaining timespan of the I4N project)?	• Awareness sessions for political and technical decision-makers; • Mapping and engagement of NbEs operating in Cascais; • Promotion of Invest4Nature tools,

<i>Examples:</i> • <i>Carry out an internal workshop between departments on the value of NbS and the role of NbEs in delivering value;</i> • <i>Share awareness raising materials for NbEs at relevant departmental events/meetings;</i> • <i>Run a workshop with NbEs/NbS practitioners.</i> • <i>Collaborate/partner with the local enterprise agency on developing targeted supports.</i>	pilot projects and blended finance opportunities. These actions will establish a solid foundation for progressing to subsequent stages of NbE support, positioning Cascais as a frontrunner in nature-positive entrepreneurship.
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THE ECONOMICS OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS



THE FARMER AS NATURE STEWARD

A SUPPORT STRATEGY FOR A NATUREBASED ENTERPRISE



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1. INTRODUCTION

Aarhus Municipality's Climate Plan 2025–2030 maintains the goal of carbon neutrality by 2030 and sets a long-term objective for land-use change involving the conversion of large agricultural areas, reducing agricultural land from 55% to 34% (See figure 1).

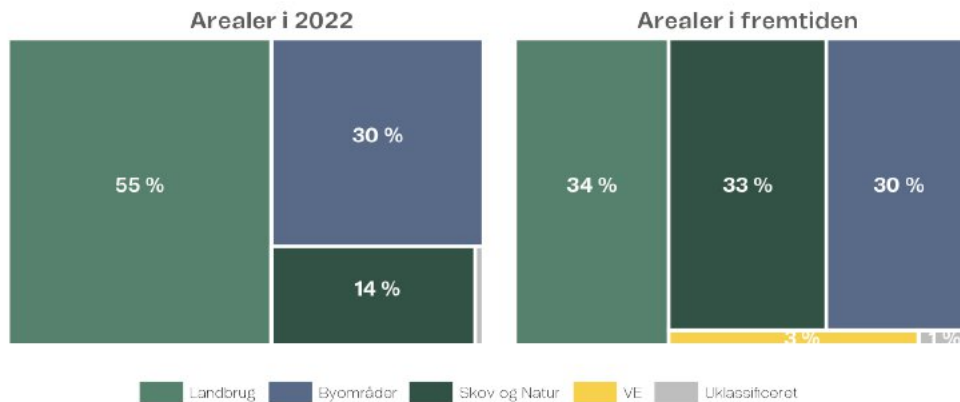


Figure 1: Schematic representation of land use composition in Aarhus Municipality

Furthermore, agriculture is expected to be part of the transformation of the food system, and greenhouse gas emissions from farms must be reduced to ensure that agriculture remains an important and valuable contributor to food production.

Four key initiatives are relevant to this strategy:

1. Conversion to forest and nature (establishment of Water and Nature Parks)
2. Rewetting of lowland soils
3. Climate inspections and climate action plans in agriculture
4. Transformation of food production

These initiatives are closely connected and all place the farmer at the center. This strategy describes how Aarhus Municipality can support the development of the farmer as a nature-based enterprise contributing to the goals of the climate plan—in simple terms: the farmer as a nature steward.

Discussions with full-time farmers to date show that many wish to continue farming the most productive and resilient agricultural land while simultaneously developing as nature stewards on areas with higher potential for nature restoration. The strategy encompasses both farmers who wish to fully transition from agricultural production to nature management and those who wish to implement a partial transition.

2. VISION

The vision is to create the framework that enables farmers to act as professional nature stewards and become active, visible contributors to society's climate and biodiversity goals. The farmer becomes the hero.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

3.1. OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The strategy should:

1. Support the establishment and scaling of farmers as nature stewards
2. Contribute to municipal climate and nature goals
3. Develop financing models enabling conversion of all or part of a farm from agricultural production to forest and nature management
4. Create partnerships between public and private actors

3.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Increase the area dedicated to nature and biodiversity
- Develop at least one operational financing model for nature management
- Educate and advise farmers on “the farmer as nature steward”

4. ORGANIZATION

A project group will be established with participation from the departments “Circular Resources”, “Business”, and Nature & Environment. The organization should ensure coherence between climate, nature, and business initiatives.

The strategy is anchored in Aarhus Municipality's Climate Plan 2025–2030 and primarily focuses on the initiatives ‘Conversion of Forest and Nature (establishment of Water and Nature Parks)’ and ‘Retirement of Lowland Soils’.

