



Network  
Nature

# Network Nature Report

**Nature-based solutions Task  
Forces Cluster Meeting**

IUCN

7 July 2023

# Table of Contents

Executive summary .....	4
Gathering the taskforces: objectives .....	5
Structure and objectives .....	5
Participation .....	5
Introduction and updates .....	6
Taskforces: Vision and potential for collaboration.....	6
News from the Task Forces .....	6
TF1   Data and Knowledge sharing   Paul Mahony, Oppla .....	6
TF2   Impact Assessment Framework   Dorsa Sheikholeslami, IUCN Global .....	7
TF3   Governance, Business Models and Financial Mechanisms   Victoria Blessing, Steinbeis Europa Zentrum.....	7
TF4   NbS Communicators   Kassia Rudd, ICLEI .....	8
TF5   NbS Education   Ivelina Ivanova, European Schoolnet .....	8
TF6   Co-creation and co-governance   Isabel Ferreira, Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra.....	8
Showcasing projects across different ecosystems .....	10
Towards effective NbS across ecosystems .....	10
PONDERFUL.....	10
RestCOAST .....	10
CLEARING HOUSE.....	11

IN-Habit .....	11
Panel discussion.....	12
<b>Building actions and relationships for NetworkNature+ .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Parallel sessions.....	13
Session 1: Influencing the political agenda.....	13
Session 2: Co-creation for NbS – Exploring citizen laboratories.....	15
Session 3: Communicating NbS effectively and inclusively .....	18
<b>Collaborating at regional and national level.....</b>	<b>20</b>
Stories from the NbS Hubs powered by NetworkNature .....	20
<b>Creating impact .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Enabling collaborations on NbS across sectors.....	21
European and international biodiversity governance .....	22
<b>Looking ahead .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Transitioning to NetworkNature+ .....	25
<b>NbS marketplace .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Take-aways and follow-up actions .....</b>	<b>26</b>
Revising the objectives of the Taskforces & workstreams .....	27
Increasing Taskforces’ membership and defining roles .....	28
Enabling collaborations between taskforces and hubs .....	28
Brainstorming roles for the Taskforces .....	29

# Executive summary

The sixth NetworkNature Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) Taskforces Cluster Meeting, held in Brussels on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023, brought together more than 85 participants, representing all Taskforces, several EU NbS projects, and stakeholders from NetworkNature and the European Commission (European Research Executive Agency and DG Research & Innovation).

The meeting provided the opportunity to take stock of the main outcomes of the Taskforces, and explore the work of and lessons learnt from EU NbS project across different ecosystems, reflecting the diversity as well as the commonalities of the projects working on NbS.

The meeting included interactive group sessions to facilitate targeted discussions, collaborations and brainstorming, focusing on the role and opportunities for the TFs in creating policy impact, engaging on co-creation activities through citizen laboratories, and exploring ways to communicate effectively and inclusively.

The meeting proceeded with two panels dedicated to creating impact, focusing first on enabling collaborations across sectors, showing the role of NetworkNature in facilitating coordination and collaboration to find synergies between sectors, and to share expertise in addition to knowledge. The second panel focused on biodiversity governance and the potential interlinkages between NetworkNature and other networks and initiatives such as BioAgora, the EU's Biodiversity Knowledge Centre, and CO-OP4CBD.

To conclude, the transition of NetworkNature to NetworkNature+ was introduced.

As an innovative element of the event, participants were invited to join the NetworkNature NbS Marketplace, showcasing more than 20 posters of NbS projects, initiatives and businesses, and enabling a common space for networking.

# Gathering the taskforces: objectives

## Structure and objectives

The sixth NetworkNature Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) Taskforces Cluster meeting, held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in Brussels, aimed to bring together Task Force members, NetworkNature, and the European Commission (European Research Executive Agency and DG Research & Innovation) for an interactive dialogue to take stock of achievements of NetworkNature, the Taskforces, and the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe Nature-based Solutions projects to date and to further increase their impact.

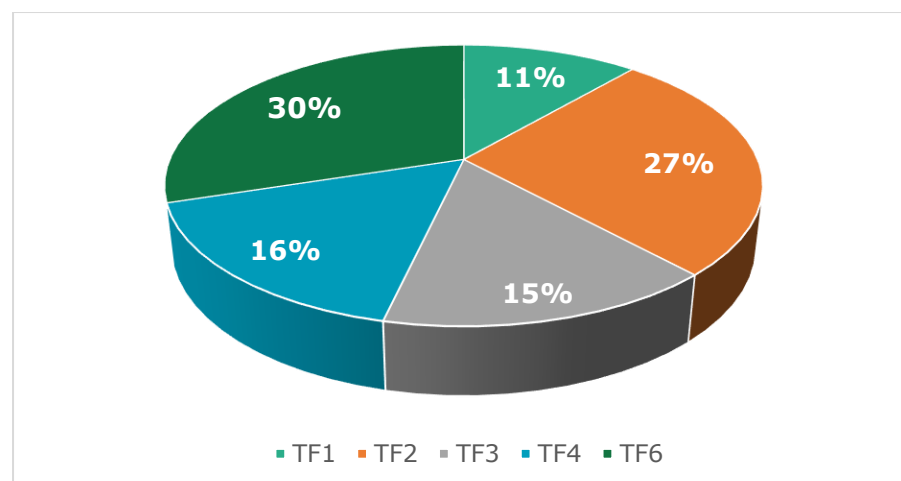
All together, they form part of what is commonly referred to as the *NbS community of practice*. Such a community thrives by coming together to exchange and the meeting created yet another occasion for this to happen.

## Participation

The NetworkNature Nature-Based Solutions Taskforce Meeting brought together at least 85 participants, including Task force members, NetworkNature, and the European Commission (European Research Executive Agency and DG Research & Innovation), as well as new projects representatives.

All Taskforces were represented. Considering that several participants were part of multiple taskforces, the following pie chart provides an overview of TF representation during the meeting.

*Figure 1 - Taskforces representation*



# Introduction and updates

## Taskforces: Vision and potential for collaboration

The event started with an interview style session moderated by Susanna Gionfra, IUCN, with representatives of the European Commission: Gilles Doignon, DG RTD and Paul Webb, REA.

The speakers were asked to outline their views on the role of the NetworkNature Taskforces in the current policy and projects landscapes respectively.

As regards to the policy landscape, Gilles Doignon talked about the importance of generating impact. The Taskforces are growing collaborations which can provide important knowledge and advise on where policy needs to go. Implementation of NbS needs to happen at scale, and these collaborations are necessary to make this happen.

Paul Webb stressed the role of the Taskforces as providing the space where projects bring together their expertise, experience and outcomes with the added value of aligning the direction of their work. He also mentioned the opportunities generated by the Taskforces collaborations going beyond the projects and consortia, be it TF6 testing their co-creation decision making tool with Brussels city or creating more impactful dissemination with the European Commission.

