



Network
Nature

Network Nature

Annual Event Report

Enabling transformation through
and for nature-based solutions

IUCN

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Executive summary

The [NetworkNature](#) Annual Event 2023 “Enabling transformation through and for Nature-based Solutions” took place on 8th June 2023, at the Flagey Building in Brussels and brought together more than 150 participants to discuss the transformative nature of nature-based solutions (NbS).

The meeting was an all-day event with a morning plenary session composed of interviews, presentations, panel debates, and interactive sessions, and in the afternoon three parallel sessions. The event closed with an evening reception. Prior to the event (Wednesday, June 7th 2023) and after the event (Friday, June 9th 2023), NbS site visits were organised respectively in Brussels and in Mechelen.

The event focused on the transformative nature of NbS, and on how NbS benefits reach across sectors and communities with their transformative potential. The discussions revolved around the transformations needed in policy, in the economic and financing sectors, and in science and practice to mainstream NbS. NetworkNature products and EU-funded NbS projects were also presented during the event. The event hosted the official launch of two important documents: the [EIB report on financing nature-based solutions](#), and the [NetworkNature Nature-based Solutions R&I Roadmap](#). Further, the [NbS Comics series](#) was presented, a project funded by the European Commission under the framework of NetworkNature and led by the Nature of Cities.

Throughout the day, participants had access to the NbS marketplace, a physical place dedicated to posters related to NbS businesses, projects, initiatives, and research to help people to network, share their knowledge, and experience on NbS.

The full agenda of the event can be found [here](#).

Introduction

Enabling transformation through and for nature-based solutions

Objectives and themes

The NetworkNature Annual Event “Enabling transformation through and for Nature-based Solutions” took place on 8th June 2023, at the Flagey Building in Brussels and brought together more than 150 participants to discuss the transformative nature of nature-based solutions (NbS).

The event concluded the NetworkNature project as it comes to an end in July 2023, but also prepared the ground for the next chapter, NetworkNature+. It brought together the NbS community once again to discuss the transformative nature of NbS, on how NbS benefits reach across sectors and communities with their transformative potential. The event discussed which transformations are needed in policy, in the economic and financing sectors, and in science and practice to mainstream NbS. NetworkNature products and EU-funded NbS projects were also presented during the event. The event provided participants the opportunity to network and to share their knowledge and experience on NbS.

Participation

The NetworkNature Annual Event 2023 brought together at least 150 participants, including NetworkNature partners and the European Commission (European Research Executive Agency, DG Agriculture, DG Research & Innovation, DG Environment, DG Climate Action, DG International Partnerships and DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations), as well as EU NbS projects representatives and stakeholders from various backgrounds, representing practitioners, finance institutions, businesses, policy and research. The meeting was open to the public, and aimed at reaching audiences that go also beyond the European NbS community. Policy makers, scientific experts, civil society, investors and financing institutions, infrastructure planners and builders, landowners and natural resource managers, as well as anybody who is involved or interested in NbS were invited.

Marketplace

As an innovative element, NetworkNature organised the NbS Marketplace, a physical area where posters of multiple NbS initiatives, projects and businesses were portrayed and where participants could network and explore the details of different NbS work. The marketplace hosted 28 posters, including 19 from EU NbS projects collaborating with NetworkNature and 9 from other initiatives.



Figure 1 - NbS Marketplace

Site visits

NbS site visits in Brussels

Three NbS site visits were organised on the 7th June 2023 by [Bruxelles Environnement](#) and [Athénée Royal Bruxelles 2 School](#), followed by a drinks' reception. The first site was [Parckfarm](#), the second was [L28 Park](#) and the third one was [Athénée Royal Bruxelles 2 School](#). NbS initiatives were presented in relation to the management of green spaces, and an educational vegetable garden in the school's playground.



Figure 2 - Photos taken during the three site visits in Brussels

NbS site visit in Mechelen

A site visit was organised on the 9th June 2023 by [Natuurpunt Beheer](#) in [Mechels Broek](#), a wetland reserve in Mechelen, to witness the restoration of ecosystem functions provided by a

natural area, including water retention and infiltration to protect the downstream area and make the city of Mechelen more resilient to climatic events.



Figure 3 - Photos of the site visit in Mechels Broek

Welcome and introductions

The opening plenary of the NetworkNature Annual Event started with a welcome and introduction by David Maddox from the Nature of Cities, moderator of the event. He introduced the [NetworkNature project](#), and the structure and objective of the day. As NetworkNature is transitioning to its second phase, NetworkNature+, David introduced some of the main outcomes achieved in the first phase.



