



Network Nature Report

NbS Task Forces Cluster Meeting

WP1

IUCN

March 2025

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Executive summary

The NetworkNature Task Forces (TFs) Cluster Meeting took place virtually on the 26th of March 2025 and gathered members of the Nature-based-solutions (NbS) TFs while exploring opportunities for cross-sectional collaboration and concluding on the topic of standardisation. After an opening by a representative from the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation from the European Commission and an introduction by the representative of IUCN EURO, the key activities and future direction of NbS TFs were outlined. Additionally, four new water projects recently added to the network took the floor demonstrating their objectives. Furthermore, the selected ideas of Network Nature Labs were presented together with the selection process. Updates on the standardisation efforts led by Naturance and Varicities were also shared and standardisation was outlined as a key process to ensure consistency and quality amongst the NbS projects. The meeting was concluded by summarising the lessons learnt and next steps. TF members were invited to attend the upcoming in-person TFs Cluster Meeting in September 2025 where NetworkNature Labs will be further developed through dedicated workshops.

Introduction

Structure and overview

The **NetworkNature Nature-based Solutions Task Forces Cluster** meeting took place online on the 26th of March 2025 and brought together Taskforce members, NetworkNature partners, and the European Commission (European Research Executive Agency and DG Research & Innovation) for an interactive dialogue to take stock of achievements of the Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe and Mission NbS projects to date and to strengthen synergies and exchange to further increase their impact and to propose updated Taskforces and cross-interactions for NetworkNature.

This year's focus lied in presenting the selected **NetworkNature Labs** ideas, that will be funded to implement cross-Task Force activities. Additionally, four new water projects were introduced to the Task Forces, while the Roadmap for R&I on NbS, developed by NetworkNature, was presented along with its potential links to the NbS Task Forces. The sessions concluded with an update on the standardisation efforts led by two NetworkNature projects: VARCITIES and NATURANCE.

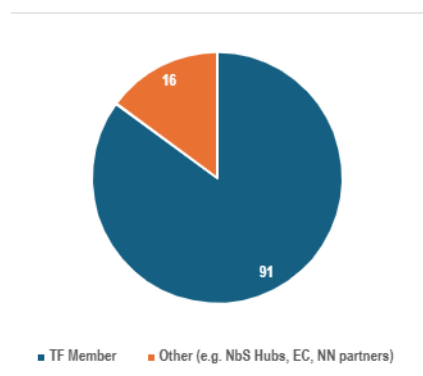
The agenda of the meeting is provided in Annex 1.

All the slides of the day are available [in this link](#).

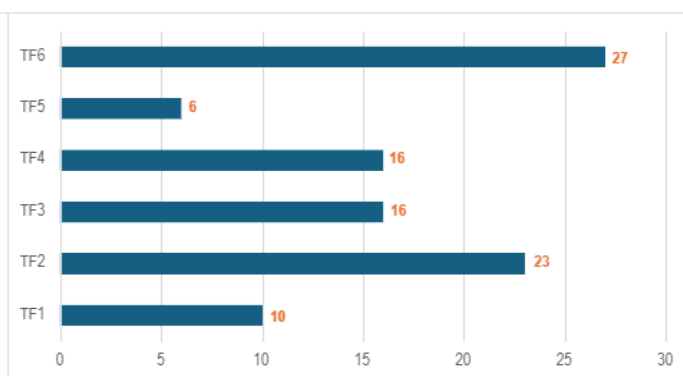
Participation

The online meeting was attended by **over 100 participants** spanning from members of TFs, NN Hubs Representatives, the European Commission as well as the project representatives for new NbS projects recently added to NetworkNature. All the Task Forces were represented as can be seen on the graph below.