Speakers were then asked to reflect on their aspirations for the future of the Taskforces. It was mentioned an aspiration for the Taskforces to expand dialogues to other areas (e.g. circular economy, bio-economy), as well as to expand to other levels, to national and regional in addition to European. For this reason, Taskforces are encouraged to engage in more collaborations also with the NetworkNature Hubs.

## News from the Task Forces

### TF1 | Data and Knowledge sharing | Paul Mahony, Oppla

Paul Mahony, OPPLA, presented the main outcomes of TF1 which aims to define and implement an effective approach to share, search and reuse data and knowledge related to nature-based solutions. A shared data management plan, co-produced by TF1 members, was developed to support collaboration between research and innovation projects supported by the European Commission. The core principles are to integrate open licenses where possible, share cases studies, create metadata on information of any shared datasets and document the processing methods used to collect data. It is also to identify on each data management plan the level of access to data and knowledge products, and to currently consider whether free and open-source software can be used and developed to support innovation.

Moreover, TF1 has been boosting and accelerating the collation of new case studies by regularly updating the [NbS case study database](#) and adding new ones. The case studies have also been expanded with new information (financing, key performance indicators) and API allows displaying case studies on other web sites. Finally, there is now a new collaborator, Herbert Haubold from Environment Agency Austria, who will work with TF1 and support the data management work.

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (15-22).

## **TF2 | Impact Assessment Framework | Dorsa Sheikholeslami, IUCN Global**

Dorsa Sheikholeslami, IUCN, presented the main outcomes of TF2 which aims to enable all EU NbS projects to collaborate on demonstrating the multiple benefits of NbS, using a coherent and integrated assessment framework based on common indicators. To meet the need for recording the impact of NbS, TF2 has published the [Handbook for practitioners: Evaluating the impact of NbS](#) in 2021. It provides practitioners with a comprehensive NBS impact assessment framework, and a robust set of indicators and methodologies to assess the impacts of NBS across 12 societal challenges. The relevance of this publication is reflected on the idea that to mainstream nature-based solutions, it is necessary to build an evidence-base of their impacts

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (23-26).

## **TF3 | Governance, Business Models and Financial Mechanisms | Victoria Blessing, Steinbeis Europa Zentrum**

Victoria Blessing, Steinbeis Europa Zentrum, presented the main outcomes of TF3 which aims to support and accelerate private sector uptake of NBS, and stimulate private sector investment in NBS, to move in the direction of an inclusive nature-based economy that creates new business opportunities and green employment. A series of publications is ongoing, including an article on catalysing conditions and constraints, with recommendations. In addition, a NbS benefit evaluation booklet on crosscutting topics with nineteen European projects assessed is under development. Lastly, TF3 participated in a multi-stakeholder forum workshop entitled “Revamping Investment for Nature Regeneration” at the World Economic Forum in Davos. The workshop focused on how to achieve a more systemic collaborative model in order to induce and reward support to people and nature on the ground. A report on the session is available [here](#).

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (27-32).

## TF4 | NbS Communicators | Kassia Rudd, ICLEI

Kassia Rudd, ICLEI, presented the main outcomes of TF4 which aims to increase visibility and dissemination channels of NbS projects and NbS in general. TF4 also intends to facilitate cross-project work. One of the main outputs was the creation of NbS related videos:

- [\*What are nature-based solutions?\*](#) (presented during the conference)
- [\*How are nature-based solutions co-created?\*](#)

A third video on types of nature-based solutions is in the making.

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (33-37).

## TF5 | NbS Education | Ivelina Ivanova, European Schoolnet

Ivelina Ivanova, European Schoolnet and coordinator of the new NbS coordination and support action very relevant to the topic, NBS EduWorld, introduced the upcoming TF5 work which aims to share, discuss and develop educational approaches for NbS across Europe. It will work to create educational experiences to make pupils and students wonder, inquire and engage with nature in new ways. The main expected output is to develop a networking space for educators to come and discuss the approaches for NbS. TF5 will gather key resources on NbS education and provide a connection to other like-minded educators. Therefore, TF5 is interested about hearing inspiring educational experiences from EU NbS projects. They also organised a training workshop for the EU Green Week on engaging stakeholders with NbS: Skills for resilient, sustainable communities.

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (38-41).

## TF6 | Co-creation and co-governance | Isabel Ferreira, Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra

Isabel Ferreira, Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, presented the work of TF6 which aims to improve and promote co-creation, including in spatial planning, for inclusive nature-based regeneration. Three products are currently at their final stage of development: the first one is a short guide for policy makers encouraging co-governance, the second one is an online co-creation decision tool for practitioners on different pathways to support co-creative processes and the last one is a guide on building blocks for co-creation. The latter offers guidelines, cases and methodologies for decision making as well as analysis of several practices implemented in European NbS R&I projects. It is intended for diverse target groups, such as researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and aims to support and guide the increasing engagement of public officers, citizens and other stakeholders.

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (42-45).



## Main products

### Taskforces

**For businesses & investors:**  
Publication series



**For general public, researchers, practitioners:**  
Video series



**For planners and practitioners:**  
Handbook on evaluating the impact of NbS



**For practitioners and decision-makers:**  
Online co-creation decision tool



**For researchers, policy-makers, practitioners:**  
Guidelines on co-creation and co-governance



**For practitioners, researchers and general public:**  
Database of NbS case studies




**For educators & students:**  
Resources on NbS education

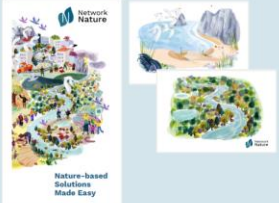
**Taskforces offer you...**

## NetworkNature


**For businesses:** Business information package




**For citizens:**  
Brochure and postcards with #NatureFacts



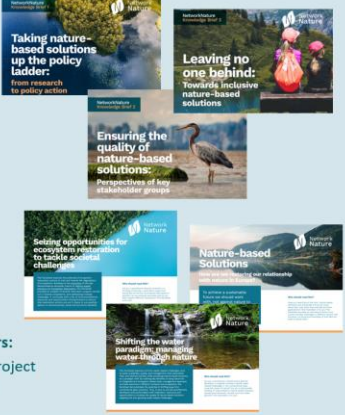
**For planners and practitioners:** Design briefs for biodiverse NbS



**For policy-makers:**  
Policy briefs



**For policy-makers, researchers and practitioners:** Knowledge briefs and factsheets




**For researchers:**  
Knowledge and project databases

**Nature-based solutions knowledge databases**

**Nature-based solutions knowledge gaps database**

Explore the nature-based knowledge gap analysis below to help identify future avenues for research. The knowledge gap database compiles an evidence base for nature-based solutions, to support defining research and innovation avenues, holder policy and practitioners' knowledge and knowledge implementation. The database gathers 'gaps' collected through desk study and online



**Network Nature offers you...**

# Showcasing projects across different ecosystems

## Towards effective NbS across ecosystems

A panel brought together representatives from four Horizon Europe/ Horizon2020 NbS projects, working on different ecosystems. Each presented an inspiring case from their project, namely: PONDERFUL, RestCOAST, CLEARING HOUSE and IN-Habit. In a discussion coordinated by Susanna Gionfra from IUCN, they shared the lessons they had learned in their respective projects and reflected on how the TFs can support their project to go forward and vice-versa.

