



Network
Nature

Network Nature

Annual Event Report

Achieving the EU Green Deal through nature-based solutions

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Introduction

Achieving the EU Green Deal through NBS

Objectives and themes

The NetworkNature Annual Event took place in virtual format on 21st October 2021.

The event was composed of three parts: an opening plenary, five parallel sessions, and a closing plenary. A summary of all parts is provided in the next chapters.

The event focused on the Network Nature semester theme “[Ecosystem restoration through nature-based solutions](#)”, in line with current EU ambitions for achieving the European Green Deal and the start of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Nature-based solutions (NBS), in Europe and beyond, are an integral part of restoration efforts and represent the building blocks for a sustainable future, including in the field of health, agriculture, climate change and more. Healthy ecosystems support 55% of global GDP, and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity underpins sustainable development. Fostering nature-positive economic activities, by supporting sectors, governments and businesses that commit to NBS are the major focus of Network Nature. Joint action and local, regional and international cooperation are crucial to maximise the impact and spread of nature-based solutions.

The recognition of their potential to address societal challenges has also translated into an increasingly prominent role of nature-based solutions in the EU policy landscape. In particular, the European Green Deal provides an opportunity to mobilise implementation, to increase financing, and to underline the role of NBS in restoring ecosystems within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The event showcased the vision and added value of Network Nature and the EU-funded Horizon 2020 Nature-based Solutions community of practice in achieving these objectives.

Aiming to create a space for dialogue for the Nature-based Solutions community and invite new and impactful actors, the event gathered stakeholders from all target groups, including policy makers, scientific experts, civil society representatives as well as landowners, natural resource managers and businesses.

The event aimed to identify opportunities for strengthened engagements and partnerships for NBS and help in promoting the uptake of project results and to support Horizon 2020 NBS projects, as well as the Biodiversity Partnership and Horizon Europe Missions to integrate NBS for ecosystem restoration effectively in future plans and actions.

Opening plenary

Introduction

The opening plenary started with an introduction to Network Nature's added value by Bettina Wilk, Senior Officer Sustainable Resources Climate and Resilience at ICLEI and coordinator of Network Nature. As a key resource for the NBS community, Network Nature facilitates the creation of opportunities for local, regional, and international cooperation. On one hand, this platform aims to strengthen and consolidate the nature-based solutions portfolio by collecting the evidence on these kinds of solutions; another objective is to promote and expand the NBS community.

Network Nature's ambitions for Nature-based solutions

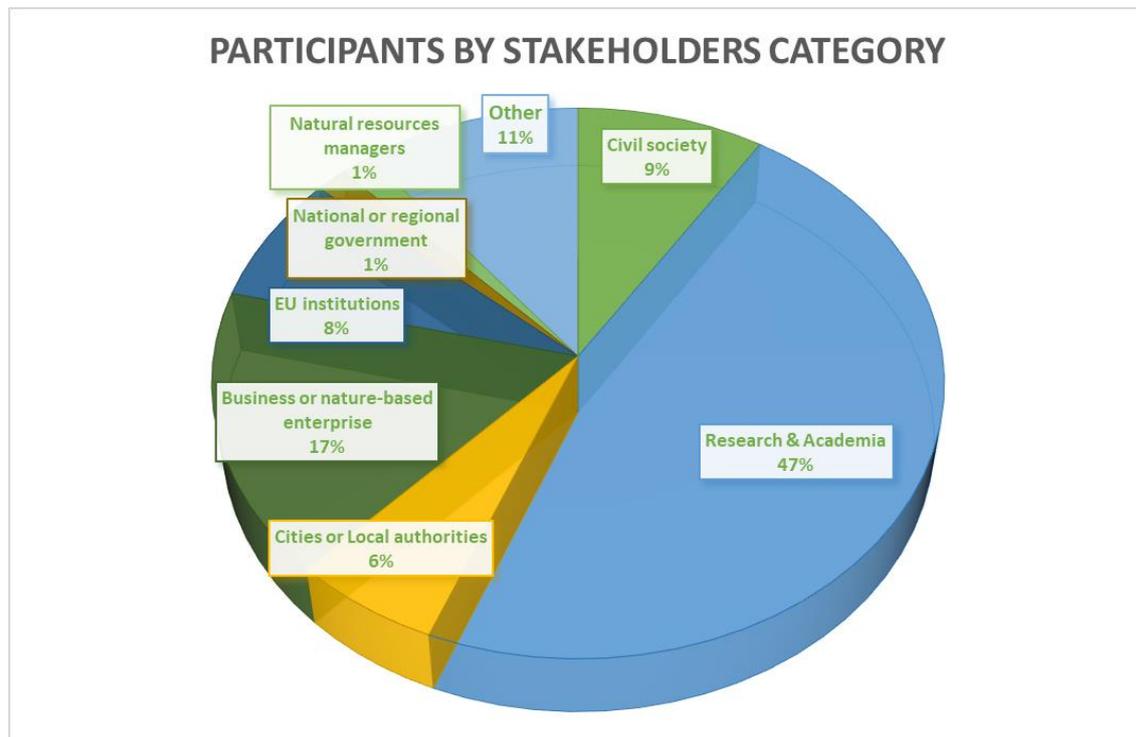
Chantal van Ham, Acting Director of IUCN European Regional Office, further emphasized the role of Network Nature in engaging new audiences, such as forest and landowners, water managers, as well as the finance and infrastructure sectors, who play a key role in upscaling NBS. To do so, Network Nature aims to share knowledge and communicate the latest findings in the field. As known to all, the protection and restoration of ecosystems is the main objective of this century, it is therefore necessary to make nature part of it. The immense potential of NBS to address societal challenges was presented by Daisy Hessenberger, IUCN Global Ecosystem Management Programme. For example, NBS can provide 1.4 billion of people with clean and safe drinking water, while saving 140 billion US\$ per year. She also provided an overview of the main risks associated with NBS misidentification and misuse, which may weaken the evidence base and lead to harm to people and nature. In order to scale up the potential that NBS have, action needs to happen at scale, policy needs to be aligned for sustaining action and finally it is necessary to enable mechanisms to address multiple challenges through the same solution. For these reasons, the Global NBS Standard was presented as providing a global language to mainstream NBS.

Interactive session

An interactive session to engage the audience was run through the use of mentimeter.

The results of the mentimeter poll questions showed that most of the attendees were from research & academia, involved in one or more EU NBS projects.

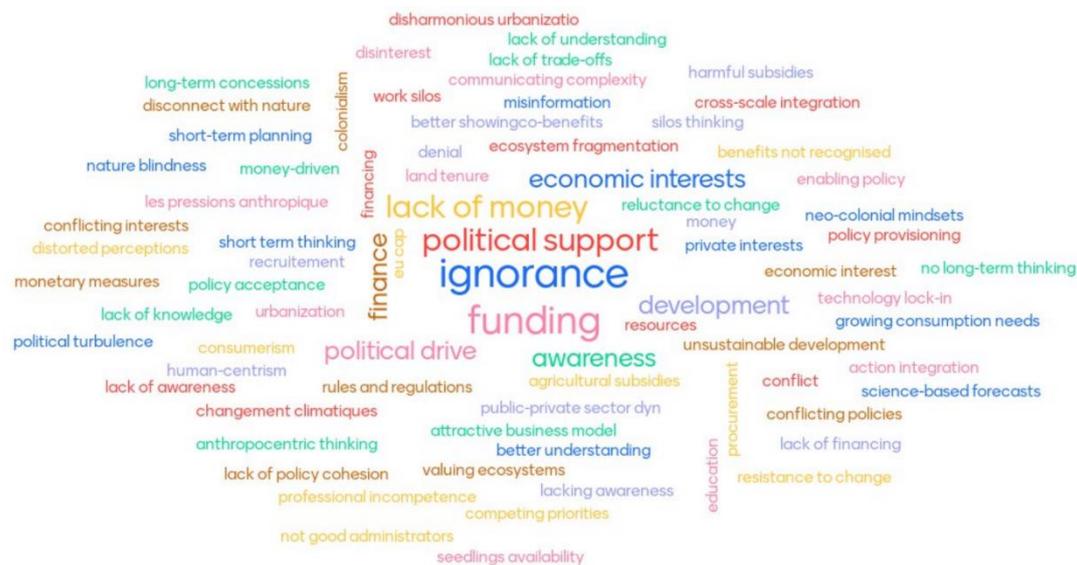
Figure 1 - Participants by stakeholders category



The focus area of the majority of attendees was the urban and peri-urban environment, followed by forests and agricultural and rural areas.

When asked about how NBS can contribute to ecosystem restoration, participants provided a number of key words, revolving around „biodiversity, „ecosystem services“ and „resilience“. Further, the most important barrier to restoring ecosystems at scale resulted to be ignorance, followed by the lack of political support and funding.

Figure 2 – Mentimeter results: „What do you consider the most important barrier for restoring ecosystems at scale?“



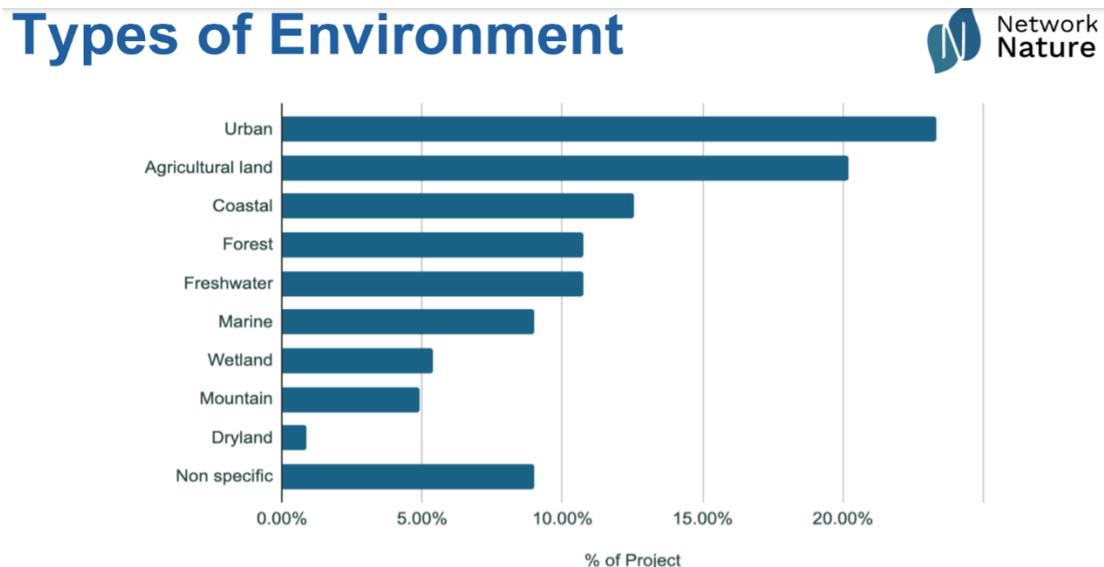
Learning, empowering people with the required knowledge as well as those in close contact with nature (e.g. farmers, landowners) and a good policy framework, were mentioned as key factors to foster ecosystem restoration and contribute to achieving biodiversity net gain.