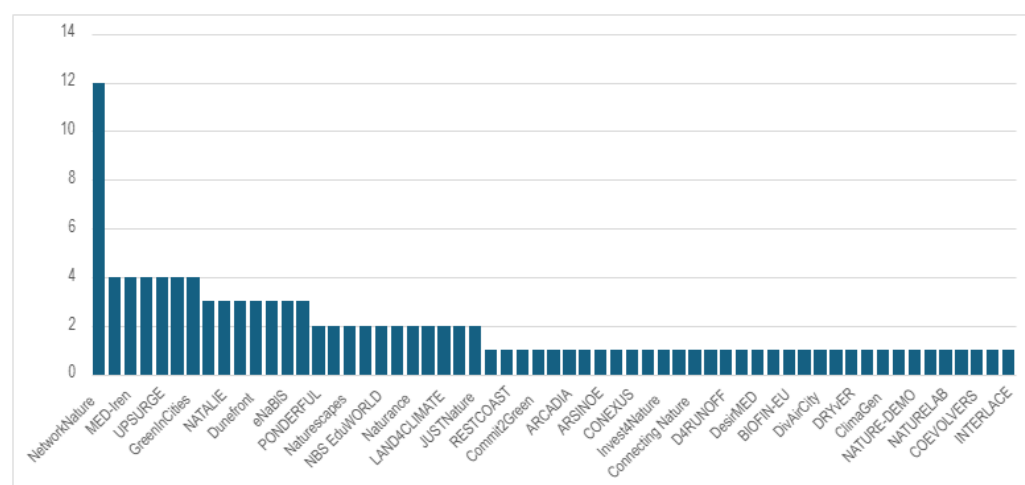
Number of attendees



Number of TF Representatives



Number of representatives from each project



Welcome Speech

Fleur van Ooststroom-Brummel

Policy Officer, Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions,
European Commission, DG RTD

Fleur van Ooststroom-Brummel opened the event by reaffirming the role of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as practical responses to complex societal challenges, beyond their status as conceptual innovations. She emphasized the importance of keeping NbS high on the EU agenda amid shifting priorities, particularly through diversified funding models, emphasizing the role of blended finance.

She also highlighted the value of Task Forces in delivering cohesive messaging, identifying research gaps, and supporting policy impact.

Concluding her remarks, she underscored the importance of collective action:

“We must join and amplify our messages and voices to ensure we continue being heard. And the best way to do this is through collaboration, because synergies can unlock greater impact — and by working together, we can accelerate progress.”

Short updates from the NbS Task Forces

After a short introduction to NetworkNature and NbS Task Forces by TFs Coordinator Firdaous Halim (IUCN), the TF representatives briefed the

participants on their progress. They shared key outcomes and future objectives as well as identifying opportunities for collaboration. These insights are captured in the table below.

Know more about it [here](#) (page 05 to 24)

Task Force	Previous Outcomes & Future Objectives	Opportunities for Collaboration
TF1: Data and Knowledge Sharing Paul Mahoney, OPPLA	Developed standardised data templates to support the European Research & Innovation Roadmap for NbS . Focused on improving data collection, standardisation, and sharing.	Provide templates and methods for local data monitoring . Need on-the-ground feedback to tailor tools to regional contexts .
TF2: Integrated Assessment Framework Louis Durrant, IEEP	Finalised Action Plan. Developed a biodiversity mini-handbook , contributed to the KPI selection tool , collected survey data from projects, and built MRV case study repository . Preparing an online database of indicators.	Link with TFs, Climate-ADAPT, and MIP4Adaptation. Establish permanent liaisons between active members and scale up membership . Gather practical feedback to inform indicator design.
TF3: Finance and Business Models (for NbS) in a Nature-Positive Economy	Updated EC Expert report, mapped finance instruments, explored tech and citizen roles in nature-positive economy. Ongoing engagement with policy and business sectors.	Share tools and insights with businesses at the local scale. Organising a webinar series on NbS business models . Seek local feedback for future programme design.

Chrispin Sanga, Steinbeis Europa Zentrum		
TF4: NbS Communicators Kassia Rudd ICLEI	Created co-creation video series and storytelling toolkit giving an accessible way to engage with NbS, also for those outside of the typical target audience. Working on operationalising tools and creating a common communication kit.	Propose closer TF4/5 collaboration and set schedule for rotating meeting leadership . Help disseminate NbS outputs through local community channels and foster cross-project collaboration through e.g. peer-to-peer learning sessions.
TF5: NbS Education Conor Dowling, NbS EduWorld	Developed learning materials including NbS 101 Design Guide , Equitable Inclusion Toolbox and Storytelling Toolkit . Call for collaboration with Horizon projects.	Engage stakeholders in practical tools and educational content. Invite feedback and use cases from local educators .
TF6: Co-Creation and Governance Natalia Burgos, Ecologic Institute	Produced guidelines, held workshops on inclusive engagement, especially concerning <i>commonly excluded stakeholders*</i> , rethinking the meaning of inclusion and redefining the voice of nature itself. Updating online co-creation tool via NN Labs with planned upcoming tests and launched spatial planning work.	Potential collaboration with BioAgora to develop guidance for the use of methods and tools in spatial planning. Develop background paper and publication with feedback from practice to inspire action and change.