Figure 4 - Main NetworkNature products by target audience

Paola Lepori, European Commission DG RTD and Alice Reil, ICLEI and coordinator of NetworkNature, gave a welcome speech to the participants. Alice stressed the importance of bringing together the NbS community as well as of enlarging it to maximise the impact that NbS can have. She emphasised the key role of NetworkNature and reminded everyone of its upcoming next phase, NetworkNature+. Paola mentioned that the European Commission has devoted particular attention to NbS since 2013, with an investment of more than half a billion in over 50 NbS projects. NbS are encompassed in many European strategies, such as the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#), the [EU Climate Adaptation Strategy](#), among other. Particular emphasis was placed on the year 2022, a landmark year for NbS at global level with the [UNEA definition](#), the [UNFCCC Sharm el-Sheikh implementation plan](#) and the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#). The European NbS community, which now encompasses a wide range of sectors and backgrounds, has developed and is very active, thanks in particular to NetworkNature, which has played a fundamental role in harnessing its collective intelligence.

Finally, Philippe Tulkens, Head of the Climate and Planetary Boundaries Unit at European Commission DG RTD, delivered an inspiring keynote speech on making peace with nature, and the role of transformations needed from governments, businesses and organisations for reinventing innovation with nature. He pointed out to the crises we are facing and how the relationship between climate change and biodiversity loss is symbiotic. It is only by considering

them together as parts of the same complex problem that adequate solutions can be found to address the situation. NbS are not only tangible actions that can be implemented to improve the situation, but are also bringing a different paradigm in the relationship between humans and nature. Indeed, NbS can help to promote transformative changes, a nature-positive economy, inclusion and plurality of values, mainstream biodiversity and its intrinsic value. Therefore, the NbS community has a key role to play, including via the mission on adaptation to climate change. With the support of the European Commission and NetworkNature, the dialogue with policy makers on NbS can also be facilitated.

Enabling transformation in policy through and for NbS

NetworkNature Policy Package

Shreya Utkarsh, ICLEI, presented the NetworkNature Policy Package. The package is composed of two briefs. A [first policy brief](#) outlines the role of cities and regions in the EU Nature Restoration Law, prioritising actions on ecosystem restoration, and adopting biodiversity-positive design in cities. A [second policy brief](#) provides a timely and brief overview of the current policy incentives for NbS and sustainability education in Europe, identifies key barriers and opportunities in supporting education systems in taking up NbS education and offers key recommendations for policy makers, educators, and other stakeholders.

More information is available in the [slides](#) (21-30).

NetworkNature readings

- [NetworkNature Policy Brief - The proposed EU Nature Restoration Law: what role for cities and regions?](#)
- [NetworkNature Policy Brief - Integrating NbS in Education: Unlocking the potential of transformative learning for sustainability](#)
- [NetworkNature Knowledge Brief 1: Taking nature-based solutions up the policy ladder - from research to policy action](#)
- [NetworkNature video: Different stakeholders weigh in on EU Nature Restoration Law](#)

Panel discussion

The first panel focused on transforming policies for deploying NbS. It gathered four experts to discuss different views on the transformations needed in policies to upscale NbS and the role of participation in shaping policy trajectories. The speakers were: Gisela Quaglia from the European Commission DG AGRI, Carsten Neßhöver from the German Environment Agency, Natalia Burgos Cuevas from the Ecologic Institute & [INTERLACE](#), and Frederik Hafen from the [European Environmental Bureau](#) (EEB). The discussion revolved around inclusion in NbS, the importance of developing co-participation and co-creation at every stage, as well as ensuring a transparent and democratic process. The [INTERLACE guide on participatory process](#) for urban ecosystem restoration was introduced as providing clear guidance to facilitate inclusive approaches. The participation of citizens with bottom-up approaches is key to develop effective and successful policies. The relevance of the Aarhus Convention was mentioned as instrumental in ensuring democratic, participatory, and transparent policies by granting citizens the right to access information, participate in decision-making processes, and seek justice in

environmental matters. These actions can help reduce the barriers to the deployment and upscale of NbS. Examples of barriers mentioned include the rigidity of institutions, [citizenwähnsing](#), and scepticisms from practitioners (e.g. farmers) when changing practices. The speakers also talked about policies supporting NbS at the European level (e.g. the potential of the Common Agricultural Policy), and at national level, such as [Germany's Federal Action Plan on NbS for climate and biodiversity](#).

More information is available in the [slides](#) (31-35).

Recommended literature

- Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity in Germany ([EN short version](#) & full [DE version](#))
- EU Mission: [A Soil Deal for Europe](#) and [implementation plan](#)
- [Agroecology partnership: final draft of the partnership Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda](#)
- [EEB Report: Power for the People](#)
- [EEB article: Win-win renewables success stories for nature and citizens in Europe](#)
- [Urban Governance Atlas | INTERLACE](#)

An interactive session with the audience was run through the use of mentimeter. The question “Do you know any tools/products/guidelines for ensuring democratic, transparent and participatory NbS policies?” was raised.