Towards the next EU roadmap for R&I on NBS: overview of the landscape and knowledge gaps

Frederic Lemaitre, Officer in charge of science-society and policy interfacing for BiodivERsA, provided an overview of the ongoing work to develop an EU Research & Innovation Roadmap for NBS. Their work included a mapping of the European NBS R&I projects (BiodivERsA, FP7, H2020, Interreg, LIFE), and studying the NBS knowledge gaps through a desk study and an online consultation. Through the mapping, it was found that out of 61.576 total projects, 223 focused on NBS.

The results of their research show that a high proportion of NBS projects focus on urban environments and agricultural land.

Figure 3 - Types of environment in NBS projects



The main societal challenges addressed are linked to social justice and social cohesion, new economic opportunities & green jobs and participatory planning and governance, followed by climate resilience, and food security. The desk study results showed that 61% of the gaps collected were categorized as research gap (missing concepts, relationship evidence, methodologies, etc), 26% referred to knowledge implementation gap (missing capacity to implement knowledge), and 13% to data gaps (missing data/information, etc).

NBS project need to start from the societal needs and challenges to be addressed. Additional factors to mainstream NBS include: balance trade-offs, economic feasibility, design at scale, inclusive governance, biodiversity net-gain, adaptive management and mainstreaming for sustainability.

Panel: “The way forward for the H2020 projects on NBS – opportunities for upscaling”

A lively panel debate on the needs and opportunities for upscaling NBS concluded the plenary session of the event, with speakers from the Network Nature NBS Community representing cities, landscape architects, the business sector, and projects implementing NBS on the ground, namely Tom Wild (Conexus), Pierre Failler (MaCoBioS), Holger Robrecht (ICLEI), Giulia Carbone (WBCSD), Tony Williams (IFLA).

Tom Wild, Conexus project coordinator, emphasised the need of evidence of long-term viability before investing in NBS and addressed the main barriers to implementing NBS projects in urban environments linked to evaluation and economic assessment. Compared to rural areas, urban areas present more fragmentation and complexity of land ownership and management.

Pierre Failler, project coordinator of MaCoBioS, introduced the MaCoBios project dedicated to explore the nexus between biodiversity, ecosystem services and climate change. As the focus of the project are marine and coastal areas, which are home to almost half of the European population, NBS and restoration actions are in place, focusing on seagrasses, which play a

fundamental role in ecosystem services (e.g. absorb carbon, decrease wave force). He provided an example of a restored beach in Martinique, which led to benefits to tourism in the area.

Holger Robrecht, Deputy Regional Director at ICLEI, stressed the importance of making NBS critical infrastructures in cities, as they are crucial for ensuring a good quality life for citizens and supporting social cohesion. The potential of NBS is widely discussed and a policy framework to support such solutions exist in the EU. However, at the national level, most recovery plans largely focus on climate mitigation, leaving behind the power of nature.

Giulia Carbone, Director of Natural Climate Solutions Alliance at WBCSD, provided the point of view of businesses. Investment on NBS can come from businesses, but the definition of NBS needs to be rethought from their perspective, that is “which business problems can be solved through NBS?”. In the case of NBS for climate mitigation, nature offers a much better solution compared to technology for carbon capture, thanks to all the co-benefits that can be delivered.

Tony Williams, IFLA Europe Past President and current Chair of the IFLA Europe Working Group on Climate Change, highlighted the growing importance of NBS in landscape architecture. He clarified that, as climate change increasingly impacts on landscapes, and responses need to ensure proper integration of nature, it is crucial to also ensure that the necessary know-how is provided to those working together with landscape architects, including constructors, planners and traditional architects. Knowledge needs to lay behind infrastructure development to ensure it is nature-friendly.

The discussion, facilitated also by the numerous questions from the audience, concluded that nature - compared to grey solutions - provides multiple benefits, from coastal defence and risk reduction, to the creation of more liveable places, supporting tourism, and enhancing biodiversity. The delivery of multiple co-benefits was one of the key factors mentioned by the panellists crucial for ensuring NBS upscaling, in addition to proper education, research adapted to the local context, skills development and re-skilling programmes, and the use of the IUCN Global NBS Standard.

Closing remarks

The plenary session contributed to showcase the experience of experts and projects working to promote NBS, and has succeeded in putting ecosystem restoration into the spotlight. Despite discussions on the existing barriers to restoring ecosystems, a message of hope was brought to light, focusing on the role of NBS to increase resilience.

Parallel sessions

Rethinking cities: from smart into human

Key messages

- *SMART as a means to underpin sustainable urban development of human-centred cities → policy makers have increased responsibility to increase Quality of Life (QoL) due to clear demand by European citizens to reorient economies to new principles that allow cities to become more resilient, liveable and avoid any future pandemics;*
- *Need for integrated, cross-sectoral approach in spatial planning that goes beyond administrative borders and includes both public and private stakeholders; collaboration is key with public authorities defining framework conditions for private sector (public procurement criteria, standards);*
- *How to support mainstreaming NBS in urban planning? Rethinking cities as ecosystems with NBS as critical infrastructure that form part of a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural features that address a multitude of challenges (QoL, climate adaptation, public health); NBS as asset approach – not a cost but a long-term asset to incentivize investment in development and maintenance of infrastructure*

The 7th edition of October Days for Sustainable Development focused on rethinking cities, from smart into human. A number of high-level speakers took part in the event. The event was organised by the EIB Institute, in cooperation with Caritas Luxembourg and University of Luxembourg. It was moderated by Tanya Beckett, BBC presenter.

The main objective of this session was to discuss what are the types of cities that people want to live in and what cities can be considered as sustainable and resilient.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Undersecretary-General of the United Nations, Malaysia, emphasised the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has contributed to prolonging the achievement of the UN SDGs. While progress has been made in many places on the 169 targets, we are not advancing at the speed and scale required. He concluded his presentation calling for action on all areas, from poverty, to gender, climate change, and closing the financial gap. He explained that three levels of action are needed: global action, local action, and people's action.

Panel discussion

A lively panel discussion took place gathering practitioners and policymakers from all over the world.

Charles-Antoine de Theux, CEO of Heliosmart, Luxembourg, presented his company, dedicated to buildings development. He explained that the company has a strong focus on circular economy and the cradle-to-cradle principle as all elements used in developments are reused to make sure the company does not depend on resources that are becoming scarce.

He called for cities to become not only smart but also human, considering social inclusion and providing affordable housing.

Jette Hopp, Director of Snohetta, Norway, presented her architectural bureau, which uses an approach to democratic access to nature buildings and landscapes. The company is based on values of accessibility and equality and the “right to roam”, that is to use landscape independently of private property rights. She presented some of their flagship projects, including carbon-positive and energy-positive buildings to compensate CO₂, and the conversion of a legacy building in Milan, a former slaughterhouse, into urban development where the old structure was preserved and green was inserted.

Figure 4 - Conversion of former slaughterhouse in Milan



Holger Robrecht, Deputy Director at ICLEI Europe, commented that the conventional urban development approach is being questioned by environmental risks and pandemics, among other factors. This calls for the need to rethink cities. In this context, NBS offer effective approaches to increase climate resilience as they provide multi-beneficial solutions to urban development. He explained that NBS need to be integrated into infrastructure, and into a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural features. The issue that persists relates to how to introduce NBS in planning and mainstream it to make it an integral element in cities. The first step is to ensure that a critical infrastructure from a finance perspective (i.e. a tree as part of a green corridor) supports the pooling of investments into design, planning and maintenance of such critical infrastructure.

Ilona Eklona, Former Director of ESPON EGTC, and Former Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of Latvia, stated that poor environmental conditions have been identified as a factor of vulnerability for COVID-19. A positive correlation can be attested between poor air quality and deaths from COVID-19, based on a study conducted in the Netherlands. She considered a green recovery as key, because it can offer a chance to rethink urban living, address climate change, prepare for future

pandemics and future-proof our cities. There is a clear demand from people in Europe for a structural change: 57% of respondents to a survey think that post-COVID-19 recovery should be green. She mentioned that only 11% of land-use change between 2008 – 2018 have been transformed into urban green. However, green urban areas are in high demand. Developing and expanding urban green infrastructure networks should be the priority for resilience-building. She concluded that there is a strong need for an integrated, cross-sectoral approach in spatial planning, including both public and private stakeholders. Further, professional training of urban planners is also a necessity.

The main discussion points arising from the panel discussion can be summarised as follows:

- How has digitalization effected planning?
 - SMART city appliance to manage cities. The Mannheim urban platform was designed as an open data platform to help to engage citizens through participatory processes and to collect and provide data and information for different actors in the city. SMART is at service for sustainability, meaning that it should be a purpose or means to underpin sustainable urban development.
 - Turning SMART into Human Cities: the objective is to move towards an urban environment that offers opportunity to work, live, use services, and achieve a high quality of life. Policy makers have increased responsibility to increase quality of life since there is clear demand by European citizens to reorient economies to new principles that would allow cities to become more resilient and more liveable.
- How can we convince private sector investment when it is at their detriment?
 - A different strategic approach is required: thinking long-term rather than short-term in terms of a positive contribution to investment;
 - There is a need for a global cooperation among cities, and collaboration with the private sector
 - Public procurement: applying procurement criteria such as Social Return on Investment and Nature Return on Investment could be an engine to induce private sector rethinking. Further, standards should include sustainability criteria to provide business opportunities in the long term.
 - Use of fiscal policies
 - Consider building materials as banks

Main outcomes

The main outcomes of this session can be summarized as follows:

- Green urban areas are growing in demand
- SMART is at service for sustainability: purpose/means to underpin sustainable urban development;
- SMART should be human: the objective is to achieve an urban environment that offer opportunity to live a high quality of life;

- There is a need for more cooperation of local authorities beyond administrative boundaries. There is a clear need to work together, join forces, expand impact and effect of solutions;
- Partnerships with private actors and non-governmental organisations are crucial considering the scale of problems faced.

The role of nature-based solutions in delivering the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework

Key messages

- *Nature-based Solutions can significantly contribute towards the targets of the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework*
- *Their contribution must be recognised in policy and scaled up globally*
- *Key to this recognition and scaling up is the application of the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions and other tools supplied by EU projects*

Context

The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) offers a clear way forward on how to reverse our biodiversity crisis. Meanwhile Nature-based Solutions (NBS) offer the potential to scale up actions which provide biodiversity benefits, as well as improving human wellbeing and addressing societal challenges.

In this session, organised by IUCN, experts and participants discussed the linkages and opportunities between the two as well as complementary frameworks such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy. The audience included participants from policy, political science, academia, consultancy, local government, EU agency and youth representatives, hailing from France, Finland, Switzerland, Sweden and the UK. When profiled for their understanding of NBS, most participants indicated they felt familiar with the term and therefore comfortable getting into more in depth discussions.

Setting the scene

The focus of this sessions was to get on the same page in terms of the definition of and resources for NBS, what the expertise was in the room and the relevance of NBS to policy frameworks, specifically the GBF. This provided the foundation to identify entry points for NBS into the Theory of Change behind the GBF.

To ensure participants started off from the same core definitions of NBS and understanding of the potential of NBS, **Daisy Hessenberger (IUCN NbS Stakeholder Engagement Officer)** presented on the history of this approach. This included an introduction to the IUCN Global Standard for NbS™, especially highlighting the relevance of criterion 8 “Mainstreaming for Sustainability” to the session’s discussions.