* By 'Commonly excluded stakeholders' TF6 understand social groups highly interested in or significantly affected by NbS, but are unable or unwilling to participate, engage, or meaningfully contribute to co-creation processes.

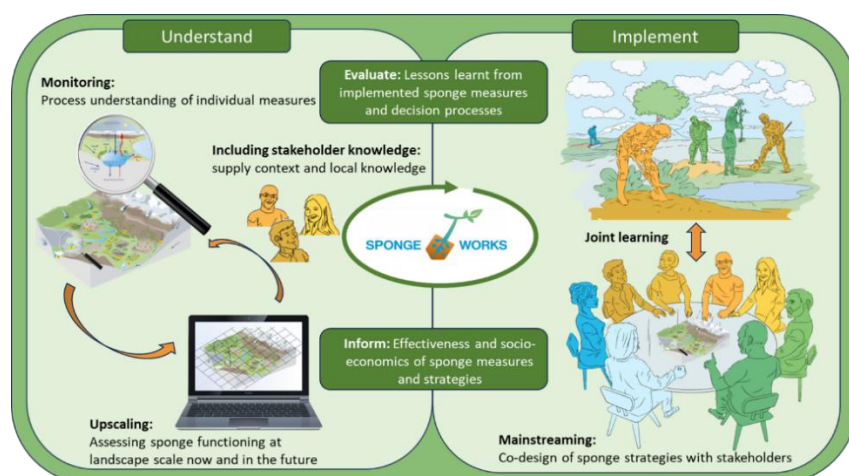
Welcoming new projects to the NbS Task Forces

11 new projects recently joined the NbS Task Forces. Four of them, namely SpongeWorks, Nature-Demo, Genesis and Med-IREN were introduced during the meeting, showing a growing NbS community working on water.

Spongeworks

Christian Albert, Leibniz University Hannover,
Project website: <https://www.spongeworks.eu/>

Christian Albert discussed the Spongeworks project, emphasizing its goal of integrating natural water retention strategies to combat drought, floods, and biodiversity decline across three large-scale demonstrators in Europe: the Vecht (Germany & Netherlands), Leze (Southern France) and Pinios (Greece) River Basin which constitute three biophysically well complementary regions. Furthermore, at least eight more countries and regions will be joining the consortium, representing a European wide network of 11 regions.



The SpongeWorks Approach

Synergizing scientific novelty through modelling landscape level effects of sponge strategies and advancing novel approaches to just knowledge co-generation while fostering societal innovations.

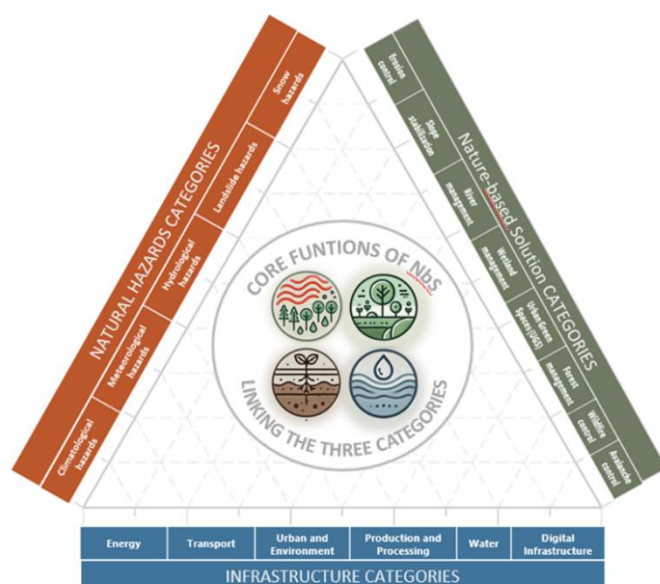
(Credits: [Spongeworks](#) & Deltares)

Nature-Demo

Mohamed Eldessouki, Digital Innovation Center

Project website: <https://nature-demo.eu/>

Mohamed Eldessouki gave an overview of the Nature-Demo project, which includes 23 organizations from 14 countries and focuses on implementing Nature-based Solutions to enhance resilience against climatic threats in critical infrastructure. The four main climatic threats that constitute the basis of the project are heavy precipitation, droughts, wildfires and heatwaves. Nature-Demo tackles them through five NbS families within four critical sectors: transport, energy production, water management and infrastructure. The emphasis is put on demonstrating the effectiveness or lack of NbS to achieve optimal resilience of critical infrastructure.