### PONDERFUL

The [PONDERFUL](#) project was presented by Aurélie Boissezon from the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland. This project investigates how pond ecosystems can be used as NbS to build resilient future landscapes in a changing climate. A [presentation video](#) was shown to the public. PONDERFUL is building a database on NbS with currently 183 NbS across 93 case studies related to ponds and pondsapes in 24 countries (Europe and beyond) which considered different criteria (biodiversity, regulation of water quality and/or water quantity, learning and inspiration as well as physical and psychological experience). Twenty practical demonstration sites have been established to provide evidence of the efficiency of the implemented NbS for delivering Nature Contribution to People (NCPs) but also to understand the social and economic context of ponds and identify stakeholders' needs to determine the best practices in the implementation of pond NbS. A leaflet per pondscape, in English and local languages, has been developed to also share success stories and ensure transferability.

The project is coordinated by Fundació Universitaria Balmes and runs from December 2020 to November 2024.

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (49-57).

### RestCOAST

The [RestCOAST](#) project was introduced by Boris Barov from Pensoft Publishers. The project works on large scale restoration of coastal ecosystems through rivers to sea connectivity with three core pilot sites and six fellow pilot sites. He presented one of the pilot sites in the south-eastern part of Rhône Delta, France, where a passive and active restoration is done. The passive restoration is pursued by no longer maintaining the historical dikes which will lead to a permanent connection to the sea and the creation of new beaches. The active restoration

consists in the implementation of integrated water management with multiple goals: restore habitat, link aquatic and terrestrial species dynamics to water management variables and protect the coast. In addition, the restored beaches were monitored to study the coastal dynamics before/after the non-maintenance of the dikes. All these actions aim to create a buffer area to prevent flood and erosion risks, provide ecosystem services and promote biodiversity.

The project is coordinated by Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya and runs from October 2021 to March 2026.

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (58-71).

## CLEARING HOUSE

The [CLEARING HOUSE](#) project was presented by Clive Davies from the European Forest Institute. The project is a collaboration between Europe and China on urban forestry as urban trees provide many ecosystem services. Four inspiring cases were shared with the public. The first one is Camp Beverlo in Belgium which used to be a military base that provided limited access and hence opportunities for nature conservation. It is now providing socio-environmental services: a diversity of forest related habitats, recreational services, heritage services with war memorials and a habitat for mammals, including nine wolves. The second case was the river basin connectivity in Barcelona Metro Area where the increased woodland cover obtained through participatory mapping, helped biodiversity recovery along with numerous social functions implementation. In Gelsenkirchen, the poorest city in Germany, the Industrial Forest Project, which aims to create a sustainable and ecologically diverse forest landscape, has contributed to the region's revitalisation and improved its ecological resilience. Finally, the last case was the large-scale urban reforestation in Beijing, China. More than 54 million trees were planted, creating 67,293 hectares of urban forest park clusters. It aimed to increase biodiversity and the connectivity of urban green spaces in urbanised areas but also to provide health, well-being, educational and recreational benefits. The presentation closed with the introduction of the upcoming UF-NbS Guidelines for policy makers and senior practitioners that will be published later in 2023.

The project is coordinated by the European Forest Institute and runs from September 2019 to August 2023.

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (72-80).

## IN-Habit

The [IN-Habit](#) project was presented by María del Mar Delgado from University of Córdoba. The project is part of four sister projects working together to increase health and wellbeing (Varcities, GoGreenRoutes, euPOLIS, IN-Habit). The inspiring case of patios in Cordoba as eco-social builders – from NbS to Social-NbS - was introduced. Patios have double functions: one is to provide green areas, the other is related to social functions. Now, people have a public access to a green place to gather, which increased social well-being, spatial-environmental

well-being while also contributing to healthier life styles. The next step is to create a green corridor to renaturalise and recover the green spaces for public use by having a walkable path that is accessible, safe, aesthetic and sustainable. Another next step is to monitor long-term social and physical wellbeing in patios. Then, María del Mar Delgado shared some lessons learnt throughout the project. She enhanced the importance of an inclusive co-creation process built on trust and collaboration and shared the difficulties encountered during the project's implementation.

The project is coordinated by Universidad de Córdoba and runs from September 2020 to August 2025.

Further information can be found in the [slides](#) (81-95).

## Panel discussion

A panel discussion, moderated by Susanna Gionfra from IUCN, gathered the four projects' representative to discuss the lessons learnt in their respective NbS project.

Aurélié Boissezon expressed her enthusiasm in seeing climate regulation highlighted in the inspiring cases. She also explained that ponds are not only good ecosystems for capturing carbon, but also places that are sought after, frequented regularly and considered safe spaces by people to cool off and meet. Then, Boris Barov spoke about the importance of considering coastal ecosystems restoration with a more global approach, as it involves the whole river basins. Successful restoration activities should not only focus on one ecosystem, but consider a larger area and the complexity of the different ecosystems. He also mentioned a lesson learnt about the benefits of leaving space for ecological restoration to take place by observing before intervening. He concluded that restoration is mainly based on observation, that it is almost impossible to predict what will happen and that it is therefore important to put in place a good monitoring system. Clive Davies added that the main challenge in urban forestry was not just to plant new trees but also to maintain the existing trees and guarantee the ecosystem services they provide, because unfortunately many urban trees do not live long. María del Mar Delgado concluded by speaking about the difficulty to find the right places to implement NbS in Mediterranean areas. She highlighted the use of patios to address the social role of NbS by involving people in the design process and avoiding top-down planning.

When asked about how the TFs support projects going forward and vice-versa, it was mentioned that TFs have helped to network with other projects to find common questions and solutions. They are also helpful to stimulate the dissemination of projects' outputs at different levels. Thematic presentations at conferences have also helped to bring together stakeholder from different projects to create a dynamic collective effort. Bringing together the NbS community and improving communication will help to convince people to invest in NbS. Establishing common definitions and common methods will enable us to move forward. Finally, the importance of the idea of inclusive NbS when working with people, particularly on a smaller scale, was highlighted.

# Building actions and relationships for NetworkNature+

## Parallel sessions

### Session 1: Influencing the political agenda

#### Key messages

- *A wide range of policy areas can be identified as of relevance to NbS, reflecting the multifunctionality of NbS, their wide applicability and the benefits and co-benefits that can be reached*
- *Promoting a cross-cutting approach in the TFs can support policy impact on NbS, by focusing on specific policy goals*
- *Identifying priority policies is needed for focus of work, to be facilitated by the TFs and NetworkNature+*
- *Enabling TFs advocacy by promoting targeted work of TFs to influence policy (it needs lighter approach, one type of product can be used for more policies)*

The session was moderated by Zuzana Lukacova, from the Institute for European Environmental Policy. The objective of the session was to explore the relevant policy realms for TF work, and the avenues for TFs and projects to generate valuable policy impacts, taking advantage of working jointly rather than individually.