The link to the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework was then presented in more detail by **Verónica Ruiz (IUCN Programme Manager, Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction)**. Nature-based Solutions are often indirectly recognised. For example, the role of healthy and resilient ecosystems in providing benefits to people is recognised under CBD, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The publication “Promoting Nature-based Solutions in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework” by Friends of Ecosystem-based Adaptations (FEbA) and Partnerships for Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation (PEDRR) was used to

demonstrate how NBS is one of the most effective tools to address this framework. Nature-based Solutions already contribute to achieving GBF Action Targets, specifically in relation to measures to conserve biodiversity designed to be resilient and provide benefits to all people, current and future generations.

Bringing clarity to the terminology is critical to mainstream understanding and ensure the incorporation of NBS approaches in the GBF. Indicators that measure NBS implementation/effectiveness need to be developed and incorporated into the GBF as well as be aligned with targets of other frameworks (e.g. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNFCCC, UNCCD).

Group work: Mapping the expertise in the room

Breakout rooms were facilitated in order to canvas the expertise in the room in relation to geography, ecosystem, societal challenge and sectors (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Notable contributions included those from the youth representative who was leading the project of the first Global Youth Statement on NBS to be delivered at COP26 and COP15, and had direct experience leading international policy work related to the GBF. Other participants highlighted the relevance of NBS to their work with EU project, design of NBS and their own work in EU and national policy.

Figure 5 - Expertise and experience of participants who were provided with a networking opportunity as well as this mapping exercise in their break out rooms

Country/Region	Ecosystem	Societal challenge		Sectors involved	
All regions	Freshwater, coastal & terrestrial	Intersectionality and inclusion	Stakeholder engagement	Industry	Engineering community
European region	Urban ecosystems	Right-based approach	Indigenous people and local communities as leaders of NbS	Academia	
Norway	Peri-urban/ urban-rural interface	Youth	Social equity, environmental justice	National and local government	NGOs
France	coastal	disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, flood protection	flood protection	civil society	
Western Balkans	Forest ecosystems	water pollution	urban heat Island effects	International Cooperation/ Development organization	
Michigan, US	Freshwater	Environmental degradation and biodiversity loss	Perception/notions of nature and NBS		

Live expert interviews

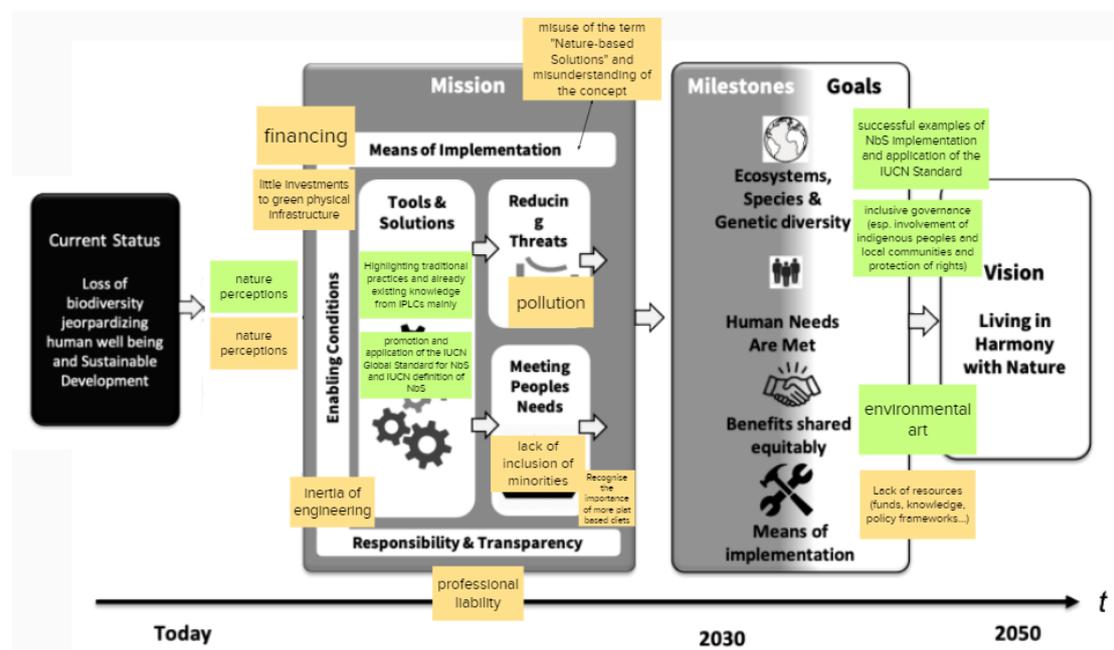
In order to provide lessons learnt, a live interview panel was moderated by Daisy Hessenberger. Verónica Ruiz, was joined by **Philipp LaHaela Walter (ICLEI Senior Officer, Sustainable Resources, Climate and Resilience)** who elaborated upon links to the Edinburgh Process as well as how EU projects were creating policy impact, for instance through the feedback on the

Urban Greening Plan Guidance and Toolkit (Task Force 6). **Karin Zaunberger (EC Policy Officer, DG ENV Biodiversity Unit)** joined to further expand upon where NBS had the most potential to contribute to the GBF as well as key opportunities for further mainstreaming, such as the EU Green Deal.

Group work: Calling out the Nature-based Solutions leverage points

Working from a common definition and framework, as well as inspired by the contributions of the experts from the interview panels, participants were put into small groups to explore the Theory of Change of the GBF. They were asked to identify enabling factors as well as potential risks specifically related to NBS in the graphic theory of change, annotating this with sticky notes (Error! Reference source not found.).

Figure 6 - Theory of Change from the GBF annotated with enabling factors (green) and risks (orange) associated with NBS



Final outputs

Participants actively participated in group work, building an environment of trust and social learning while benefitting from networking opportunities. After getting on the same page and hearing of champion policy progress from EU projects, priority opportunities for this community to mainstream NBS in the GBF were identified and documented.

Carbon Farming as a nature-based solution and a first attempt to pay for ecosystem services

Key messages

- *Dialogue and interactive exchange to establish common ground and understanding for the approaches that lead to a sustainable future and opportunities for landowners and farmers is essential – in support of this IUCN has published a report with 14 approaches to sustainable agriculture*
- *In light of the EU Carbon Farming Initiative to be launched soon, there is a huge potential for carbon farming in peatlands: by restoration or rewetting 3 % of agricultural land up to 25% of agricultural emissions can be reduced. With the upcoming COP 26 in Glasgow this is an excellent opportunity to push forward.*
- *Professional and independent advice, building and maintaining a community of practice, and clear mechanisms for rewards to farmers are essential for upscaling sustainable agricultural practices*

The session was organised by the European Landowners Organisation. It focused on innovative approaches in carbon farming and sustainable agriculture. It was moderated by **Jurgen Tack (Scientific Director, European Landowners Organisation)**.

The title of the session includes two buzzwords: “nature-based solutions” and “ecosystem services”. The former is defined as solutions inspired and supported by nature, which are cost effective, provide environmental and economic benefits and increase resilience. The latter refers to benefits derived from ecosystems.

The aim of the session was to create a dialogue and an interactive exchange between stakeholders to discuss nature-based solutions for a sustainable future, in particular with regard to the engagement of landowners and farmers.

Further, the session discussed the link with the European Green Deal as well as other relevant EU policies and funding instruments.

The main objectives of the session were to:

- Create dialogue and an interactive exchange between stakeholders
- Present new ideas and developments in policy and practice
- Discuss nature-based solutions for a sustainable future for, in particular with regards to the engagement of landowners, building on existing work in addressing the challenges members are facing
- Discuss the link with the European Green Deal and other relevant EU policies and funding instruments

Alberto Arroyo Schnell (Head of Policy Team, IUCN Europe) provided a presentation focusing on the terminology discussion around sustainable agriculture.

When asking ourselves “What is sustainable agriculture?”, different answers exist, depending on who we ask. In order to find a common ground for a definition, IUCN has developed tools,

collected evidence and convened multi-stakeholder dialogues on sustainable agriculture. More recently, IUCN has also become a strategic partner of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture.

IUCN has organised with DG Agriculture three participatory sessions on the green architecture of the CAP with representatives of the agriculture sector and the nature conservation community. The feedback on these sessions was positive and will continue considering the EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

To advance the debate on sustainable agriculture, there is a need to clarify the landscape and terminology. For this purpose, IUCN has written a report on the different approaches to sustainable agriculture, including carbon farming, collecting and disseminating knowledge with different stakeholders, and with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Netherlands.

Research and exchange with stakeholders showed there is an abundance of terminology, concepts and practices on sustainable agriculture, which is a source of disagreement. Differences in interpretation can create confusion and make it challenging to make meaningful progress towards sustainable agriculture.

The report is a collection of literature and peer reviewed information to be used by professionals and academia. It has a glossary of 180 terms related to sustainable agriculture. Further, 14 approaches for sustainable agriculture were identified, selected for their relevance to sustainability and the policy agenda. The definition and principles for each approach have been described as well as the history, geographical scope and applicability. Key goals and priorities are described as well as examples of best practices, challenges and opportunities. Supporting activities to sustainable agriculture are included as well in the [publication](#).

Alberto Arroyo provided an example of how the report covers each approach, and focused on Carbon Farming. This is a recently developed approach, therefore there are many unknowns, and measuring results can be challenging.

He concluded that the diversity of approaches is a strength and the choice of the approach depends on local context. There is a need for dialogue and an enabling environment for landowners to find common ground and to establish metrics to assess environmental performance of agricultural practices and approaches.

Lastly, Alberto Arroyo mentioned some relevant IUCN initiatives:

- The IUCN World Congress has resulted in a number of resolutions, including on [transforming global food systems to achieve the SDGs, developing agricultural practices such as Nature-based Solutions](#) and on [developing agroecological practices as nature-based solutions](#).
- [IUCN Director General' Strategic Initiative on Sustainable Agriculture and Land Health](#)
- [IUCN's Common ground report](#) on restoring Land Health for Sustainable Agriculture

Niall O'Brolchain (Member of Irish Parliament and researcher at National University of Ireland), provided an overview on the EU policy on carbon farming and proposed a carbon farming model.

He informed the audience about an important commitment of the EU, that is to release a Carbon Farming initiative in 2021, as mentioned in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Further, he introduced a CAP position paper that was put forward with a number of recommendations including the eligibility of farmland and peatlands, enhancement of results-based payment schemes, bringing together the agriculture and environment committees at EU level. The paper showed that there is a huge potential for carbon farming in peatlands: by restoring or rewetting 3% of agricultural land within the EU, up to 25% of agricultural emissions can be reduced. The upcoming COP 26 in Glasgow is an excellent opportunity to push the carbon farming agenda forward. However, the involvement of landowners and local communities is also crucial to make progress.

Peatlands are one of the most valuable carbon sinks, having great potential in terms of climate benefits and environmental co-benefits. The European debate shows that NGOs and scientists look forward to GAEC 2 for protection and restoration of peatlands. An agreement was reached on the legislative text for the CAP conditionality GAEC 2, marking the start of a real shift in how we practice agriculture in Europe, as stated by Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, and ensuring that the new CAP supports the Green Deal.

Further, it is mentioned in the Circular Economy Action Plan that the European Commission will develop a regulatory framework for certifying carbon removals to verify their authenticity.

Niall O'Brolchain provided an overview of the carbon farming model developed under the Care Peat project, to evaluate the pricing options for investing in peatland restoration. The model is based on a one-hectare farm, and validated through discussions with farmers and stakeholders. The model considers a loan to convert livestock farming to peatland over a 30 year contract period and that the farmers sell directly to the buyer. Considering the goal of reaching net zero in 2050, and that not all peatland is currently going into carbon farming and rewetting, there is a difficult policy question to answer.