Nature-based Solutions for demonstrating climate resilient critical infrastructure

(Credits: nature-demo.eu)

GENESIS

Alejandro Garcia, Instituto Geológico y Minero de España

Project website: <https://genesishnbs.eu/>

Alejandro García highlighted the vulnerabilities of freshwater systems on small islands, particularly in Macaronesia, due to climate change impacts such as reduced water supply and extreme weather events. Additionally, reduced precipitation patterns result in limited freshwater supply and reduced groundwater recharge capacity which these islands mainly rely on. Therefore, the ambition of the project is to innovate, e.g. dry galleries and underground dike-impounded dam systems tailored to Macaronesia and integrating them with state-of-the-art NbS for rainwater harvesting. This approach is critical to advancing the understanding of the nonlinear understanding between NbS and critical water infrastructure. The project involves collaboration with local communities and stakeholders across various islands.

Med-IREN Project

Ioannis Zarikos, National Center for Scientific Research "Demokritos"

Project website: <https://med-iren.eu/>

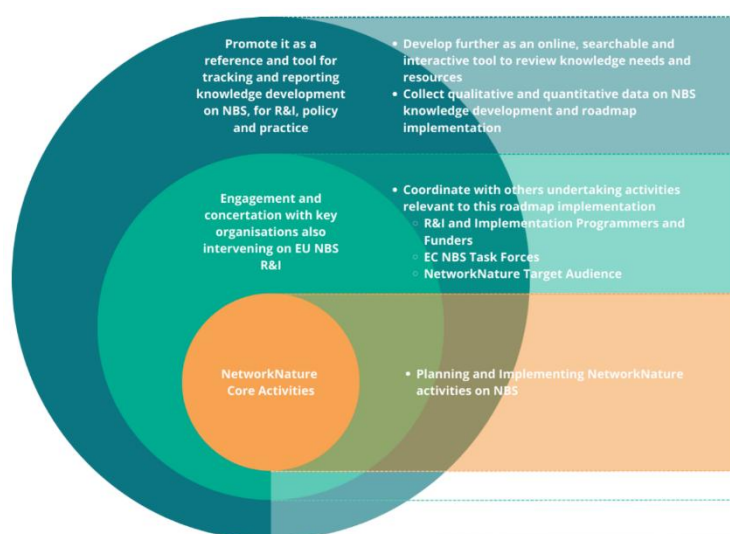
Ioannis Zarikos introduced the Med-IREN project aiming to enhance the resilience of crucial Mediterranean critical infrastructure through systemic technological and social innovations utilizing NbS. For example, the Egaleo island in Greece, struggling with the heat island effect and heatwaves, is upscaling its urban greening and use of urban pocket parks. Interestingly, where introducing more greenery is not possible, urban bioreactors will be used to enhance the effectiveness of the NbS. Providing evidence on key enablers like participatory governance and citizen engagement, novel forms of financing, innovative urban/landscape planning and capacity building will also be key.

Know more about it [here](#) (pages 25 to 62).

Roadmap for Research and Innovation on Nature-based Solutions

Evelyn Underwood, IEEP

Evelyn Underwood (IEEP) introduced the 2023 Roadmap for research and innovation on Nature-based Solutions, which outlines four key action areas. The Roadmap serves as a framework to monitor and report on the implementation of Task Force activities, encouraging collaboration and feedback from Task Force leads. Evelyn emphasized the importance of aligning Task Forces contributions with the Roadmap's objectives to enhance policymaking and decision-making processes. Additionally, a key feature is to promote cross-project collaboration spanning over multiple TFs which enables to harness the unique strengths and expertise of each one of them. To manage the role of NN, the project developed a strategic framework through which alignment can be ensured between the activities of NN and those outlined in the Roadmap.