Zuzana started the session by providing an overview of NbS in the EU policy landscape, focusing primarily on the EU Green Deal. Key policies introduced included:

- *The Biodiversity Strategy which provides a comprehensive, ambitious and long-term plan to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems, and where NbS are considered a core element.*
- *The Nature Restoration Law proposal which, if adopted, would provide the first ever legal requirement for large-scale nature restoration. It provides important opportunities for NbS as they are fundamental to restoring ecosystems to good condition and ensuring achievement of the set targets.*
- *The Common Agricultural Policy – including only implicit support for NbS but showing scope for improvement and opportunities for NbS, e.g. through agroforestry*
- *The Farm to Fork Strategy, to ensure the protection of semi-natural habitats used in agriculture from intensification and of remaining natural ecosystems from agricultural expansion, showing opportunities for NbS*
- *The EU Climate Adaptation Strategy, which includes an explicit mention to NbS recognising their potential for adaptation*

Upcoming relevant legislations include the Soil Law and the Sustainable Food Systems Law.

While benefits and importance of NbS for biodiversity and climate are recognized on the EU level, more needs to be done for the NbS to be fully enshrined in the EU policy and taken up by the MS. More information on the EU policy landscape for NbS is available in the [slides](#) (102-114).

A first joint exercise invited participants to map key policy areas of relevance to NbS. The wide range of policy areas identified reflects the multifunctionality of NbS, its wide applicability and the benefits and co-benefits to be reached:

- *Water*
- *Forestry*
- *Cities*
- *Marine (Blue-economy)*
- *Climate and energy*
- *Taxonomy & finance*
- *Education*
- *Health*
- *Tourism*
- *Disaster Risk Reduction*
- *Air pollution*
- *Circular economy/ bio-economy*
- *Heritage*

It was agreed that if there is a need to “convince” stakeholders on the adoption of NbS, this should start from those areas which show more interest and evidence, for instance, those where clear economic benefits can be demonstrated (e.g. tourism).

The discussion then moved to focus on how local/national/regional policy can contribute to effective implementation of EU policy. The following challenges in impacting local/regional/national policy were identified:

- *Lack of policy makers awareness (all levels)*
- *Cross-sectoral limitations*
- *Departmental siloes (city level)*
- *Need to change communication and engagement strategy*
- *Existing legal framework limitations (in all levels) – procurement, safety regulations*
- *Unwillingness to change status quo – bias*
- *Reluctance to integrate NbS in local policies – needing requirements top-down*
- *Open-source procurement*
- *Short-term political visions and cycles*
- *Lack of private sector onboarding*

As regards to opportunities from the TFs, the following were identified:

- *Mobilising policymakers to steer change by promoting and sharing the work of the TFs – e.g. Nature-positive economy work of TF3*
- *Mainstreaming the nature-based economy*
- *Working towards policy momentum, filling the missing link between policy and research*
- *Task Forces advocacy – policy labs, policy briefs, communication groundwork with specific groups, working in groups to show benefits*



- *Science-service for biodiversity (linking policy to research)*
- *Generating thematic inputs from projects capitalising on their focus – thematic working groups*
- *Political media campaign (e.g. TF4 or TF5 inputs)*
- *Keeping bottom-up approaches*

#### **Key outcomes**

- *Developing a potential TF or workstream dedicated to producing specific policy-relevant products (e.g. briefs analysing specific policies)*
- *Working in groups to produce targeted joint outputs towards specific goals for policy impact (e.g. on a specific policy/area) capitalising on the projects' thematic focus*
- *TFs contribution to identify priority policy areas in NetworkNature+*
- *Potential products/activities for TFs include policy briefs, policy labs, communication material and political media campaigns*

## **Session 2: Co-creation for NbS – Exploring citizen laboratories**

#### **Key messages:**

- *Citizen labs are proposed for development in NetworkNature+ to facilitate the meeting between diverse profiles for collaboration, experimentation and the collective creation on projects/products.*
- *The labs require two steps: first an open call for ideas and then an open call for collaborators to ensure commitments and diverse expertise.*
- *The NN laboratories could lead to the creation of dedicated TF workstreams, capitalising on agreed collaborations between interested stakeholders, from the TFs and potentially other (e.g. citizens, cities, etc.)*
- *Uptake and mainstreaming of NbS require prioritization at the policy level, while utilizing concrete examples of NbS success through site visits (NbS live catalogue). The citizen laboratories have the potential to be a strong channel to build and convey this need as a bottom-up approach.*

The session was moderated by Maria Nuñez Rodriguez, IUCN and explored ways to improve the outreach and engagement with the non-usual stakeholders in NetworkNature+ through organizing citizen laboratories. An introduction to this concept was provided through a presentation, available in the [slides](#) (115-122). The labs aim to facilitate the meeting between diverse profiles for collaboration, experimentation and the collective creation on projects/products. These “labs” require two steps: first an open call for ideas and then an open call for stakeholders interested to collaborate on the selected ideas (i.e. collaborators). During the parallel session, the concept was presented, discussed and enlarged by participants' contributions on how to engage and develop the calls.