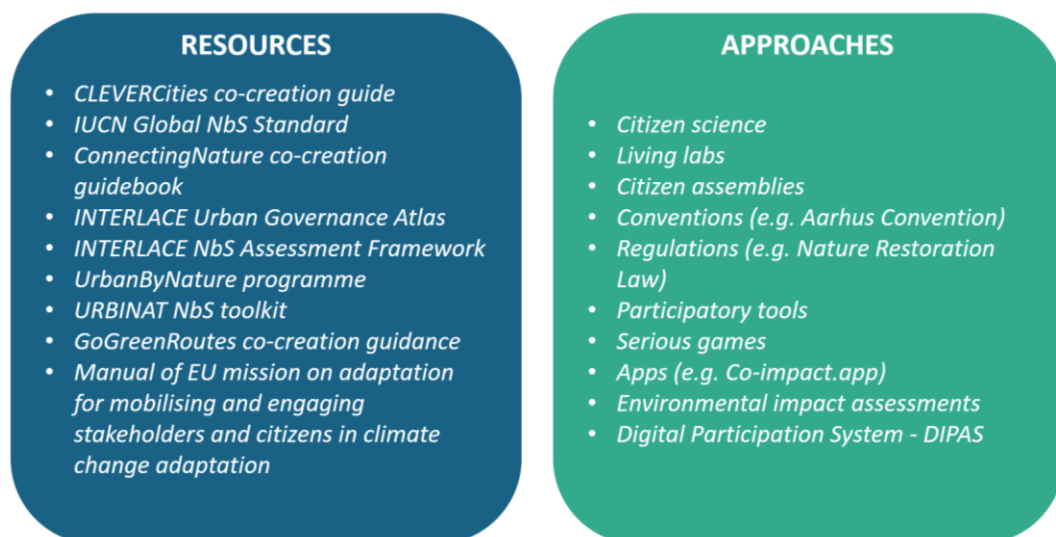


Figure 5 - Summary of responses to “Do you know any tools/products/guidelines for ensuring democratic, transparent and participatory NbS policies?”

When asked to outline the key transformations needed in policy to ensure NbS implementation and upscale, participants mentioned the need for co-creation and co-design approaches with

citizen engagement, collaborative governance models, justice and equity, bottom-up approaches, public-private partnerships (including for funding), more flexibility, and more ambitious political leadership, leading to more stringent regulations and the removal of harmful subsidies.

Enabling transformation in economy through and for NbS

NetworkNature Business Information Package

Victoria Blessing, Steinbeis, presented the [NetworkNature Business Information Package](#). This package, dedicated to SMEs, includes practical content and gives SMEs tips to start their NbS journey. Victoria mentioned the importance of including the concept of NbS in the education of future business professionals and how this package can be helpful for higher education institutes to add NbS in their academic program. Then, she described the content of the package, including definitions, business model canvas, and inspiring stories and examples.

More information is available in the [slides](#) (40-50).

Useful resources

[NetworkNature Business Information Package](#)

Policy and Legislation databases: to better understand what permits are needed to implement projects

- [Geospatial Information Knowledge Platform Business](#) | OPERANDUM

Networking platforms: connect with partners across value chains, stay up to date and make their voice heard

- [Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform](#) | Connecting Nature
- [EdiCitNet Marketplace](#) | Edible Cities Network
- [Enterprise Europe Network](#)

Funding opportunities: different financial instruments to facilitate the start-up and scale-up of nature-based enterprises (NBE)

- Grants from EU programmes such as [Horizon Europe](#), [LIFE programme](#), [COST Actions](#) or the [European Regional Development Fund](#)
- Loans, guarantees and equity from EU institutions such as the [European Investment Bank](#)
- Crowdfunding through the [Nature Solutions Platform](#) | REGREEN

EIB Report on investing in nature-based solutions

Guy Hudson, European Investment Bank (EIB), officially launched the [EIB Report “Investing in nature-based solutions: State-of-play and way forwards for public and private financial measures in Europe”](#). He talked about the current landscape of NbS in the EU and potential scale. The report identified 1,364 projects implemented on-the-ground, mostly in urban ecosystem (75%). The data was taken from databases, projects, online researches and Horizon programme’s information. He talked about NbS funding and the state of the NbS market and market trends. Funding for current projects is on average less than €2 million, and it comes mainly from European funds (62%), while private funding remains negligible (3%). The sector

that benefits most from NbS funding is agriculture, but its effectiveness is still being questioned. Grants, public funding and philanthropic capital are the main financing tools for NbS, followed by market-based loans. However, NbS market failures and barriers were also mentioned. Five were identified: information failures, coordination, risk, long timeframe and high transaction costs. The EC-EIB [Natural Capital Financing Facility](#) (2015-2022), a market-based financial instrument for biodiversity and nature-based climate adaptation, and its lessons learned were also presented during the presentation. As an example, land availability, cost and eligibility were identified as key issues. It was stressed that the eligibility framework needs to be adjusted to fit the characteristics of investing nature. Sectors where there is significant strategic alignment with nature in terms of spatial footprint, avoided costs/risks and time horizon were also identified: urban projects, utilities and water resources managers, forestry and forest derived products, bio-economy, among other. Finally, conclusions and recommendations of the EIB report were shared. There is an urgent need for a continuum of policy-based financial instruments that anticipate demand and regulatory developments. Moreover, there is a need to streamline coordination with EU, member state grants and subsidies.