He provided an explanation of how carbon credits work and explained that different systems exist, namely the government system and voluntary system. Carbon credits are a unit of measurement, where 1 ton of carbon dioxide or equivalent removed from the atmosphere is on credit to offset emissions. For instance, a farmer may sell carbon credits to an airline, and the airline charges passengers for these credits, paid to the farmer. There are many different ways of doing this, but there is an ongoing debate on whether this approach is appropriate.

For carbon farming, profitability takes time to achieve per hectare while expenses are high for restoration. Turning an agricultural field into a carbon sequestering bog is possible but naturally takes time, however it is possible to do that in 3 years with intensive methods.

In the EU, farming is heavily subsidised. However, carbon farming does not have subsidies at this moment. The European Commission will launch a carbon farming initiative to reward climate friendly practices, and a regulatory framework to assess authenticity across the EU. Without subsidies, farming in Europe will not be profitable. Subsidies for carbon farming will be revenue neutral on existing farmland, which means that when shifting from one form of farming to carbon farming, subsidies need to be transferred. Lastly, equalisation of subsidies for peatland restoration is necessary to make it work.

Marc Rosiers, (Senior Consultant to Agriculture Companies and Senior Advisor at ELO) provided a presentation on working towards a carbon farming standard.

He introduced a number of carbon farming initiatives in mineral soils used for arable land or grassland and stressed that clarity on regulatory frameworks in the EU is missing.

He referred to carbon farming as the management of carbon pools and flows at farm level to mitigate climate change. It is about applying adapted practices, to increase carbon sinks and remove CO₂ emissions delivered by farmers. The European Commission wants to contribute with results-based eco-schemes. Further, he explained that a new context is provided by recent EU policies, including the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy, the EU Strategy on Adaptation and Climate change, the Fit for 55 Package and the Circular Economy Action Plan. All these policies make clear that the land-based sector needs more and better incentives for managing carbon to drive the necessary transformation by 2050.

A carbon standard requires the knowledge and know-how for making the right management decisions. For climate neutrality, we need to maintain our natural carbon sinks to store biomass, and applying regenerative farming practices can increase these sinks.

He explained the way to sequester soil organic carbon is via regenerative farming practices. Such practices can also deliver wider agro-economic, environmental and climatic benefits from increases in soil organic carbon. Carbon is therefore the ideal lever to valorize other ecosystem services.

Marc Rosiers presented the new Belgian Living Soils initiative. The heart of the project is to develop a standard which starts with a book of requirements for farmers to improve carbon sinks. The project will also assist farmers on how to apply this and support them in making impact calculations, and assessing other co-benefits. The project will establish communities of practice, that can be developed further as demonstration projects.

An existing standard will be adapted to the Belgian local circumstances to deliver the expected results. Farmers are asked to deliver data, plan for regenerative agriculture practices, and monitor results of CO₂ removals and sequestration in the soil. Once this standard is verified, it is certified by VERRA and sold to 3rd parties. Further, a scorecard with baseline will help to monitor results. In order to scale this up, an expertise center is to be established and the community of practice will exchange best practices among farmers to use the new techniques.

He provided an overview of the key factors for success, namely:

- Professional and independent advice
- Building and maintaining a community of practice which are essential for the rollout of the Carbon Farming scheme
- Rewarding farmers through public and private sources (i.e. eco-schemes in the CAP pillar I, agri-environmental measures in CAP pillar II, and private money in the form of a premium on the price of raw materials and/or the sale of carbon credits)

Marc Rosiers concluded his presentation by introducing the new Green infrastructure of the CAP 2021-2027. In particular, he mentioned Eco-schemes as a new instrument to reward farmers that choose to go one step further in terms of environmental and climate action. Farmers can subscribe to eco-schemes across Member States, as part of national strategic schemes which are currently under development, to be applied from January 2023. However,

some clarifications are still needed regarding the eco-schemes integrated in pillar I, as there is a big difference between pillar I and II, with the latter being payment driven. There is a mismatch with the eco-schemes and the availability of subsidy and transfers of budget between years.

For an EU Carbon Farming initiative, a framework is necessary to achieve certainty for the development of demonstration projects in the field.

Carmen Avellaner, (European Innovation Project Manager APCA and i2Connect) presented the i2Connect project.

Agriculture and forestry are facing major challenges. In this context, the i2Connect project is trying to explain the shift from linear knowledge transfer to interactive innovation, and aims to increase and speed up innovation at local level. The project proposed to work in a more participatory, multi-actor approach.

Carmen Avellaner explained the concept of interactive innovation as a process in which complementary knowledge that is shared comes from working together, through co-creation and sharing of practice. Networks are the principle enabling mechanism and structure to make interactive innovation possible.

The objective of the project is to foster the role of advisors in interactive innovation to support the transition to a productive, sustainable and resilient agriculture (including forestry). This is to be achieved by strengthening skills of advisors for interactive innovation, by enhancing their role and by creating a network.

The project, started in 2019, will run until 2024. It comprises 24 partners, from 21 EU countries. The focus is on the advisory services and the support advisors give to farmers.

The first step of the project was to explain the concept of interactive innovation to achieve a common understanding. Then, to expand and update the AKIS inventory (Agriculture Knowledge Innovation Services).

A key output of the project is the development of an operational advisory services database. This is now operational but the challenge remains on how to make such database useful. Further, the project focused on identifying the required competencies of an innovation advisor, and a report on this was produced. A number of good practices of interactive innovation was identified through the project. In particular, 18 good practices were identified from 70 practical cases, which can be categorised in: skills & competence, activities, enabling environment, structure and governance, and communication.

Under the project, training programs (e.g. train the trainers) are being developed, together with materials and tools to enhance advisors' personal skills and networking skills and to support peer to peer learning between advisors.

Panel discussion

The session concluded with a panel discussion moderated by Jurgen Tack, ELO.

Questions concerned the ability of farmers to absorb all information revolving around sustainable agriculture and the need to provide clear practices. As regards to the complexity of the topic, it was agreed that in order to understand the benefits of sustainable agriculture, and

of carbon farming in particular, there is a need to look at things from the farmers' perspectives, that is an intergenerational point of view.

The challenges of finding adequate advisors for farmers and landowners was raised. The database developed under the i2Connect project is a first step towards addressing such challenge but it was suggested that farmers also need to take into consideration their specific context, and therefore might benefit from advisors in their area.

When it comes to support, there is a need to redirect it from conventional to sustainable agricultural practices. It was agreed that a framework at EU level, as well as at national level is crucial. In order to upscale innovative approaches, and in particular carbon farming, a number of supporting factors were mentioned, including support for infrastructure, specific trainings for advisors, availability of supporting mechanisms and funding, and the appropriate and coherent use of metrics to understand impacts and benefits.

Closing the research gaps for nature-based solutions

Key messages

- Overall positive appreciation of preliminary results from NetworkNature R&I landscape mapping and knowledge gaps collection
- Facilitating factors for R&I to support deployment of effective NBS
 - Momentum = growing awareness of biodiversity loss/higher on policy agenda
 - EU policy in place
 - Social awareness and empowerment
- Barriers for R&I to support deployment of effective NBS
 - Lack of knowledge about benefits of NBS
 - Siloed approaches/dominant narratives
 - Systematic evaluation indicators and open data

The session was organised by BiodivERsA.

It started with an introduction to the objectives by **Frederic Lemaître, BiodivERsA**.

The objectives of the session were to present and critically discuss with the participants the Network Nature's mapping of the EU R&I landscape on NBS and collection of NBS knowledge. Further, building on this discussion, the session aimed to engage participants to contribute to the ongoing development of a European R&I roadmap on NBS mainly by reflecting on potential facilitating and constraining factors.

Mapping of the European NBS R&I projects

Mariem EL Harrak, BiodivERsA presented the methodology used to build the mapping of the European NBS R&I projects:

The mapping was conducted over the period 2011-2021. A large number of projects was covered by the mapping, including projects from BiodivERsA, H2020, FP7, Interreg, LIFE (still under progress). The mapping was conducted using keywords-specific methods:

- First step using "Biodiversity" as the keyword;
- Second set of keywords "Services and Approaches"

On that basis, projects were retrieved and manually checked to identify the NBS relevant projects.

Selection of the projects

A project was considered as R&I on NBS when corresponding to the following criteria:

- Resulted in biodiversity benefits
- Tackled a societal challenge
- Resulted in Social and economic benefits and/or increased resilience

A rating scale from 0 to 3 was used for each criterion. The projects were considered in the mapping if they explicitly used NBS or were included in the H2020 NBS call and if all the criteria had a score greater than or equal to 2. This process resulted in 223 NBS projects (pending integration of LIFE projects). After gathering these projects under one database, they were analysed using different variables:

- Types of NBS;
- Types of NBS approaches;
- Types of societal challenges;
- Types of environment + geographical and funding trends.

Mapping preliminary results

In terms of number of NBS projects, a plateau can be observed since 2017 (around 30 projects/year):

- Geographical analysis: even if focused on European projects, a participation from all around the world could be seen. The two main regions outside Europe were South America and Asia.
- Analysis of the Typology (Eggermont et al.), composed of 3 typologies: the analysis showed that **types 2** (solutions based on developing sustainable management protocols) **and 3** (solutions involving the creation of new ecosystems) were a lot more present than type 1.
- Types of societal challenge: the analysis demonstrated a prominence of economic development and social cohesion challenges, together with climate resilience.
- Types of approaches (derived from Cohen-Schacham and al.): aspects were added on agriculture management approaches and development of the Ecosystem-based management approaches (water, fisheries, forest, etc.).
- Types of environment: the urban environment was found as the most studied environment in Europe, followed by agricultural land.

Knowledge gaps collection

Frédéric Lemaître explained the 2-step approach to collect the knowledge gaps: 1. desk study; 2. survey.

Desk study

17 publications were analysed to retrieve the explicitly cited gaps. These included major EU R&I and policy documents (e.g. the European Biodiversity Partnership SRIA, the NBS State of the Art in EU-funded Projects publication of the EC, ThinkNature NBS Handbook).

39 broad gaps categories were identified, with 10-15 of them presenting high occurrence (>3).

Survey

An online Survey was open for approximately one month.

45 respondents participated in the survey, including ½ academics and 1/3 stakeholders (national policy makers, NGOs and SMEs). 46 gaps were identified, gathered in three main categories:

- Missing knowledge/data
- Implementation gap

- Capacity & awareness gap

Presentation of the EC and the NetworkNature TF works on building an evidence-based framework

Laura Wendling, Technical Research Centre of Finland, presented the work of the European Commission's and the NetworkNature's Task Forces on building an evidence-based framework.

Addressing NBS knowledge gaps is crucial to complete the evidence on NBS multi-functionality and multiple benefits.