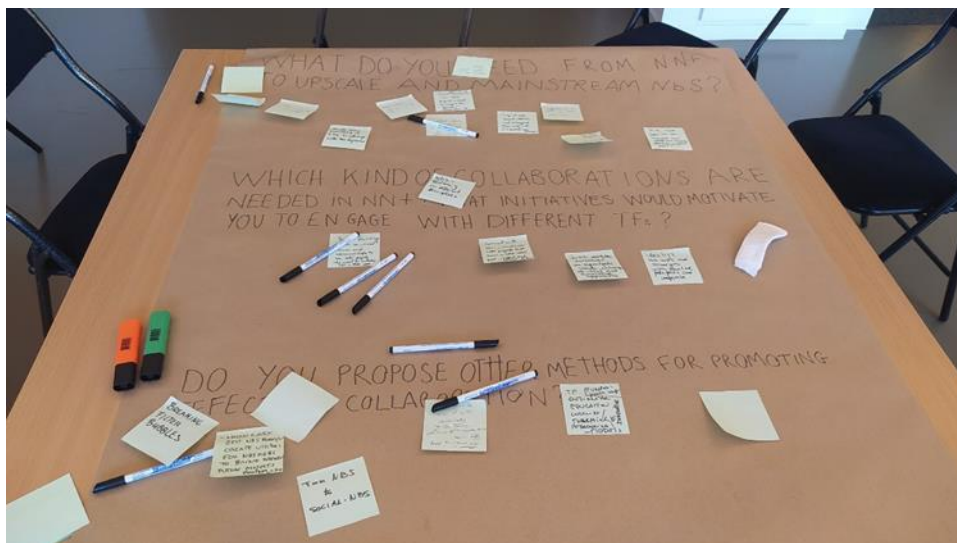
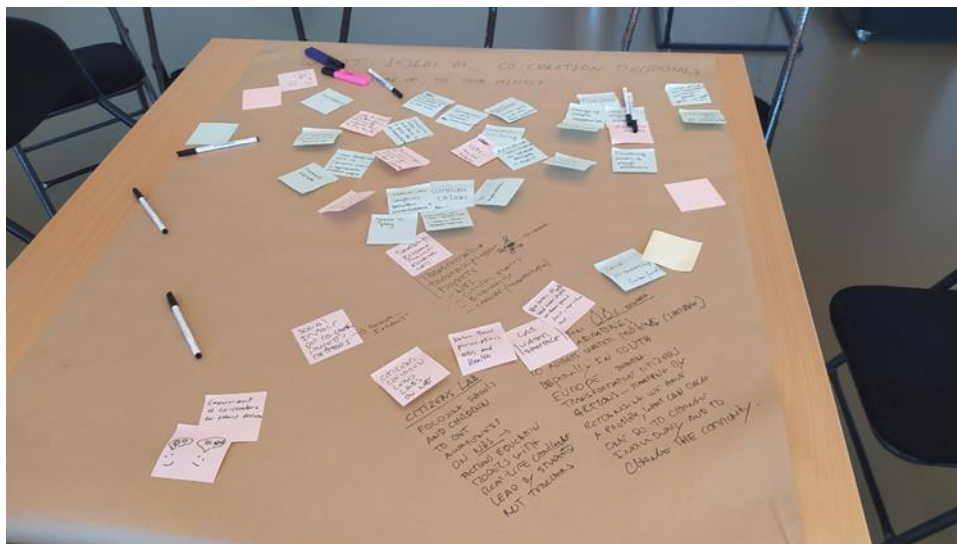
The participants were then divided in three groups to share their experience and viewpoints in relation to co-creation in three roundtables discussing means of uptake and mainstream collaborative NbS.

- *The first table was linked to the question: What ideas of co-creation come up to your mind?*
- *The second table discussed the following questions:*

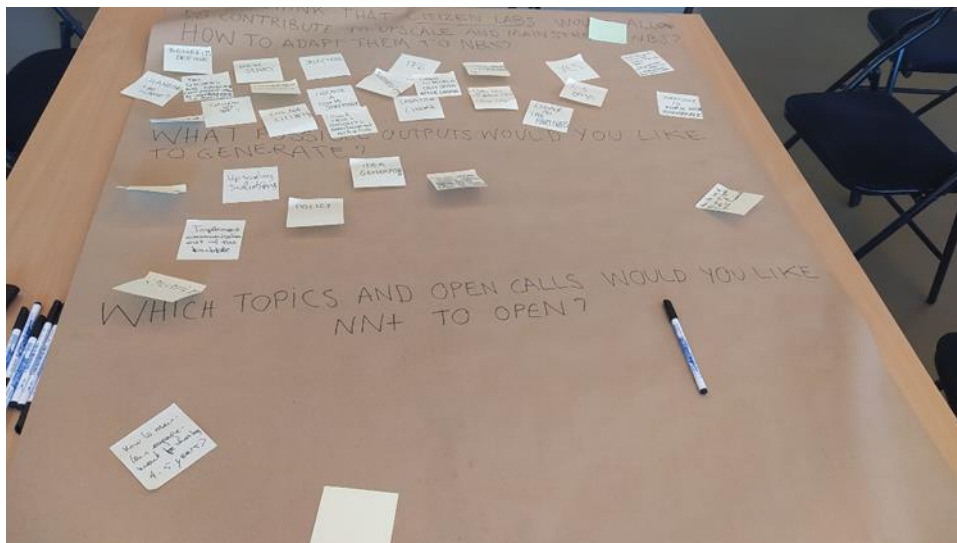
- Do you think that citizen labs would allow to contribute to upscaling and mainstreaming NbS? How to adapt them to NbS?
- What possible outputs would you like to generate?
- Which topics and open calls would you like NN+ to open?
- Finally, the questions discussed at the third table were:
  - What do you need from NN+ to upscale and mainstream NbS?
  - Which kind of collaborations are needed in NN+? What initiatives would motivate you to engage with different TFs?
  - Do you propose other methods for promoting effective collaboration?

The participants of each group tried to respond to these questions with an open discussion, facilitated by the IUCN moderators, where everybody could share their opinions and experiences. They turned tables until the end of the session where the moderators shared a summary on the discussion at each table.

Figure 2 - Roundtables co-creation work







The NN laboratories could lead to the creation of dedicated TF workstreams, building on agreed collaborations between interested stakeholders, from the TFs and potentially other (e.g. citizens, cities, etc.)

It was also suggested that more clarity is needed around the use of the word “citizen” laboratories, as all the proposals may not put only citizens in the centre. Further, it was proposed to create room for unexpected synergies by putting the citizen laboratories at the same days as the TF meetings so as to allow new stakeholders engagement with the TFs. It was highlighted that in-person and first-hand experience of NbS interventions is one of the most efficient ways of promoting and showcasing the actual efficiency of the NbS approach. Therefore, organising site visits is an important component of future activities, contributing to a living catalogue of NbS.

The following topics were proposed for the labs and ideas:

- *Social justice*
- *Conflict resolutions*
- *Upscaling implementation*
- *Breaking silos on communication*
- *Policy*
- *Idea generation*
- *Monitoring methods*
- *Thematic areas such as water*
- *How to retain connection & relationship with non-beneficiaries*

The calls could follow this format:

- *First call as open call for ideas*
- *Second call: collaborators for the selected ideas*

**Main outcomes:**

- *NN+ provides a great opportunity for the implementation of Citizen Laboratories*
- *It was suggested to organise the labs as pop-ups during the same days as the TFs meetings*

- *It is important to engage local and or vulnerable communities; potentially through TF6 and NN Hubs.*
- *The education system, at the school level and at the university level, are important target groups for the formation of the labs.*
- *To facilitate the workflow and to harness the potential within the TFs, it would be beneficial to provide a list of projects containing information on their focus, type of intervention and involved stakeholders. This would help different TF members in identifying potential synergies and possible collaborations.*
- *Several ideas, mentioned above, have been identified for the open calls for the laboratories*

### Session 3: Communicating NbS effectively and inclusively

#### Key messages

- *Inclusivity in NbS communication is key, and it should be developed so as to reach diverse audiences and create enthusiasm*
- *Technical topics are difficult to translate to different audiences – the focus should be more on disseminating with people rather than at people*
- *There is a need to change the narrative and show the power of NbS for society*

The session on effective communication for NbS was moderated by Kassia Rudd, ICLEI and it aimed at leveraging everyone's communication skills together and to discuss about how NetworkNature+ and the TFs can support NbS communication efforts and ideas. More information is available in the [slides](#) (123-128).