More information is available in the [slides](#) (51-66).

Panel discussion

The panel discussed the topic of transforming the economic sector to finance NbS and promote biodiversity. It gathered four experts to discuss different views on the transformations needed in the economic and financing sector to upscale NbS, including the use of relevant EU funds (e.g. for regional development and agriculture, [CAP funds](#), ERDF, Cohesion Fund). Chantal van Ham from Arcadis, Emmanuelle Escarnot from Wallonia Region, Thomas Marois from SOAS University of London and Guy Hudson from EIB participated as speakers. Together, they discussed on mobilising funding from different sectors to finance NbS. NbS can play a transformative role in our economy. However, they also mentioned the obstacles and challenges that can be faced to mobilise funding, as identified in the [EIB report](#). They shared their opinion on the important role that public banks play in catalysing a green and just transition, as well as how public funds at regional level can contribute to transformations, using the example of agriculture and the efforts of the Wallonia region to align biodiversity, climate and economic objectives in the sector. Generally, aligning financing strategies with environmental and societal objectives can support NbS funding, offering a more long-term investment horizon which could help to support research and innovation. NbS offers a proactive approach to address environmental challenges and mitigate the cost of inaction that also needs to be taken in account. Overall, there is significant capital that can be mobilised to support NbS financially, but some questions still need to be addressed about economic viability to reassure investors in NbS.

Enabling transformation in science and practice through and for NbS

NetworkNature NbS Research & Innovation Roadmap

Frédéric Lemaître, Biodiversa+, presented the [NetworkNature NbS Research & Innovation \(R&I\) Roadmap](#). It aims to identify core action areas for European research and innovation on NbS that are essential to achieve [EU goals for NbS development and deployment](#). The Roadmap offers an overview of the efforts made thus far, identifies critical knowledge gaps, and promotes the collaboration and coordination of European research and innovation activities related to NbS. The overarching vision of the roadmap is for EU research and innovation to empower policy, practice, businesses, and citizens in mobilizing the full potential of NbS in achieving a sustainable and just transformation of society, building on robust evidence and expertise.

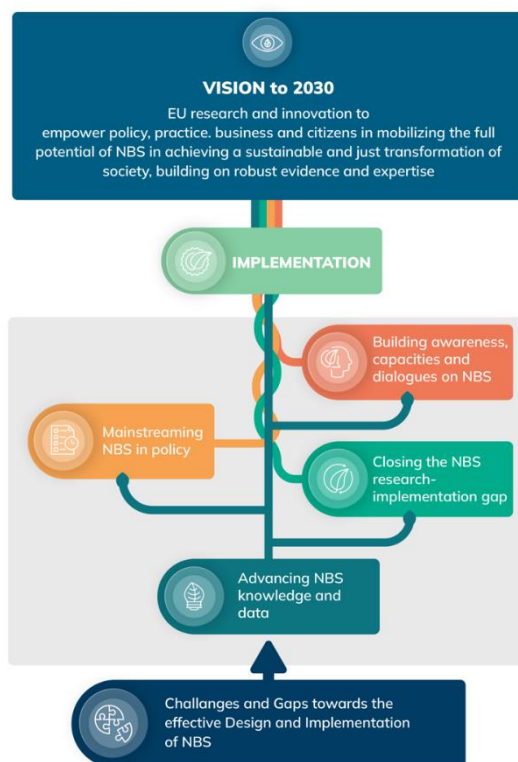


Figure 7 – NbS R&I vision to 2030

Four experts were invited to discuss on their perspectives on the added value of such a

document and how it is being or can be used in the coming years in their respective contexts and perspectives on the role of NN+ in accompanying this implementation: Marco Fritz, European Commission DG RTD shared his views from a research and policy-making perspective, Robert McDonald, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) from an international NGO, Hilde Eggermont, Biodiversa+ from a programmer and funder perspective and Laura Wendling, VTT Finland from an NbS researcher perspective. The roadmap welcomes the overall vision on transitioning towards NbS, and in particular, provides a clear picture of knowledge gaps that are useful and usable for the research community. It also identifies some key points regarding knowledge implementation needs. From a programmer's perspective, the roadmap is particularly useful for strategic planning and the development of programmes and related activities, including funding opportunities. It helped TNC with projects' implementation and keeping in touch with the state of science. Moreover, the first draft of the roadmap has already been used in the Biodiversa+ context to help guide the development of the [NbS flagship programme](#) and the associated [BiodivNbS joint call](#). It also has been used to develop other strategic activities, for example by helping to define the needs guiding the [BiodivClim Knowledge Hub on NbS](#). Further key steps were suggested to upgrade the roadmap, for instance developing summaries and syntheses of the roadmap's most salient elements for different audiences but also to present and use this roadmap to engage other directorates around NbS.