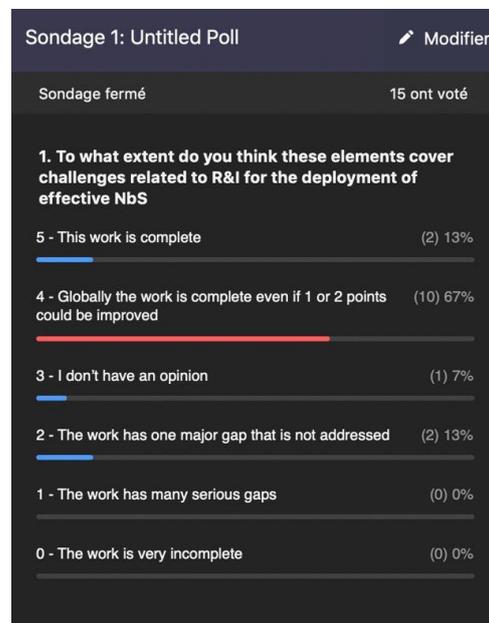
She presented the work of the first 3 European task forces on NBS:

- **TF1: Data and knowledge sharing**
 - Promote online, searchable and reusable European evidence base on NBS.
 - Outcomes: data management plan and EU NBS knowledge repository.
 - A common template and KPIs have been defined. API implementation and testing are currently undertaken.
- **TF2: Integrated NBS assessment framework and methods**
 - Promote a coherent and integrated assessment framework based on common indicators
 - 3 publications, including a Handbook to develop and implement scientifically-valid monitoring and evaluations plans for the evaluation of NBS impacts.
- **TF3: Business models and financial mechanisms**
 - NBS procurement guide to implement NBS projects, and valuation of NBS benefits
 - Complement task forces 1 and 2.
 - Undergoing work: currently looking at specific methods used to assign values to NBS benefits. Target: evidence base from EU NBS solutions.

Questions and feedback

Participants were asked to consider the key elements coming from the presented work (desk study and survey) and to share their feedback.

Figure 7 - Poll results



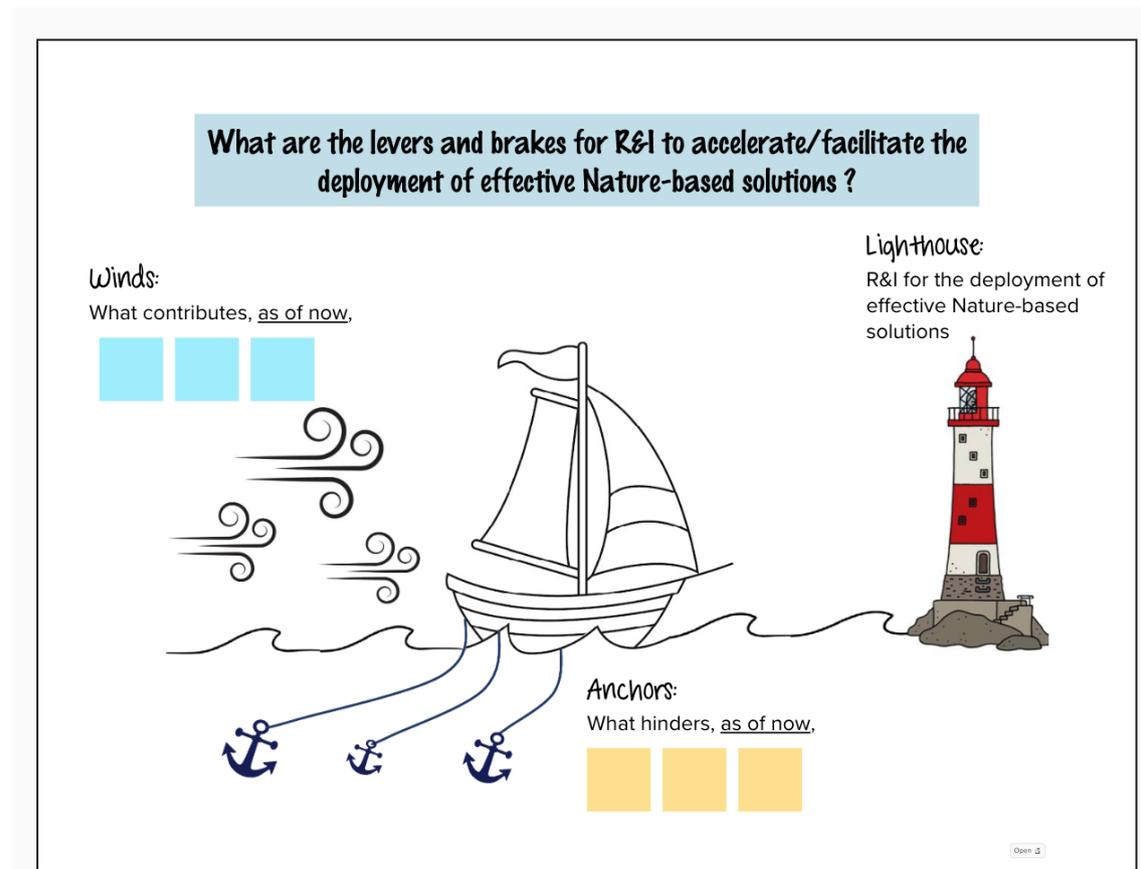
There was an overall positive appreciation of the preliminary results presented from NetworkNature R&I landscape mapping and knowledge gaps collection as showed by the result from the poll filled by the participants during the session.

Interactive session: co-creation of the EU NBS Research & Innovation Roadmap

During the interactive session, participants were asked to reflect on the identification of levers and barriers to facilitate the deployment of effective Nature-based solutions.

The “sailboat approach” was used for this purpose.

Figure 8 - Sailboat approach



After a time for individual reflection, participants were asked to reflect in group and to come up with 3 levers (winds) and 3 barriers (anchors) to present in plenary. The results from the four groups were summarised as follows:

Group 1

Winds:

- Biodiversity crisis becoming more important on the policy agenda;
- Empowerment of youth, increased engagement in different activities with regards to NBS;
- Increasing availability of data with regards to NBS.

Anchors:

- Misuse of the NBS term (green washing);
- Dominance of certain narratives when it comes to the implementation (e.g. engineering narratives, green infrastructure);
- Systematic evaluation indicators missing; lack of recognition of importance of open data on governance.

Group 2

Winds:

- Raise of social awareness, education is a huge wind for the corresponding anchor to get rid of (i.e. lack of social awareness).
- Funding opportunities (but maybe not identified in all countries).
- EU policy in place, connected with the social awareness problem. Pressure on local governments, policy and so on; if not, the policy will not consider this issue.

Anchors:

- Poor awareness regarding the benefits of NBS, but also the phenomenon that people from urban space not necessarily want green areas and not necessarily believe greenery provides benefits.
 - It is not that obvious when you ask people what they think: some would rather have a new parking lot than a new green area. Strong stereotypes (e.g. can make the walls more humid...). Hard to go through these hard stereotypes and educate people. This huge problem was identified both Poland and Spain), but might not be the same elsewhere (UK, Germany...).
- Poor political agenda: if people don't want it, politics will not create new green areas. In the less developed countries / in the less deprived areas, people do not consider NBS as a benefit but only an aesthetical pleasing element.
- Lack of funding opportunities.

Group 3.

Winds:

- Biodiversity crisis;
- Momentum at the policy level (EU policy + social awareness link);
- Tendency for naturalness within the population.

Anchors:

- Lack of space for NBS (e.g. flooding issues: handling it with NBS requires additional space).
- Lack of trust / confidence: dominance of the narratives (linked with G1). Tendency for engineering, calculating solutions. We have been working against nature for a long time now, so still lack of trust for NBS.
- Scaling up/down (from pilot to mainstream; from global to local, from local to global).

Group 4.

Winds:

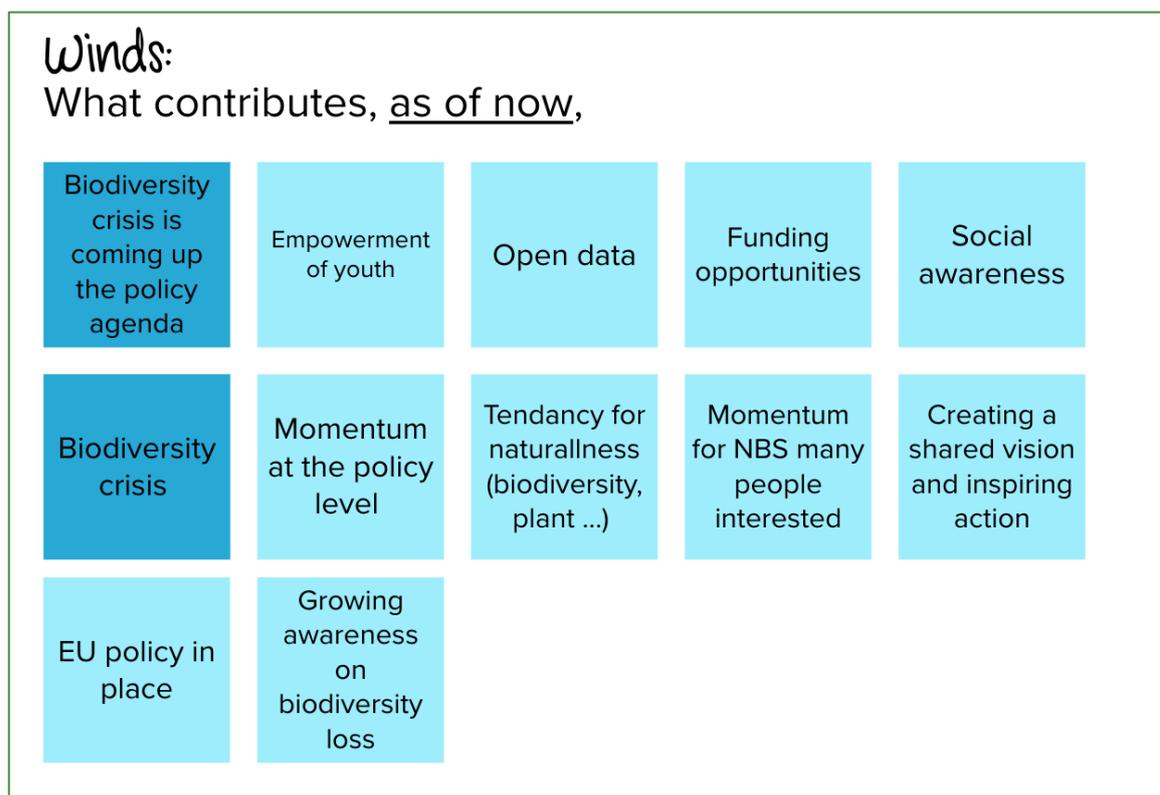
- Momentum on biodiversity loss (not only political but also among people);

- Quite new, growing awareness (biodiversity loss was not known as the climate crisis, more the case now).
- New way of thinking: shared vision and inspiring action.

Anchors:

- Lack of knowledge on the benefits of NBS: technical, economic and social aspects among the users at least (among industry, among funders...);
- Lack of funding and funding possibilities;
- **Siloed approaches** that we have in the modern society. It challenges the possibility to use NBS: in the modern world, difficult to communicate with all the society, esp. public areas.