The session started with introductions of the various participants. Each participant in attendance discussed the NbS projects that they are involved in. The room had a diverse set of stakeholders, with some being involved directly in Communications as a part of their position and some interested in learning more.

When asked what their favorite part of communicating about NbS was, participants had a wide range of responses including but not limited to: learning from others, face to face interactions, transforming places around the world, reaching diverse audiences in various regional contexts, and creating enthusiasm for the topic.

A number of **challenges in communicating about NbS** was identified, including the need to reach civil society better, difficulties in translation in different languages and across different levels of understanding, a difficulty in communicating highly technical topics such as modeling, reaching policy-makers effectively as well as farmers. *“My favorite part of NbS comms is the idea that we might meet people where they are and disseminate at them less and with them more,”* noted David Maddox, The Nature of Cities.

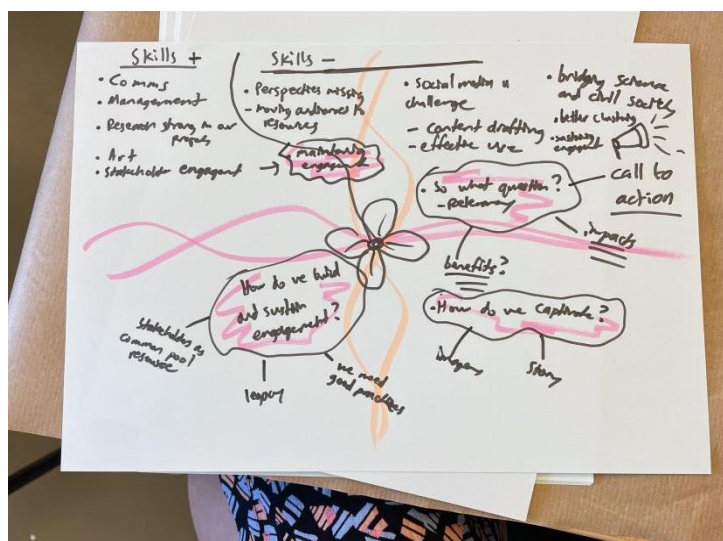
Communication has a challenging objective, and inclusivity is key. The discussion raised the issue that while we see all citizens in Europe increasingly aware about climate change, there

is still a lot to do to increase awareness and knowledge on NbS. There is a need to change the narrative and show that this is what our society needs. Further, convincing more people and different target groups requires targeting communication and messages as well, to make these accessible to different portions of society and to be able to see things from different perspectives (e.g. farmers). The need to also educate media and journalists about NbS was stressed, so that these groups can help in communicating more effectively about the topic.

Following these important reflections, David Maddox spoke briefly to the [NbS comics](#) launch. The initiative involves 7 comic artists who created 7 stories. For context, David notes that there are 77 million views of comics each month in the U.S., creating an immense opportunity to meet people where they are. The comics talk about these issues in a way that connects to their actual lives. Sometimes it can feel that climate change is something that happens to somebody else at the moment, but NbS has the opportunity to connect people to nature in their everyday lives.

The session concluded with a brainstorming activity where the audience worked in groups to produce 3 set of skill maps. The brainstorms demonstrated that there is a lot of overlap between skill gaps and skill competencies, showing that there is an excellent foundation for a series of skill shares. People were especially excited by the idea for any formal skill share to be made available to the task forces, and to always include a practical component, so that people leave an event with drafts or outlines that they can then continue.

Figure 2 - Skills map



**Main outcomes**

- *Communicating about NbS thrives with face-to-face interactions*
- *Creativity is key to engage audiences*
- *Communications is essential to effectively spread the mission of NetworkNature and to effectively connect with stakeholders*
- *NetworkNature has the opportunity to share relevant skills for communicating about NbS but also to strengthen or develop new ones taking advantage of the wide community of practice*

# Collaborating at regional and national level

## Stories from the NbS Hubs powered by NetworkNature

NetworkNature has supported the launch of 6 national/regional NbS hubs. Their objectives, focus and work has been captured in a dedicated NetworkNature Booklet titled "[Voices from the NetworkNature NbS Hubs: A booklet of success stories](#)" which was presented by Susanna Gionfra, IUCN.

To complement the booklet, the session gathered the representatives of the six Hubs to share their insights on their new hubs and launch events. The following reflections were made:

- *Marta Biczowska, representing the Polish Hub, mentioned that while the Hub is very young, there is a clear intention to transfer knowledge, especially to other cities in Poland*
- *Americo Mateus, representing the Portuguese Hub, talked about their launch event, which used co-creation principles and worked directly with citizens and other stakeholders, and which served to attract further interest from other stakeholders and entities (e.g. ongoing collaboration with schools)*
- *Mónika Németh, representing the Hungarian Hub, mentioned the success of their launch event which gathered more than 200 people and focused on the structure of funds and how they can help NbS projects*
- *Nataliia Pustilnik, representing the Ukrainian Hub, spoke about how the launch event attracted new organisations to the already contributing partners, setting the ground for future collaborations and contributing to the platform of case studies*
- *Leonard Sandin, representing the Nordic Hub, talked about the strong political support for the Hub from the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the ambition to collect and share knowledge on NbS, from the top to trickle it down to the local scale.*
- *Gregorio Sgrigna, representing the Italian Hub, highlighted the role of biodiversity and the clear link between the hub and the new [National Biodiversity Future Centre](#).*

When asked to share ideas on how the collaboration between the Hubs and the TFs can be enabled, it was mentioned that a good starting point is the screening of NbS projects to identify national/regional partners to engage with, as was the case of the Italian Hub. The Hubs are also already collaborating with different stakeholder categories which can be targeted by TFs' products. For instance, the work of the Portuguese Hub with schools provides a clear link to the mission of the new NbS Education Taskforce (5). Further, it was highlighted the need to keep people interested and engaged even after the end of a project, and the hubs could facilitate such long lasting engagement, potentially making the link with living labs started in

some projects. The TFs represent a great entry point for further engaging partners and bring forward the TFs' outcomes through the hubs.

## Creating impact

### Enabling collaborations on NbS across sectors

The session gathered inputs and ideas on how different sectors can be engaged in NbS implementation, focusing on how effective engagement and collaboration can be ensured and the role of networks. For this purpose, the panel, moderated by Alice Reil, ICLEI, included representatives of networks.

To kick start the discussion, speakers were asked to outline the role of NbS beyond usual sectors and how such integration could be enabled.

Federica Risi, EUKN, stressed the role played by NbS in every policy sector, as NbS provide ecosystem services, influencing also the social and economic spheres. However, challenges remain across sectors in terms of funding, procurement and lack of training/capacity building, calling for a multi-level governance structure.

Samuele Tonello, EuroHealthNet, focused on the key role of NbS in the health sector, as the context and impacts of these solutions have a clear effect on our health, from food systems to physical and mental health. The challenge to overcome revolves around shifting the perspective from individual to societal level, placing well-being at the basis of our society. Work is ongoing on linking food systems and physical health and trying to create an index for physical health which should be embedded into the EU framework, helping to integrate the social perspective with the economic one. A reference was made to the [NetworkNature semester theme on nature-based solutions in light of the COVID-19 pandemic](#), which emphasises the impacts of NbS on health.