More information is available in the [slides](#) (76-90).

NetworkNature Practitioners Package

Daniela Rizzi, ICLEI, presented the NetworkNature practitioners' package, a design briefs series on biodiversity-positive design recommendations for urban and peri-urban areas with NbS. It presents simple design suggestions for renaturing in built environments to restore or to provide habitat for nature. While it is not meant to replace professional ecological or landscape guidance, it aims to encourage designers to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to make projects more biodiverse. The first design brief presents different approaches towards "renaturing". The second design brief provides NbS design recommendations considering the following typologies of space: wildlife-friendly areas, conservation sites and the public realm. The third design brief delivers NbS design recommendations considering the following typologies of space: urban and suburban mobility network (roads, streets and axes), green associated with buildings (green roofs and facades), and vacant plots and brownfields.

More information is available in the [slides](#) (93-101).

NetworkNature documentation

- [Design Brief 1- Biodiversity-positive Design in Urban Areas with NBS: Approaches](#)
- [Design Brief 2- Biodiversity-positive Design in Urban Areas with NBS: Wildlife-friendly Areas, Conservation Sites, the Public Realm](#)
- [Design Brief 3- Biodiversity-positive Design in Urban Areas with NBS: Mobility Network, Green associated with Buildings, Vacant Plots, Brownfields](#)
- [NetworkNature Factsheet 3: Shifting the water paradigm - managing water through](#)

[nature](#)

- [NetworkNature Factsheet 4: Financing NbS in cities – exploring opportunities from municipal funding](#)

Recommended literature

- [Handbook on Nature-based Solutions: Promoting Biodiversity in the City of Madrid](#) | City of Madrid
- [Urban Greening for Biodiversity Net Gain: A Design Guide”: or Biodiversity Net Gain](#) | City of London
- [Designing for change](#) | World Landscape Architecture (WLA)
- [Handbook on the Singapore Index on Cities’ Biodiversity](#) | Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Panel discussion

The third panel on transforming science & practice for NbS gathered five experts from science and practice in different sectors (water, agriculture, coastal and urban): Eva Brusselman from ILVO Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food representing [ECONUTRI](#), Isabel Ferreira from the University of Coimbra representing [URBiNAT](#), Myron Peck from the Royal Netherlands University for Sea Research representing [FutureMARES](#), Ellis Penning from Deltares representing [MERLIN](#), and Daniela Rizzi from ICLEI. The discussion revolved around the experiences and challenges in shifting from conventional to nature-based interventions and the transformations needed in science and practice to make NbS the new normal. They highlighted that the specific circumstances and local factors play a significant role in shaping the challenges and outcomes. Some overall challenges in shifting from conventional to nature-based interventions include changing mindsets and perceptions, convincing stakeholders and decision-makers to recognise the multiple benefits of nature-based solutions and their effectiveness in water management. Overcoming entrenched beliefs and promoting a shift in mindset towards nature-based approaches is also essential. Additionally, in terms of technical expertise and knowledge gaps, the implementation of nature-based interventions may require specialised knowledge and skills that differ from traditional engineering practices. Therefore, bridging the knowledge gaps and building technical expertise among practitioners is crucial for successful implementation. On the other hand, regulatory frameworks and institutional barriers can also pose challenges, as adjustments might be necessary to accommodate nature-based solutions and align them with policies, permits, and regulations, leading to their much-needed widespread adoption. Finally, funding and cost considerations are needed: securing adequate funding and addressing cost concerns can be obstacles in implementing nature-based solutions. Demonstrating the long-term cost-effectiveness and co-benefits of nature-based interventions is crucial for overcoming financial barriers.

Recommended literature

- [New framework for monitoring systemic impacts of freshwater and wetland restoration actions](#) | MERLIN
- [Online case-study portal to share knowledge and report findings](#) | MERLIN
- [About the project](#) | ECONUTRI
- [NbS catalogue](#) | URBiNAT
- [Publications](#) | FutureMARES

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (102-106).

NetworkNature: Introducing the NbS comics

David Maddox, The Nature of Cities, presented the launch of seven [NbS comics](#), a project funded by the European Commission under NetworkNature and led by The Nature of Cities. He reminded the impact of arts and, especially, comics to share a story and deliver an effective message. He brought to mind the importance of communication in spreading the NbS community work and making it accessible for every public. Two artists, [Marta Delas](#) and [Charlie La Greca Velasco](#), shared their experience in creating their NbS comics, the creativity process in the making and the benefit of art for transmitting messages and knowledge especially to a non-scientific audience.