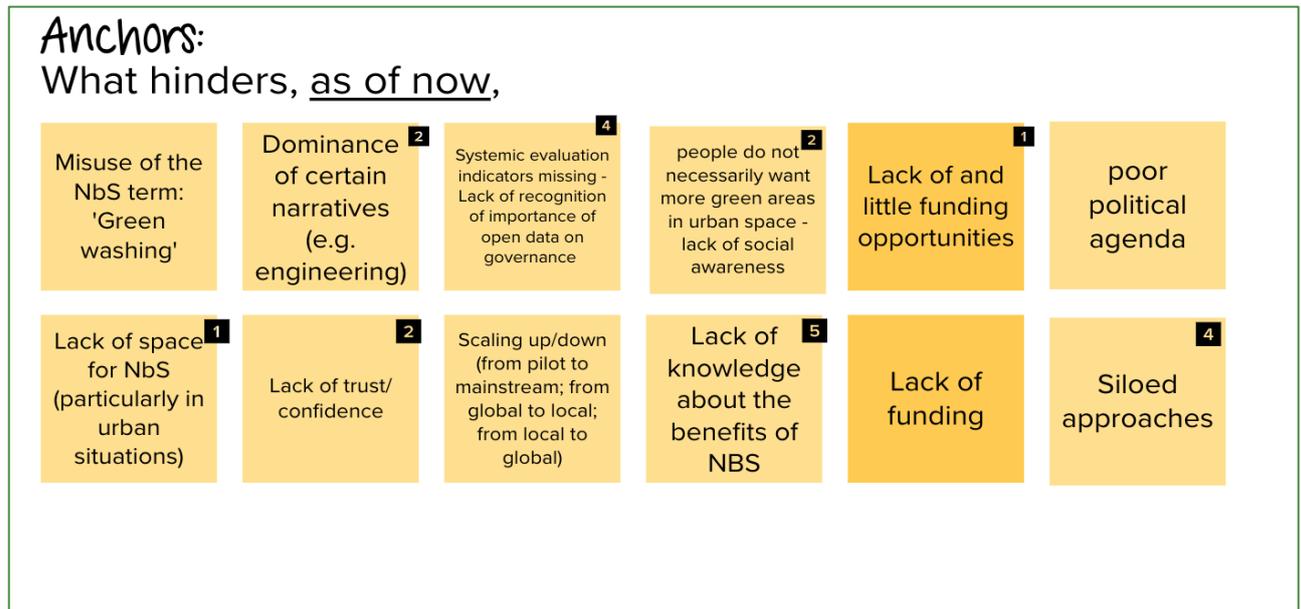
Figure 9 – Overview of levers (winds)



Main Facilitating factors for R&I to support deployment of effective NBS

- Momentum = growing awareness of biodiversity loss/higher on policy agenda
- EU policy in place
- Social awareness and empowerment

Figure 10 - Overview of barriers (anchors)



Participants were asked to prioritise the Anchors by voting for the 3 they deemed more important. The 3 mains anchors identified by the participants were:

- the lack of knowledge on NBS benefits (5 votes)
- siloed approaches (4 votes);
- systematic evaluation indicators missing (4 votes)

Conclusion and next steps

The session concluded with an explanation of the next steps. The prioritised elements and the more detailed content will be used and highlighted in the Strategic Workshop with the EU policy-makers, R&I programmers and experts to be held in November.

The objective is to consider the elements gathered so far - including outputs from the session - to advance on a first draft roadmap to be shaped in January 2022. This draft will go under consultation to gain feedback, and a final roadmap will be published in May 2023.

Kick-off meeting of the network of national representatives for SMEs interested in nature-based solutions

Key messages

- *Inspiring presentation of NBE White Paper and its relationships with SMEs: identified barriers, enablers and the forecasted increase of the investments in this field (3 times until 2030 according to the UN).*
- *Building on the preliminary results of the online survey, the main problems faced by SMEs when moving towards NBS are:*
 - *Many activities targeting large companies, few for SMEs,*
 - *Low availability of NBS (very solicited and facing many other urgent matters)*
- *Key solutions were further identified and prioritised:*
 - *Collect and adapt the existing tools and support to the needs of SMEs*
 - *Access a list of NBS presenting also their evaluated benefits*
- *Attending organizations indicated which activities of the network they would be willing to support.*
- *Presenting the topics of the Meeting to come.*

The session was organised by Steinbeis 2i.

The session aimed at presenting the scope of the network of National Representatives for SMEs interested in NBS, and support from NetworkNature. Further, the session enabled a brainstorming, prioritisation and definition issues to be tackled by the network. Lastly, the activities that the participants would engage themselves into were defined.

Nature based economy

Siobhan McQuaid, Trinity College Dublin and Connecting Nature Project, presented the Nature-based Economy (NbE) White Paper and its relationships with SMEs, where barriers and enablers are identified. The presentation also included a forecast of the increase of investments in this field by 2030.

Figure 11 - Nature-based Economy representation

Where does the nature-based economy fit?

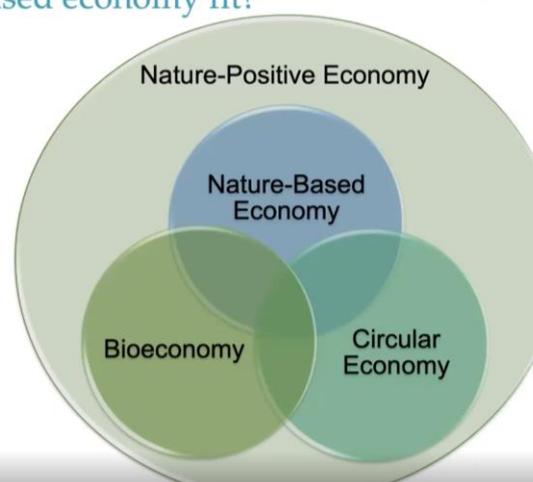
Economies of the future must be net zero and nature positive.

A nature positive approach enriches biodiversity, stores carbon, purifies water and reduces pandemic risk

Targets:

- Zero loss of nature from 2020
- Nature positive by 2030
- Full recovery by 2050

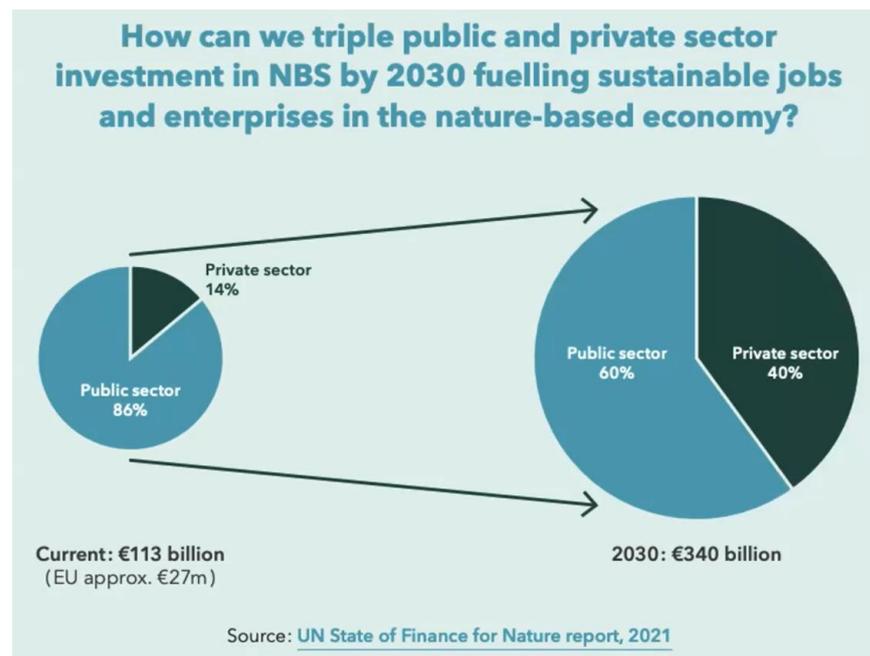
(WEF 2021)



A contextual overview connecting NBS to NbE was provided. Further, the lack of evidence on the economic impacts/benefits of NBS was highlighted as well as the need to present relevant data.

Nature positive economy can be considered as the umbrella concept for Nature-based Economy, Bio-economy, and Circular Economy.

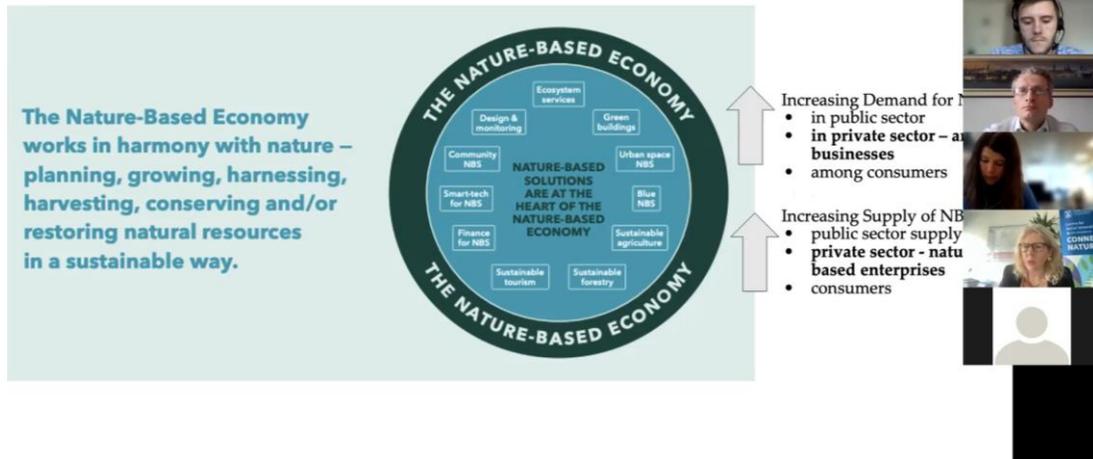
Figure 12 - Tripling investments in NBS by 2030



According to the [UN State of Finance for Nature Report in 2021](#), globally € 113 billion are invested annually in Nature based Solutions (the majority coming from the public sector). To reach the climate objectives, € 340 billion should be invested in NBS by 2030. Investments should increase four-fold by 2050 from the current level. Such investment rates will certainly fuel the demand for NBS, support the companies providing NBS and also the creation of sustainable jobs. The need expressed in this report also states the importance to increase the commitment of the private sector (from 14% in 2021 towards 40% in 2030) to achieve this overall increase in investments where companies and SMEs have a role to play.

Figure 13 - Increasing NBS market demand and supply

Increasing NBS market demand and supply



From the demand side, the question is “How to increase demand of NBS in the private sector?”. Among possible drivers of demand, the following can be found: EU taxonomy on sustainable investment; increased public/employee awareness; pressure to reduce carbon emissions; etc.

Possible barriers to demand include: lack of awareness; lack of knowledge and skills; credibility; lack of regulation and incentives; etc.

When looking at the supply side, mainly Nature-based Enterprises with direct activities (NBS for green buildings, water management, sustainable agriculture, etc) and indirect activities (advisory and financial services, smart technology, research & innovation, etc) supply NBS.

Market demand for NBS is a decisive factor for NbE but also finances for such enterprises.

Figure 14 - Examples of relevant publications

Growing momentum



A growing number of publications are tackling this subject which is creating a growing momentum for the Nature based Economy, Nature based Solutions and Nature based Enterprises.

Network Nature

The Network Nature project and the concept of Network of National Representatives for SMEs interested in NBS were presented, highlighting the fact that this Network:

- is launched and hosted by the Project Network Nature, but is also supported by Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform, B@B, Enterprise Europe Network and some other clusters and associations.
- is an initiative from Network Nature to support the adoption and implementation of NBS.
- will support SMEs through capacity-building, networking, matchmaking, and financial/funding advice activities.
- will also generate inputs for the preparation of policy recommendations to inform policymakers.
- is mainly composed of Business Supporting Organizations interested in the field of NBS.