Andrea Rubini, Water Europe, focused on the water sector stating that most water infrastructure is grey, costly, depreciating and often ruining landscapes, showing the potential of NbS and green infrastructure. Water is a global challenge but is it managed locally. This requires the awareness of society to put the environment and well-being on top of the agenda and allow to find a balance between grey and green infrastructure.

The panellists were then asked to outline how NetworkNature could support efforts to integrate NbS across sectors.

Federica Risi pointed out to the already ongoing work of NetworkNature to generate and share knowledge, proposing as a next step the sharing of expertise, usually interdisciplinary, including a social science approach for vulnerable parts of society. Samuele Tonello stressed the importance of facilitating coordination and collaboration to find synergies between sectors. Andrea Rubini emphasised the need to motivate more levels to implement NbS, to break the siloes and address issues on a systemic level involving different stakeholders.

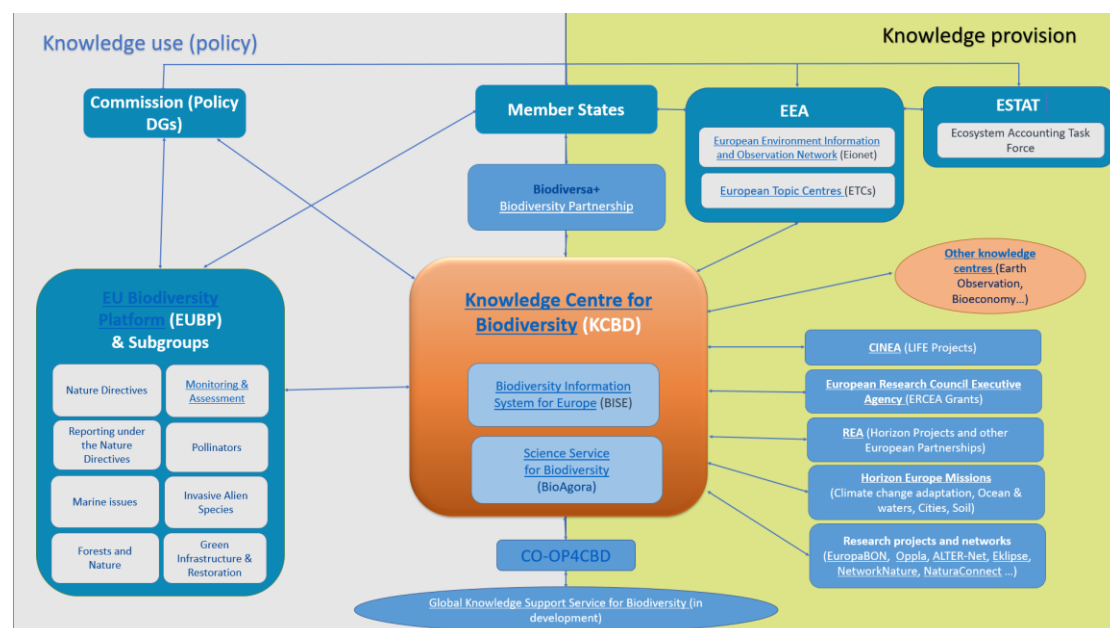
## European and international biodiversity governance

The event then turned to discussions on biodiversity governance. Both the European and international aspects were presented, as well as the role of networks, exploring collaborations with NetworkNature.

Building on the need to create a strong and solid network that assures rapid and transparent transfer of information from science to policy and from policy to science, Rayka Hauser, European Commission DG ENV, outlined the work of the European Commission in relation to the [EU Knowledge Centre for Biodiversity](#). The centre supports policymaking by:

- *Developing tools that support the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, including its global dimension;*
- *Identifying, filtering and structuring relevant information and making it accessible bringing together researchers, policy-makers, NGOs, industry and citizens;*
- *Analysing, synthesising available evidence and communicating it in a transparent, tailored and concise manner.*

When new legislation or issues are being discussed and there is a knowledge need in the EU Biodiversity Platform or its Subgroups, they can submit a question to KCBDB to obtain the best available, reliable and synthetised knowledge in the quickest way. The picture below is a first step to organise ourselves and all the available knowledge channels.





Ben Delbaere pointed out that there is a mismatch between science and policy. Lots of research outputs addressing policy needs are available but the knowledge it is still not accessible. The European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 called for a science policy mechanism to be developed to address this issue. In this context, he introduced the [BioAgora](#) project. This project will go beyond the state of the art by co-creating new ways of bridging the gap between science, practice, and policy, which will be used as a basis for the development of the Science Service for Biodiversity. It will:

- *Be a functional and fair science service for biodiversity*
- *Design demonstration cases that push up biodiversity commitments*
- *Assess and integrate existing policy interface networks*
- *Provide tailored pathways on how better orchestrate science-policy interactions*
- *Provide capacity building*
- *Engage with a broad range of actors such as policymakers, scientists, businesses, and citizens.*

BioAgora will develop a Science Service for Biodiversity (SSBD) that fully supports the ecological transition required by the European Green Deal and the European Union's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. This service will be nurtured by people and communities like the ones present today at the Annual event. The Science Service for Biodiversity will respond to this current gap in Science-Policy Interfaces but will also anticipate future needs. It will provide the scientific pillar of the EU's Knowledge Centre for Biodiversity (KCBD). More information on BioAgora is available in the [slides](#) (148-153).

Jorge Ventocilla, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, talked about the [CO-OP4CBD](#) project which aims to strengthen the role of the European Union in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and related international agreements. He started by introducing the CBD as the "Sister" agreement to the UNFCCC, both of which were negotiated during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It has 3 main objectives:

- *The conservation of biological diversity*
- *The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity*
- *The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources*

During the fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the CBD, the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#) was adopted, following a four-year consultation and negotiation process. This historic Framework, which supports the achievement of the SDGs and builds on the Convention's previous Strategic Plans, sets out an ambitious pathway to reach the global vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050. Among the Framework's key elements are 4 goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030.

There are some targets especially relevant and linked to NbS and NetworkNature:

TARGET 11 *“Restore, maintain and enhance nature’s contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, [...] through nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches for the benefit of all people and nature.”*

TARGET 12 *“Significantly increase the area and quality, and connectivity of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces in urban and densely populated areas sustainably, by mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ensure biodiversity-inclusive urban planning, enhancing native biodiversity, ecological connectivity and integrity, and improving human health and well-being and connection to nature, and contributing to inclusive and sustainable urbanization and to the provision of ecosystem functions and services”.*

TARGET 21 *“Ensure that the best available data, information and knowledge, are accessible to decision makers, practitioners and the public to guide effective and equitable governance, integrated and participatory management of biodiversity, and to strengthen communication, awareness-raising, education, monitoring, research and knowledge management [...] .Engage experts train them in CBD process and use them to negotiate in the associated countries.”*

CO-OP4CBD is European network of professionals from the academic and non-academic sectors across a wide range of disciplines (including nine project partners from five EU member states, Norway, and the United Kingdom). It enhances coordination within the EU to advance the implementation of the CBD by harnessing the expertise from EU-funded projects and initiatives more effectively. More information is available in the [slides](#) (154-168).