Further information is available in the [slides](#) (109-118).

The comics are available [here](#) and on [Webtoon](#).

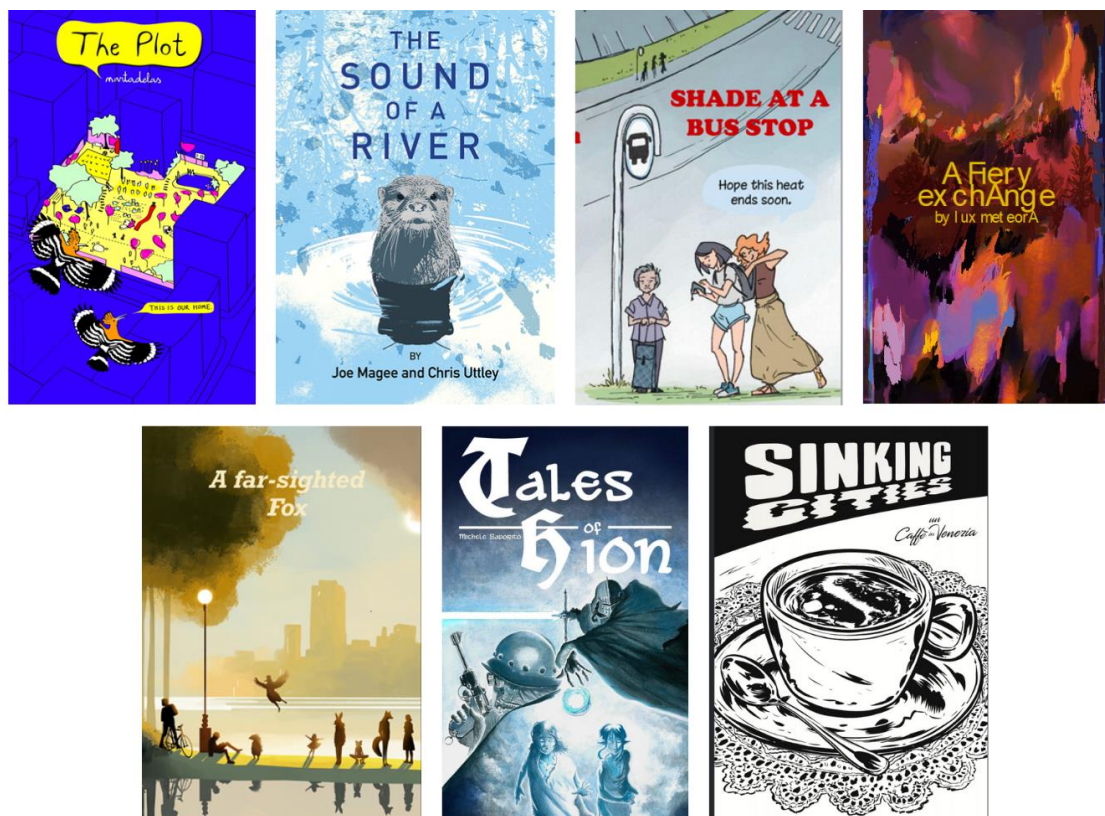


Figure 8 - Covers of the seven NbS comics

Parallel sessions

Parallel session 1 - Transforming audiences: NbS Storytelling

Key messages

- *Making a good NbS storytelling starts with the identification of what we want to tell and how we can bring it back to NbS work*
- *Communication is important to reach new audiences and catch people's interest*
- *Key elements of a story: audience, plot, setting, location, characters, point of view, conflict*

Main objectives

This session aimed to discuss ways to tell better stories that reach new audiences for NbS and explore the building blocks of good storytelling using techniques from comics, arts, theatre. Participants collaborated to create scripts for stories and discuss storytelling ideas. The session was facilitated by David Maddox, The Nature of Cities.

Summary of the session

The session was about storytelling, especially visual. It started with David Maddox sharing some thoughts and questions on storytelling in general, highlighting the key elements of a story. Marta Delas and Charlie La Greca Velasco, both artists, shared their take on where their stories/comics came from. For Charlie, the entry point to a good story is something relatable, he followed this up with the advice of being ready for the process and what comes from it – saying yes to each other during the group story building process. For Marta the story was inspired by her own life, taking bits and pieces from her environment and adding different layers to bring more richness to it. After a few more pointers, the group exercise started.

The second part of the session was the group work of developing a story and then drawing it, with the help of Charlie and Marta. Every group received a few prompts from which they had to start and develop the story. Some of the results can be seen in the photos. The session was rounded off by every group sharing their stories and some thoughts on the process.