5. BARRIERS

The strategy identifies the following centrale barrier for farmers to become nature stewards:

5.1. FINANCIAL BARRIERS

- Lack of stable financing models, that can take the loss of converting farmland to nature
- Uncertainty regarding income from nature-based solutions
- High initial investment costs
- Limited access to green finance
- Investor and bank expectations regarding returns per hectare

5.2. ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS

- Lack of coordination among stakeholders

- Limited knowledge of NBE models
- Lack of competencies and advisory services

5.3. CULTURAL BARRIERS

- Farmer identity is centered on food production and as contributor to economic growth
- Traditional perceptions of nature and farming
- Cultural and economic intergenerational expectations
- Pressure to expand farms for succession
- Permanent land-use commitments

5.4. REGULATORY BARRIERS

- Complex legislation
- Dependence on EU agricultural schemes
- Lack of incentives
- Administrative burdens
- Nature development may limit future development opportunities for the farmer

6. STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

To develop and implement the strategy it is necessary to involve and co-create with external stakeholders:

- Farmers and landowners interested in developing “The farmer as a nature steward”
- Farmers associations
- Aarhus Water Planning Committee
- Banks and investors
- Central Denmark EU Office
- Danish Agricultural Agency
- SEGES Innovation
- Farmers already transitioning to nature stewardship – both partly and full transition

These stakeholders are invited into a partnership forum/living lab to guide and monitor the progress. Efforts will be made to establish a pilot project involving a farmer, ensuring that the initiative remains practice-oriented and that the results are actively implemented

7. FINANCING MODELS

A central focus of the strategy is the development of financing models that provide both the incentives and the financial feasibility for farmers to transition, either partially or fully, to the role of nature steward.

Potential financing models include:

- Payments for ecosystem services
- Carbon and biodiversity credits
- ESG-driven companies
- Public-private partnerships
- Green investment funds
- EU funding
- The Green Tripartite Agreement

The aim is to create longterm and scalable solutions

8. CAPACITY BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION

To secure implementation the strategy must be supported by capacity building and communication:

8.1. COMMUNICATION

- Dissemination of good examples
- Visibility of NBE benefits
- Dialogue with local communities and the farmers

8.2. CAPACITY BUILDING

- Education and training for farmers and companies. Aarhus Municipality has developed 30 climate actionplans for 30 farmers. The knowledge and network of this activity will be included
- Financing and business development advice
- Workshops and demonstration projects
- Knowledge sharing among stakeholders

9. IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the strategy should be carried out in phases and be based on political support, cross-sectoral collaboration, and the development of concrete demonstration projects.

The work will be organized as a process focused on establishing a solid foundation for the farmer as a nature steward and ensuring effective implementation in practice.

9.1. PHASE 1 – ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL ANCHORING

The first phase focuses on establishing the organizational structure and securing political ownership.

Key actions include:

- Establishment of a cross-departmental project organization
 - Decisions regarding project management and governance
-

- Securing political support
- Identification of key stakeholders and partners

It is recommended that an internal project group be established with representatives from relevant departments, including Nature, Circular Resources, Business Development, and, where relevant, other departments.

9.2. PHASE 2 – MAPPING, ANALYSIS AND ALLIANCE BUILDING

This phase aims to establish the necessary knowledge base and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders.

Key actions include:

- Establishment of a project group involving external stakeholders
- Mapping of existing initiatives and opportunities
- Identification of barriers to implementation
- Collection of knowledge on funding sources and financing models
- Analysis of international experience and best practices
- Formation of alliances with banks, investors, utility companies, and knowledge institutions
- Dialogue with farmers and industry organizations

At the same time, efforts should be made to identify the most significant barriers, including:

- Regulatory barriers at both EU and national levels
- Farmers' economic and operational challenges
- Barriers related to food production and land use
- Limited access to financing and risk capital

9.3. PHASE 3 – PILOT PROJECTS AND LIVING LABS

The strategy should be translated into practice through the establishment of pilot projects and demonstration sites.

Key actions include:

- Development of concrete pilot projects with farmers
- Testing of financing models
- Development of partnerships between public and private stakeholders

The pilot projects should demonstrate the opportunities available and serve as platforms for learning and knowledge generation.

9.4. PHASE 4 – CAPACITY BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION

A key part of implementation is strengthening competencies and creating a broad understanding that nature stewardship can be a viable business model and “production line” for farmers, either fully or partially.

Key actions include:

- Dissemination of knowledge to farmers and businesses
- Training programmes and workshops
- Exchange of experiences among stakeholders
- Communication initiatives targeted at citizens, businesses, and decision-makers
- Promotion of successful case studies

Communication efforts should support both political backing and local acceptance.

9.5. FASE 5 – SCALING AND LONG-TERM INTEGRATION

Based on the experiences gained from pilot projects and partnerships, the strategy should be scaled up.

This includes:

- Integration into municipal plans and strategies
- Expansion to larger geographical areas
- Development of long-term financing models
- Continued development of partnerships and investment models
- Integration into the municipality’s climate and nature initiatives

The objective is to establish a permanent framework for the development and support of the farmer as a nature steward.

10. SUCCES CRITERIA

The strategy will be evaluated based on:

- The number of established farmers who choose to become nature stewards, either fully or partially
- The area converted to nature-based solutions
- The amount of CO₂ stored and/or reduced
- The number of businesses and farmers involved
- The level of investment and external funding attracted

11. CONCLUSION

The farmer as a nature steward represents significant potential for climate action, biodiversity enhancement, and business development. Through a strategic and

coordinated effort, the municipality can create the conditions for a new generation of green enterprises while accelerating the green transition.

A successful strategy requires:

- Close collaboration between public and private stakeholders
- Long-term financing models
- Strong political anchoring
- Capacity building and knowledge sharing
- A focus on implementation and scaling-up activities

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