For more details on specific action areas and integration of the implementation of the Roadmap in NN, please see [European Roadmap to 2030 for Research and Innovation Report](#).

Know more about it [here](#) (pages 63 to 72).

Network Nature Labs Overview and Selected Projects Presentation

Maria Núñez, IUCN EURO

Maria Nunez (IUCN EURO) outlined the purpose of NetworkNature Labs, emphasizing their role in promoting collaboration among Task Forces and supporting the participation of new partners to the TFs. She detailed the selection process for eight projects from Open Call 3, which involved evaluations according to the selection criteria by Task Forces coordinators and input from the European Commission and TFs leads.

All presentations can be accessed [here](#) (page 77 to 182) and in the links provided in the following table.

The following eight ideas are currently under development through the NN labs.

Topic	Key Outputs
Fostering NN Hubs and TF Collaboration	

<p><u>NbS 101 for Hungarian journalists</u> Monica Nemeth (BURST, TF6)</p>	<p>Objective: to equip journalists with the knowledge and skills to effectively recognize NbS and tell their stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design NbS 101 Press Kit communication A tool for NbS Hubs to promote comms with local journalists in their local languages • NbS Masterclass: capacity building and practical pitching sessions encourage collaboration between media & NbS community. Open to other TFs for testing/replicating
<p><u>From Planning to Action</u> Gregorio Sgrigna (CNR-IRET, TF1-TF2)</p>	<p>Objectives: Empower stakeholders, integrate planning, access funding, build networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summer school on Urban NbS for professionals: a training workshop for Professionals revolving around urban regeneration, providing hands on learning and networking while learning how to structure financially viable NbS projects.
<p>Advancing NbS Knowledge</p>	
<p><u>AIM-NbS Advancing Impact Measurement of Nature-based Solutions</u> Carolina Cantergiani (TECNALIA, TF2)</p>	<p>Objectives: Systematically collect insights from EU-funded projects to understand bottlenecks, challenges, and successes in impact evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Phases: 1:Survey, 2:Analyse responses in a workshop 3, policy brief and open-access publication • Organised repository of challenges, successes and recommendations
<p><u>Co-creating NbS in Informal Urban Settlements</u> Beatriz Caitana (CES, TF6) & Gerd Lupp (TUM, TF6)</p>	<p>Objectives: Understanding the NbS co-creation in context of informal settlements to co-produce new lessons learnt on climate change, justice and human-nature relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical report with NbS con-creation results and lessons learned for innovative NbS oriented to urban informal settlements.</i> • Local workshop as showcasing of NbS co-creation results, and co-diagnostic and co-design activities

Advancing NbS Tools and Data

<p><u>Citizen App for NbS Data</u> Carlos García de Leániz (Blue Rivers Foundation, AMBER, TF1 & TF2)</p>	<p>Objectives: Update the existing AMBER app and its use and use of the data and develop a generic open source platform adaptable to citizen rivers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An upgraded, improved app • A generic mapping platform • A blue-print for mapping freshwater biodiversity using citizen science
<p><u>Decision Support System DSS</u> Sean Bradley (Groundwork London, CLEVER Cities, TF6)</p>	<p>Objectives: Continue the development of functional online Co-Creation & Co-Governance DSS tool (up to 75%), provide users with access to core technical information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective of 75% content completion with AI bot integration for enhanced user interaction • Programmed revised structure and functions. Feedback and updates based on 5-8 groups involved in cocreation projects

Exchange, Capacity Building and Awareness

<p><u>Insurance & NbS for Resilience</u> Jaroslav Mysiak (NATURANCE, TF2)</p>	<p>Objectives: showcase real world applications of insurance that incentivize investment, clarify the roles of different actors in nature-based insurances, and facilitate dialogue among stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops business case catalogue & visuals as an open-source resource • Open call for identifying businesses cases, and generate an open-source resource for public use. • High level hybrid side event organised with a steering committee
<p><u>The NbS Fresco</u> Natalia Brack & Giulia Bussoletti</p>	<p>Objectives: Raise awareness of NbS benefits, fostering education and knowledge uptake</p>

(Sustainable Innovation Institute, NBRACER, TF4 / TF2 & TF6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Phased approach: content creation → pilot → refinement → kick-off</i> • <i>A set of digital cards and instructions and a kick of workshop of the NbS Fresco</i> • <i>Invites TF member participation for validation</i>
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Next steps for NN Labs | Maria Nuñez, IUCN EURO

Maria Nuñez (IUCN EURO) summarised the next steps for Network Nature Labs, including the publication of presentations [online](#) to foster collaboration between the TF members and exchange contacts. Additionally, the upcoming in person Task Forces Cluster Meeting in September was highlighted as an opportunity to further engage the partners and continue the ongoing conversation through a set of workshops throughout the day.