Main objectives

Environmental degradation due to increased human activity and climate change implications are making humanity increasingly prone to risks of environmental nature, such as natural hazards, extreme weather, and human-made environmental disasters. The [World Economic Forum Global Risks Report 2023](#) identified “natural disasters and extreme weather events” among the top 10 risks affecting humanity in the next 2 years and 10 years (at second and third place respectively).

Nature-based solutions are gaining increasing attention as effective approaches to adapt to and counteract disasters. The session aimed to discuss the opportunities arising from considering NbS as an approach to reducing the risk of disasters. Innovative experiences with NbS for disaster risk reduction were shared from different projects – namely, [ADAPT](#) (erosion control in forest ecosystems), [PHUSICOS](#) (extreme weather in mountain landscapes), [RECONNECT](#) (hydrometeorological risks in urban areas) and [OPERANDUM](#) (hydrometeorological risks) – showcasing examples in different regions and ecosystems. The projects’ experiences were complemented with an interactive discussion with the audience to highlight challenges, success stories and identify needs and ideas for concrete approaches to better position NbS for disaster risk reduction. The session was facilitated by Dorsa Sheikholeslami, IUCN.

Summary of the session

The session started with a poll question on defining Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). All answers had an aspect of prevention and mitigation. Then, the discussion started with how NbS can play a role in reducing the impact of disasters. Silvana di Sabatino, [OPERANDUM](#), spoke about the DRR interventions in the project where nine types of open-air laboratories with NbS were implemented for different hazards. She emphasised the importance of testing all components before implementing: monitoring, establishing what the benefits and co-benefits are, and then incorporating the knowledge generated to the projects. Examples of the projects led include a [sand dune realisation with coconut material](#). The aim is therefore transforming the way engineers think in terms of solutions. More information is available on [GEOIKP](#).

Fabien Téchené, [ADAPT](#), presented the three pillars of the project: policy integration, knowledge and capacity, and implementation. Some pilots in ADAPT are focused on DRR. Two of them are located in Serbia and Albania, where landslides and soil erosion have been observed as a result of a mismanagement of the landscape, leading to forest degradation. In these two areas, there are similar hazards in different contexts leading to similar solutions but different implications. The lessons learnt were the need to do site identification and to do a multi-stakeholder engagement process in all stages. The challenges encountered were the determination of economic feasibility through a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) for NbS - it is not only about the economic gains but also about adverted losses - and also to get to a bigger scale. Indeed, DRR is one of the societal challenges addressed by NbS, but not the only one, and this is why scale is important.

Gerd Lupp, [PHUSICOS](#), demonstrated the capacity of NbS for DRR in mountain landscapes. He presented [five cases studies](#) which aim to co-design and co-create the solutions with stakeholders. He continued on how solutions are needed to improve forests, by preventing risks, because some forests are not in good condition. One of the biggest challenges according to him is getting awareness and the lack of knowledge. Furthermore, sometimes solutions may be hybrid: at small scale, working at landscape level with multiple solutions can be interesting.

Zoran Vojinovic, [RECONNECT](#), introduced [the ten EU demonstration sites](#), focusing on large scale interventions in rural areas. Different landscapes were addressed, such as rivers and mountains, where NbS need co-creation and co-design approaches to be robust and adaptive. He pointed out the lack of guidelines for large scale interventions, as most are focusing on small urban interventions. A lot of benefits and co-benefits when evaluating the performance of demonstrations were observed. However, side effects can also emerge: in one of the cases, NbS for flood protection caused fish mortality. Being robust and having an adaptive management is therefore important because sometimes there are unwanted impacts that need to be identified and addressed as soon as possible.

The discussion continued on the challenges of NbS as tools for DRR. One of the challenges is that nature also benefits from small scale disasters so it is sometimes difficult to find the balance between gains for nature, and disaster reduction. Moreover, DRR can be the entry point to work with national and local authorities, but only focusing on DRR can end up reducing the impact of NbS which goes beyond: a whole-area approach for NbS is therefore the way forward. Generally, there is a lack of awareness, guidelines, legal challenges, tendering processes, and long-term commitments of stakeholders that limit the expansion of NbS as DRR solutions.

Main outcomes

- *NbS are increasingly taken up for DRR but several challenges/lessons were identified*
- *Determining economic feasibility of NbS is done through cost-benefit analysis, however it is not only about economic gains but also about averted losses.*
- *There are many benefits and co-benefits when evaluating the performance of demonstrations, but there is a need to also look at the side effects*
- *DRR can be the entry point to work with national and local authorities. But the journey of NbS, going through the criteria, takes you to other societal challenges. Focusing only on DRR ends up reducing the impact of NbS which goes beyond.*
- *Sometimes solutions may be hybrid. If small scale, we can still work at landscape level with multiple solutions.*

Parallel session 3: Transforming cities and regions – Upscaling NbS beyond city boundaries