Presentation of the results from the online survey on barriers and enablers

An online survey was launched to gather insights on barriers and enablers to be tackled by the network. The preliminary results of the survey were presented, including the characterization of the type of organizations that contributed to the survey, the sector these organizations are active in, whether they are already engaged with NBS or planning to be.

Figure 15 - Survey results (Question 1)

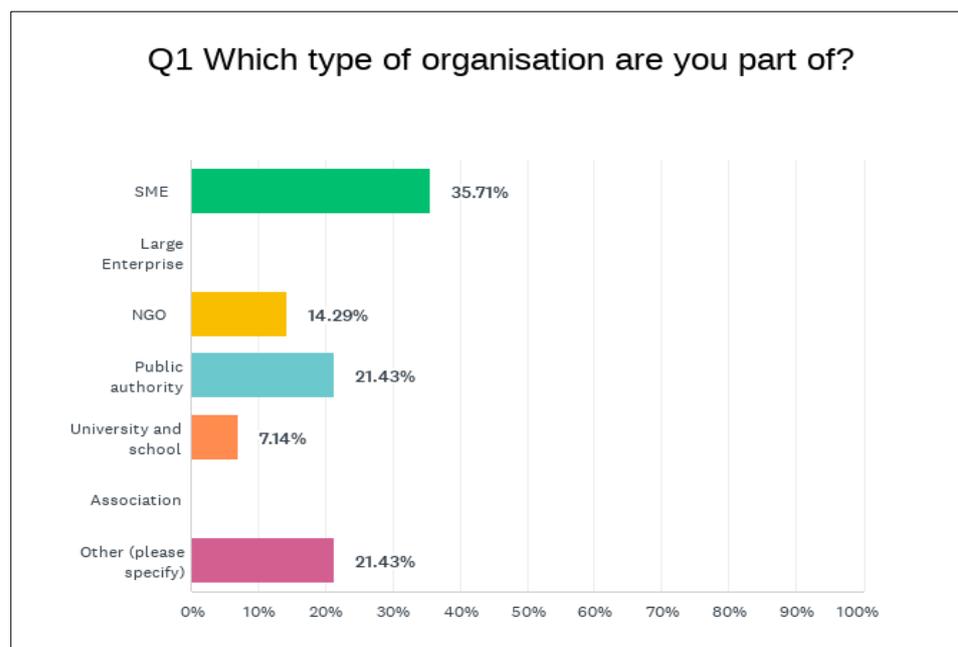


Figure 16 - Survey results (Question 2)

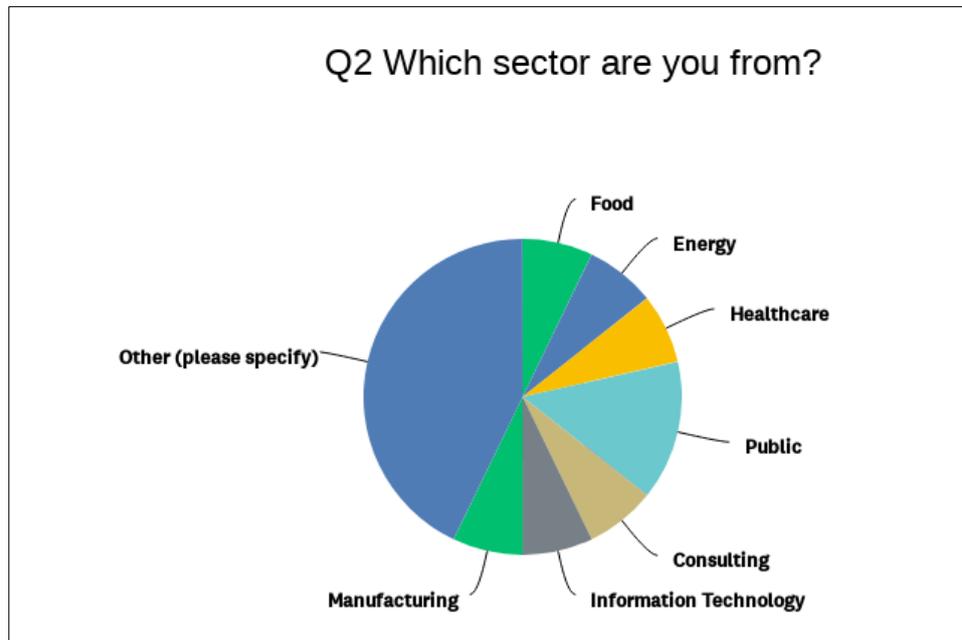
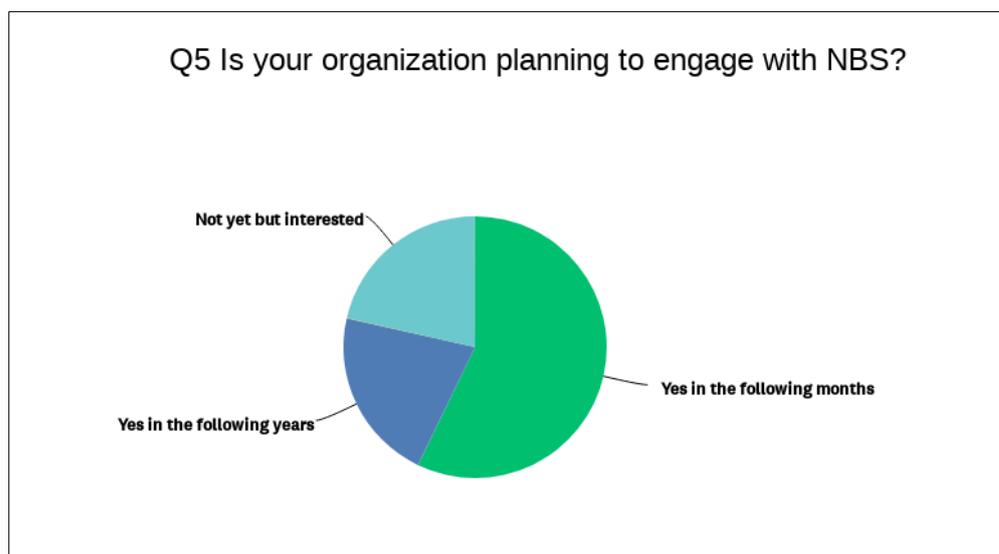


Figure 17 - Survey results (Question 3)



Figure 18 - Survey results (Question 5)



Barriers or enablers of interest to be tackled by the network

The ranking of identified barriers/problems and enablers/solutions was one of the main outcomes of the online survey. The resulting ranking was presented (see the *green cells* in the table below) and then the participants to the workshop were invited to define other problems/barriers and solutions/enablers that weren't already mentioned in the outcomes of the survey (see *light blue cells* in the table below). To finalise the activity, participants were asked to establish a connection between a concrete problem and a concrete solution from the different ideas that were shared during the workshop (indicated with *lowercase letters*).

Table 1 - Barriers and enablers

Ref.	Condensed list of barriers/problems	Condensed list of enablers/solutions	related with barrier
d	Skills and competencies in the organization	NbE seed accelerator programs and/or incubators to support the access to finance (equity/debt) and to facilitate the scale-up of NbEs (especially internationally).	a, c, d
e	Public funding for NBS projects	Provide practical, easy-to-use and evidence based tools to assess (value) the benefits arising from NBS for NbEs.	-
-	Resources/guidelines for developing new or improving existing NBS	Information source on NBS regulations	-

i	Cooperation with partners to implement NBS projects	Database of suppliers (NBEs)	i
-	Availability of technical equipment and primary products	Training programs for organisations implementing NBS	-
-	Low collaboration with policymakers and businesses to support urban plans and building codes that contemplate NBS	Database of best practice cases, case studies, success stories, etc for NbEs to learn from and accessible through a wide-reaching network to foster co-learning and to inform future practice.	g
b	Lack of understanding of the business case for NBS, which is perceived as a cost rather than a revenue stream (cost-benefit analysis needed).	Recognition by public authorities	a, e
a	Public procurement as it is often not suited for NbEs and NBS.	Advising and supportive contact point for organizations interested in NBS	-
f	Prioritization of NBS next to other projects	Higher funding rates or incentives	-
c	Lack of incentives for private sector to invest in NBS (no buy in from senior management).	NBS-friendly revision of legislation and regulations	-
-	Sustainability fatigue: biodiversity, CSR, NBS, circular economy, etc are complex concepts whose meaning often overlaps with each other adding to the fatigue and confusion.	Awareness raising about the economic, environmental and social benefits to overcome lack of understanding of the public opinion and some organizations.	b, f
g, h	Lack of market data (i.e. market size) and clear business models for NbEs.	Develop stakeholder networks (local/international) to connect NbEs with intermediaries and the finance sector.	b, c, h
-	-	Develop standards/measurement criteria to better determine the impact of NBS (economic, environmental, etc).	-

-	-	Awareness raising among investors (impact investors, philanthropy networks, etc)	-
-	-	Public funding availability and other policy instruments to encourage both demand (consumers, private sector, etc).	-

Figure 19 - Overview of problems to be tackled by the Network

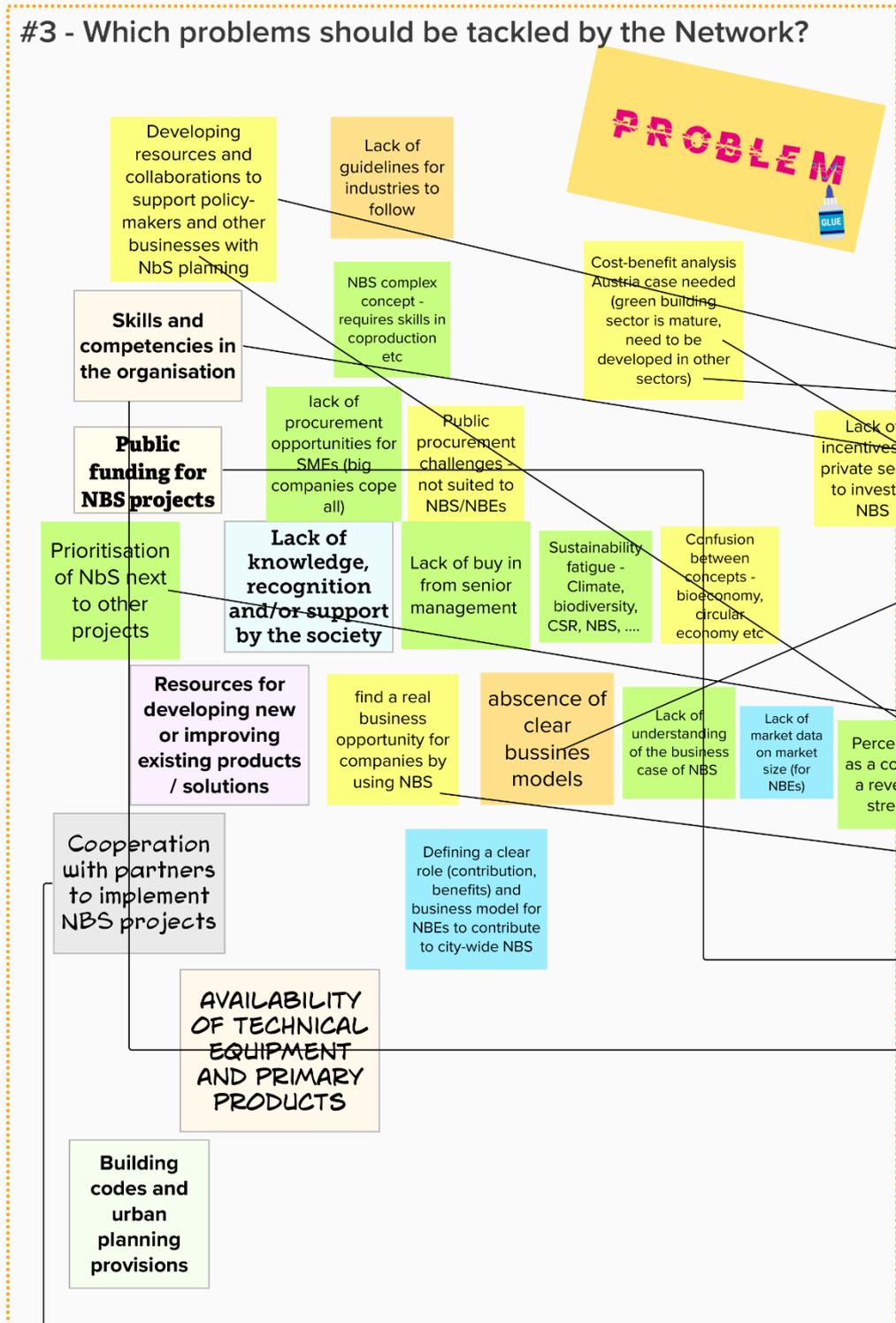


Figure 20 - Overview of solutions



Priority activities

Participants were asked to indicate the most relevant activities that the network should tackle.