Standardisation updates

Monica Heyder, ICLEI

Monika Heyder (ICLEI) discussed the progress in standardisation for Nature-based Solutions, including the forthcoming European standard on NbS vocabulary. She outlined opportunities for stakeholder engagement through CEN Workshop Agreements (CWA) and introduced Katerina Lilli (TUC, representing VARCITIES project) and Jaroslav Mysiak (CMCC, representing Naturance project), who presented their respective work on standards for cities and nature-based insurance investment solutions.

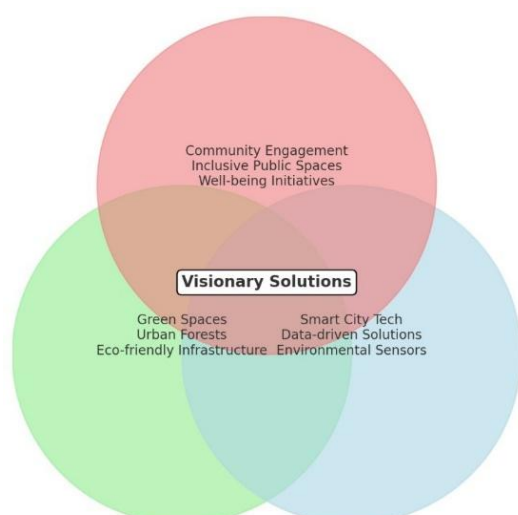
Know more about it [here](#) (pages 186 to 206).

For more details, access NetworkNature page on the [CEN Workshop Agreement \(CWA\)](#).

Varcities CWA

Denia Kolokotsa, Katerina Lilli, Elisavet Tsekeri, TUC

Through this ambitious project which places human communities at the heart of future cities' vision, the complexities as well as opportunities offered by cities are acknowledged. The visionary solution highlights a novel approach which integrates NbS with digital, social and cultural aspects enhancing the wellbeing of citizens in cities. Through establishing seven criteria for a visionary solution, good practice and offering a structured methodology for capturing and assessing Visionary Solutions best practices, replication and long-term impact can be maximized.



(Credits: [VARCITIES](#))

Naturance CWA

**Jaroslav Mysiak & Melissa Herlitz,
Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC)**

The project aims to evaluate the technical, financial, and operational feasibility and performance of solutions that integrate and combine disaster risk financing and investments with NbS. The key is to ensure NbS performance is measured in a standardised, consistent way to facilitate cross-comparison between contexts and countries and measure the risk reduction benefits provided by NbS.

Conclusion and next steps

To conclude the meeting, Firdaous Halim (IUCN EURO) provided the final remarks outlining key take-aways and next steps for the work of the Task Forces.

TF representatives, enriched by newly added projects, engaged in meaningful dialogue on enhancing data harmonization, assessment frameworks, innovative financing and standards. Through selected NetworkNature Labs initiatives such as utilization of NbS in informal urban settlements or integrating insurance and NbS in the Naturance project, practical tools and strategies were presented while promoting cross-collaboration.

Looking ahead, the participations were encouraged to actively engage in final refinements and new developments of tools, provide feedback for better locally suited improvements and participate in cross-Task Force initiatives. The upcoming in-person Task Forces Cluster Meeting in September 2025 will serve as a pivotal forum to assess progress, deepen cooperation and ensure sustained momentum of NbS as a cornerstone of the green transition in Europe.