Key messages

- *Collaboration is needed: form networks and alliances for a common goal and voice based on exchange and knowledge sharing, to also share success stories and lesson learned*
- *Join existing groups – [Covenant of Mayors Europe](#), [Green City Accord](#), [Urban Greening platform](#)*
- *Engage in EU policy making processes with stakeholder meetings*
- *Cities and region are the leaders of change*
- *Solutions are needed at every level*
- *We must preserve what we have first to then develop new green spaces and ecosystems*

Main objectives

In this session participants learned about challenges and opportunities for cities and regions to upscale and mainstream nature-based solutions to the benefit of other planning and development priorities (e.g. climate adaptation and resilience, mobility, energy transition, sustainable food systems). Local governments generally focus on implementing NbS within their administrative limits. However, by collaborating with their regional counterparts, they have the potential to integrate policy goals through NbS and implement on the ground greening and restoration projects and programs, bringing environmental, economic and societal benefits beyond their boundaries. The session discussed these opportunities to transform all landscapes through city-regional collaboration. EU projects with city and regional partners were welcomed to share their experience. The session was facilitated by Alice Reil, ICLEI and Shreya Utkarsh, ICLEI.

Summary of the session

Speakers in this session included Marta Mansanet Cánovas from the European Committee of the Regions, Natalia Burgos Cuevas from the Ecologic Institute, Marta Biczowska from Wroclaw City Hall (Polish NbS Hub) and Etienne Aulotte from Bruxelles Environment.

The two cities representatives shared information on the actions in their respective city. In Wroclaw, a series of connected nature-based solutions (pocket parks and a green street) has been established through the [GrowGreen project](#). In Brussels, a new instrument that brings various stakeholders together (public, civil society) called [urban renovation contract](#) has been created to co-create and co-design areas. Three municipalities worked with the regional government to create new ecological corridors for species. They stressed the importance to first preserve the existing green spaces before starting creating new ones and creating connected green spaces to ensure an access to every citizen. A great added value of NbS in

green spaces management was emphasised, as these solutions can be simple to implement, low-cost and require no technology.

The speakers talked about financing NbS in cities and engaging people. In Wroclaw, they are trying to encourage partnerships with city missions in order to get private sector partners involved. In Brussels, there are subsidies for local action climate plans. Small grants are dedicated to local organisations to do outreach, education and stakeholder engagement. Moreover, every two months, a training for municipalities called “[Nature Academy](#)” is organised. Finding new sources of funding also implies more generally adapting NbS language and developing communication to targeted outreach. It is therefore necessary to intensify dialogue, multiply collaborations and develop co-design, co-implementation and co-maintenance over time.

Main outcomes

- *Contracts can be created to bring together stakeholders*
- *Partnerships with city missions to attract private sector partners*
- *Use of subsidies for local organisations to implement NbS*
- *Trainings for municipalities on NbS*
- *Adapting communication on NbS regarding the target*
- *NbS have a great added value in green spaces management because they are simple to implement, low cost and require no technology*

NetworkNature: Continuing collaboration

Towards NetworkNature+

Alice Reil, ICLEI, gave a presentation on continuing collaboration in NetworkNaturePlus (NN+). She presented the objectives of the upcoming project and the structure with its Work Packages' missions and coordinators. The second phase of the project will be a continuation and strengthening of our work, with the ambition of *accelerating the upscaling of NbS implementation in science, business, policy and practice in line with EU ambitions to address biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and climate change by 2030*. She also provided a teaser of some outputs that will be produced within NN+.



Products *teaser*



 <p>Interactive network map of NBS projects + NBS interactive walk-through</p>	 <p>4 guidance booklets for integration of NBS in selected business sectors for newcomers and established nature-based enterprises</p>
 <p>A new 2027-2030 NBS R&I Roadmap for policy integration and research programming</p>	 <p>Game-based platform for NBS learning and decision support</p>
 <p>'NBS product packages' per policy area</p>	 <p>Expand #Naturefacts into NBS key facts database</p>
 <p>Expand NBS Hubs for awareness raising and implementation across EU</p>	 <p>'Communication Toolbox' on NBS for regional and local authorities <i>(complemented by capacity-building)</i></p>

Figure 10 - NetworkNature+ products teaser

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (128-131).

Concluding remarks

Gilles Doignon, European Commission DG RTD, provided some closing remarks with an inspiring speech on the relevance of NbS interventions by giving an example on NbS practices in a vineyard in Italy. Even though the concept of NbS is not familiar to everyone, some initiatives already exist and our aim is to spread these solutions to respond to climate change challenges.

Finally, Boris Erg, IUCN Europe, ended the event with closing remarks on how important it is to continue collaborating on nature-based solutions and to develop and spread the concept to a broader audience.



NetworkNature is a resource for the nature-based solutions community, creating opportunities for local, regional and international cooperation to maximise the impact and spread of nature-based solutions. The project is funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 programme.