To do so, participants had the task to assign priorities to the different enablers/solutions to help the Network of National Representatives better orientate its future efforts. The list below shows the resulting order of priorities based on the outcomes of the workshop.

Priority	N° of votes	Enabler/solution
1	6	Develop stakeholder networks (local/international) to connect NbEs with intermediaries and the finance sector.
	6	Provide practical, easy-to-use and evidence-based tools to assess (value) the benefits arising from NBS for NbEs.
	6	Awareness raising about the economic, environmental, and social benefits to overcome lack of understanding of the public opinion and some organizations.
2	3	Public funding availability and other policy instruments to encourage demand (consumers, private sector, etc).
3	2	Training programs for organisations implementing NBS
	2	Database of best practice, case studies, success stories, etc for NbEs to learn from and accessible through a wide-reaching network to foster co-learning and to inform future practice.
4	1	Database of suppliers (NbEs)
	1	Develop standards/measurement criteria to better determine the impact of NBS (economic, environmental, etc).
	1	NbE seed accelerator programs and/or incubators to support the access to finance (equity/debt) and to facilitate the scale-up of NbEs (especially internationally).

Several comments were made during the session which highlighted the importance of addressing the challenge of measuring impact for SMEs. For instance, smart technologies were mentioned as opportunities to tackle such a challenge as they can make it easier and cost effective for SMEs to measure the impact of NBS. Tackling such a challenge could be one of the focus areas of the Network, and organising dedicated meetings for specific subjects could help in the future to work out the measuring issue. Further, the B@B Platform was mentioned as a useful guide for SMEs to overcome the issues related to measuring impact.

Activities to be covered and support needed

All participants were asked to indicate which activities (solutions to problems) they would be ready to support and to describe the support that they would provide. A table summarising the outcomes of this exercise is available in Annex A of this report.

Points of relevance for policy recommendation

During the workshop it was agreed that one way of supporting the future investment in NBS is to help nature-based enterprises (that is, SMEs offering -directly or indirectly- NBS) by means of creating resources (tools, trainings, best practices, success stories, mentoring, etc) channelled by networks such as the Network of National Representatives for SMEs. In that

sense, policy makers should have in mind that for the forecasted increased demand for NBS to be successfully met by NbE, companies should not be left alone. An Europe-wide network of business supporting organizations could play an important role in providing such support. Further, in the past years we have witnessed numerous changes of focus (e.g. sustainable development, climate, NBS) which may contribute to slowing down SMEs' actions as they may not have the resources to develop a new strategic plan for each new topic. A more comprehensive approach of these different topics would enable to better follow the SMEs and increase the impact and consistency of the different campaigns.

Closing plenary

Investment in Nature-based solutions for achieving Green Deal ambitions for the EU

Philippe Tulkens, Head of Unit Climate and planetary boundaries, European Commission DG Research & Innovation, provided a speech on the opportunities for investments in NBS. The first step, he said, is ensuring the understanding of the importance of nature in tackling climate change. Nature can bring many benefits to society, including in relation to mental and physical functions, climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as risk reduction (floods, landslides, etc). Despite the increased recognition of the importance of NBS, investments are still lagging behind. As stated by UNEP, investments in NBS need to triple by 2030, in order to tackle the consequences of climate change. Studies confirmed that NBS are the most cost-effective solutions for climate and societal crises. Research finds that the conservation and effective management of at least 30% of the planet's most important area for biodiversity could protect up to 80% of plants and species, secure 60% of carbon stock and save 60% of the planet's clean water. These figures can help to increase awareness and incentive investments from public and private sectors. However, further actions are needed, including changing people's behaviour, removing harmful subsidies, promoting more sustainable production and consumption patterns. He concluded by stating that a science-based approach is crucial to succeed in addressing the climate crisis.

Panel: „Achieving Ecosystem Restoration targets through joint actions for NBS“

A panel discussion on achieving Ecosystem Restoration targets through joint actions for NBS brought together a range of stakeholders: Raysa França (Youth4Nature), Richard Scott (SER Europe), Jurgen Tack (ELO), Raul Sanchez (UrbanGreenUp project) and Silvana Di Sabatino (Operandum project).

Raysa França, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, Youth4Nature, stressed the importance of communication among stakeholders to achieve ecosystem restoration. In particular, she focused on the crucial need to better include the youth in NBS discussions and decision-making processes. Putting preconceptions aside and enabling young people to take on leadership positions may be beneficial to bring on new experience and views on the table.

The conservation of nature is an important way to tackle the consequences of climate change and the extinction crisis, as stated by Richard Scott, Member of the Board of the Society for Ecological Restoration. In order to achieve a successful implementation of NBS and ecosystem restoration and get the ecological message across the world, knowledge sharing is crucial. Currently, knowledge is available, but it is necessary to ensure it is shared with the “right” language, to bring in new audiences. He stressed the importance of SDG 17 for strengthening

the means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development to achieve a better and greener future. To do so, science-based communication among partners and stakeholders is indispensable.

The importance of sharing knowledge was emphasised also by Jurgen Tack, Scientific Director, European Landowners Organisation. In the current context where climate change is continuously changing the functioning of our habitats, he posed an important question on whether the focus should be on restoring such habitats or rather restoring ecosystem services. Overall, NBS should be seen as a methodology to achieve restoration targets. He also addressed the issue of youth engagement in agriculture, and explained that, as a sector, agriculture is still quite conservative but demands are shifting toward more innovative instruments. This may also represent a challenge for the new generations who will take over.

Raul Sanchez, UrbanGreenUp project coordinator, underlined the important role that NBS play in restoring ecosystem services in cities. Cities are to be seen as ecosystems facing numerous challenges which can be addressed through integrated solutions offered by NBS. For example, trees can buffer temperature, control flood, manage the soil, and contribute to increasing social cohesion. The relevant knowledge on NBS and their use is available and continuously growing but implementation requires joint action and collaboration among stakeholders, especially public-private collaborations.

Finally, the relevance of working together across disciplines and sectors to act for the environment and for biodiversity was stressed by Silvana Di Sabatino, Operandum project coordinator. In order to better explain the importance of stakeholder relationships, she mentioned an example from the Operandum project concerning Lake Puruvesi in Finland, an area which was facing water purity and biodiversity loss issues. Good management of the lake as well as of the surrounding areas (e.g. forests) through the engagement of the whole chain of stakeholders led to a successful implementation of NBS to the benefit of the lake area. She explained that in the Operandum project the concept of Urban Living Labs has been re-elaborated into Open Air Laboratories, as they are thought for larger contexts than simply urban environments. Today, cities are increasingly connected to their surrounding rural/coastal/mountain environments. As the size increases, also the investment needs change.

Closing remarks

The Network Nature Annual Event concluded with a message of hope: despite the different crises the world is facing, this is an exciting time to act. Progress on NBS is developing and will continue to grow but more efforts are needed to seek “diversity”, both in the ecosystems to protect and in bringing together the groups to make this happen.

Annex A

Activities to be covered by the Network of National representatives for SMEs interested in NBS

Participant	Activity it could engage with
Jesus Iglesias (Social Climate)	<p><u>[Priority 3] “Database of best practice, case studies, success stories...”</u></p> <p>Transfer the gained experience related to “private-public NBS Cluster” and “NBE incubation program”.</p>
Mario Balzan (Ecostack Innovations)	<p><u>[Priority 1] “Develop stakeholder networks (local/international)...”</u></p> <p>Interested in working with other SMEs</p> <p><u>[Priority 1] “Provide practical, easy-to-use and evidence-based tools...”</u></p> <p>Testbed implementation, monitoring and the development of new tools as part of a NbE.</p> <p><u>[Priority 3] “Training programs for organisations implementing NBS”</u></p> <p>Co-creation and training activity with our stakeholder network.</p>
Siobhan McQuaid (Trinity/Connecting Nature)	<p><u>[Priority 3] “Public funding availability and other policy instruments...”</u></p> <p>NbE research</p> <p><u>[Priority 5] “NbE seed accelerator programs and/or incubators...”</u></p>

	Working with cities on developing NbE accelerators.
Lamiaa Biaz (LGI)	<p><u>[Priority 1] “Develop stakeholder networks (local/international)...”</u></p> <p>Support networking efforts</p> <p><u>[Priority 3] “Public funding availability and other policy instruments...”</u></p> <p>Access to finance</p> <p><u>[Priority 5] “NbE seed accelerator programs and/or incubators...”</u></p> <p>Support NBS accelerator</p>
Mark Sweeney (Enterprise Ireland)	<p><u>[Priority 1] “Provide practical, easy-to-use and evidence-based tools...”</u></p> <p>Best practice case studies.</p> <p><u>[Priority 2] “Awareness raising about the economic, environmental and...”</u></p> <p>Awareness raising</p> <p><u>[Priority 3] “Training programs for organisations implementing NBS”</u></p> <p>Interested in Training Programmes</p>
Andrea Goertler, Nicholas Tänzer & Konstantin Wegner (GIZ - German Development Cooperation)	<p><u>[Priority 1] “Develop stakeholder networks (local/international)...”</u></p> <p>Twinning between EU based NbEs & Networks and developing country NbE and/or networks for capacity building</p>

<p>Janne Fillet (EU B@B Platform)</p>	<p><u>[Priority 1] “Develop stakeholder networks (local/international)...”</u></p> <p>Support the coordination with other SME / nature networks (i.e. SME United, Capitals Coalition, etc).</p> <p><u>[Priority 3] “Database of best practice, case studies, success stories...”</u></p> <p>Look for synergies. We could provide case studies on NBS.</p>
<p>Jemma Simpson (Oppla)</p>	<p><u>[Priority 1] “Develop stakeholder networks (local/international)...”</u></p> <p>Oppla can help provide this support (Networks)</p>



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