Annex 1: Agenda

09h30 – 10h20 Welcome and introduction		
09h30 09h35	Welcome Speech	Fleur Van Ooststroom Brummel, DG RTD, EC
09h35 09h40	Introduction to Network Nature and to NbS Task Forces	Firdaous Halim, IUCN
09h40 09h55	Short updates from the NbS Task Forces	NbS TFs Representatives: TF1 - Paul Mahony TF2 - Louis Durrant TF3 - Chrispin Sanga TF4 - Kassia Rudd TF5 - Conor Mark Dowling TF6 – Natalia Burgos Cuevas
09h55 – 10h20 Welcoming new projects to the NbS TFs		
09h55	Welcome to new projects	Firdaous Halim, IUCN
10h00 10h05	SpongeWorks	Christian Albert, Leibniz University Hannover
10h05 10h10	NATURE-DEMO	Mohamed Eldessouki, Digital Innovation Centre
10h10 10h15	Med-IREN	Ioannis Zarikos, National Center for Scientific Research "Demokritos"
10h15 10h20	GENESIS	Alejandro García Gil, Instituto Geológico y Minero de España
10h20 – 10h40 Roadmap for R&I on NbS		
<i>After an overview of the Roadmap for R&I on NbS (Introduction / R&I Roadmap), the session will discuss the link with the European NbS Task Forces</i>		
	Roadmap for R&I on NbS	Evelyn Underwood, IEEP
	Q&A (10 min)	
10h40 10h45 Short break		

10h45 – 12h35 NN Labs: Selected ideas and Next steps		
This session will introduce the Network Nature Labs and will present the selected ideas for funding.		
10h45 11h55	Introduction to NN Labs (5 min)	María Nuñez, IUCN
10h45 11h05	Fostering NN Hubs and TF Collaboration	
	NbS 101 for Hungarian journalists how to recognize NbS and tell their stories	Mónika Nemeth, BURST, TF6
	From Planning to Action A Summer School on Urban NbS for Professionals	Gregorio Sgrigna, CNR-IRET, TF1-TF2
	Q&A (5 min)	
11h05 11h25	Advancing NbS Knowledge	
	AIM-NbS Advancing Impact Measurement of Nature-based Solutions	Carolina Cantergiani, TECNALIA, TF2
	Co-creating NbS in the context of informal settlements: joint lessons with a case in the Global South	Beatriz Caitana da Silva, Centre for Social Studies, URBINAT and TRANS-lighthouses, TF2, TF6. Gerd Lupp, Technical University of Munich, PHUSICOS, TRANS-Lighthouses, TF6
	Q&A (5 min)	
11h25 11h45	Coffee Break	
11h45 12h05	Advancing NbS tools and data	
	An open-source citizen app to map freshwater barriers and biodiversity features	Carlos García de Leániz, Blue Rivers Foundation, AMBER, TF1 and TF2
	DSS The Co-creation – Co-governance Online Decision Support System	Sean Bradley, Groundwork London, CLEVER Cities, TF6
	Q&A (5 min)	
12h05 12h25	Exchange, capacity building and awareness	
	Integrating Insurance and NbS for Resilience	Jaroslav Mysiak, Euro-Mediterranean Centre

	shared dissemination & exploitation activities	on Climate Change, NATURANCE, TF2
	The NbS Fresco: an Educational and Awareness-Raising Tool	Natalia Brack, Sustainable Innovation Institute, NBRACER, TF4
	Q&A (5 min)	
12h25 12h30	Wrapping up	
	What are the next steps for NN Labs?	María Nuñez, IUCN
12h30 12h35	Short Break	
12h35 – 12h50 Standardisation updates		
12h35 12h50	Standardisation updates	
	Standardisation presentation	Monika Heyder, ICLEI
	VARCITIES CEN Workshop Agreement	Denia Kolokotsa, VARCITIES
	NATURANCE CEN Workshop Agreement	Jaroslav Mysiak, NATURANCE
	Q&A (5 min)	
12h50 – 13h00 Concluding remarks		
13h50 13h00	Concluding remarks	Firdaous Halim, IUCN



NetworkNature is an expanding 'network of networks' working together to raise awareness, share knowledge and build capacity about nature-based solutions to accelerate their uptake in business, science, policy and practice along the policy priorities of the European Green Deal. It will maintain and add to a diverse and science-based repository of evidence on NbS, strengthen partnerships and foster new relationships around a clear, strategic framework for action. This work is underpinned by an up-to-date EU Research & Innovation NBS Roadmap and NetworkNature's six priority themes: Biodiversity enhancement and ecosystem restoration; Sustainable food systems; Zero Pollution; Climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience; Sustainable finance, investment and just transition; Sustainable urban and regional transformation.



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UK Research
and Innovation

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