To conclude the session, the speakers were asked to reflect on the role of NetworkNature and the potential synergies with the above-mentioned initiatives.

Rayka Hauser, stressed the role of the science service for biodiversity to act as a connection between the NetworkNature community and policy-makers. Ben Delbaere mentioned that it is essential for the Science Service to receive inputs and NetworkNature has a lot to offer. In terms of feedback, it could be explored how the EU Biodiversity Platform can use the knowledge produced by NetworkNature. Jorge Ventocilla stressed that NetworkNature has the expertise and knowledge about NbS. CO-OP4CBD offers the interface to connect science and policy. Science has not the same timing as Policy, which is a challenge. Best practices, cases etc. could help for NbS policy uptake. There is therefore potential for collaborations and contributions from NetworkNature.



# Looking ahead

## Transitioning to NetworkNature+

Alice Reil, ICLEI, concluded the event by explaining how NetworkNature will transition to NetworkNature+. The second phase of the project will be a continuation and strengthening of our work, with the ambition of *accelerating the upscaling of NbS implementation in science, business, policy and practice in line with EU ambitions to address biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and climate change by 2030*.

NetworkNature+ will continue to serve and support EU-funded NbS projects, answer needs of target audiences (which in this phase will be expanded), and inform and connect policies at EU level.

Also, the work of the Taskforces will continue and further develop in NetworkNature+, as the best vehicle for collaboration and joint impact. Five policy themes<sup>1</sup> will be identified starting from key EU policy targets to be achieved by 2030, the EGD issue areas and EU Missions to orient the TF work towards demand-based products with direct relevance for policymakers and stronger policy impact. The [NbS R&I Roadmap](#) will provide guidance for the identification of priorities and needs for the TFs. Further, new features (still to be determined) on the TFs' co-production workspace will make collaboration more inclusive and easier to manage.

More information on NetworkNature+ is available in the [slides](#) (171-178) and details on future actions for the taskforces are provided in the last section of this report.

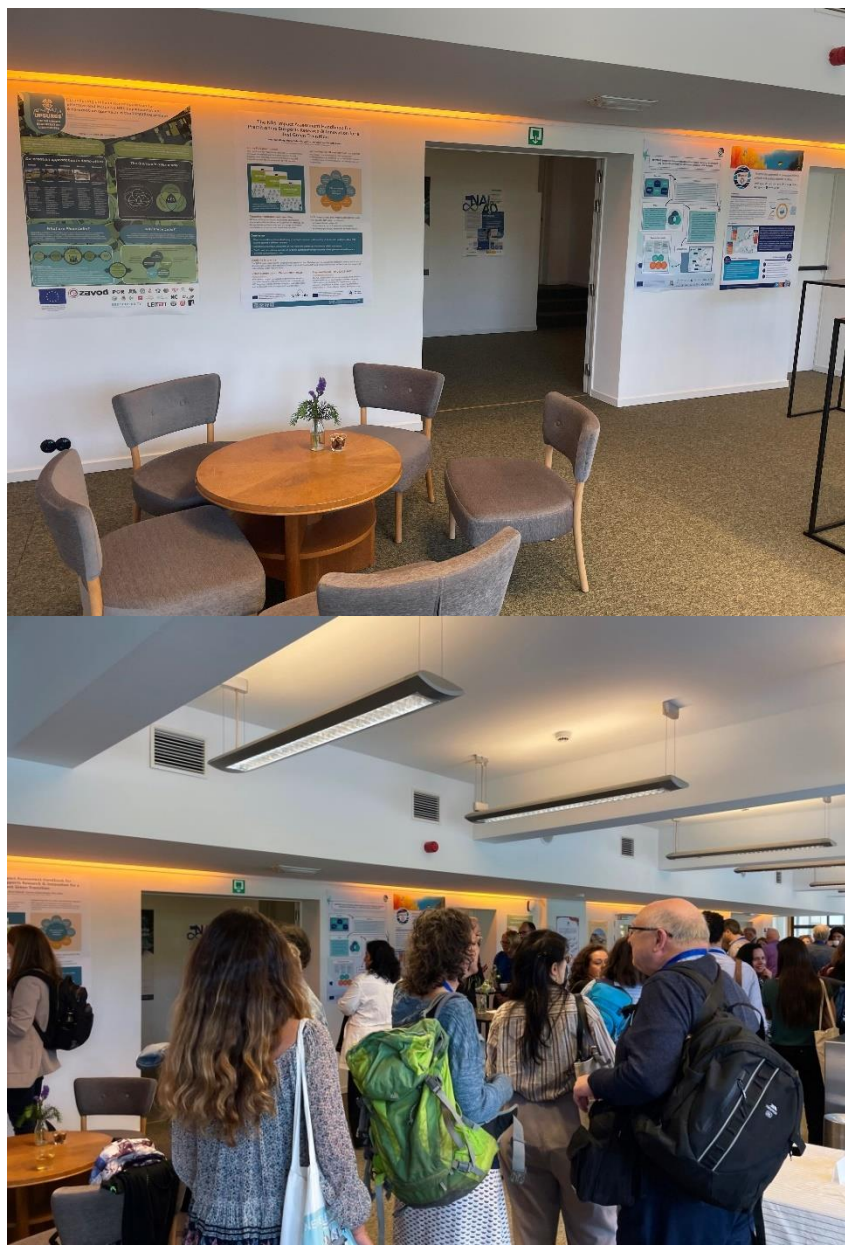
---

<sup>1</sup> E.g. biodiversity & ecosystems; climate change adaptation and mitigation; health and zero pollution; agriculture, soil and sustainable food; urban and regional development; sustainable finance and just transition

# NetworkNature NbS marketplace

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

*Figure 3 - NbS Marketplace*



# Take-aways and follow-up actions

Transitioning to NetworkNature+ will require a strong effort placed on strengthening the role and functioning of the taskforces. Based on the discussions held with taskforces leads and members, NetworkNature partners and the European Commission representatives, the following actions are proposed.

## Revising the objectives of the Taskforces & workstreams

The current Taskforces address the key areas and transversal topics of collaborations. The overall topics of the NetworkNature Taskforces will not change, however, there is scope for improving and redefining their objectives based on:

- (i) *The Nature-based solutions R&I Roadmap*
- (ii) *The needs of stakeholders in the NbS community*
- (iii) *The collaboration interests of NbS projects*
- (iv) *The TF activities carried out so far and their lessons learnt*
- (v) *The NbS policy developments*

The parallel sessions held during the last NetworkNature TF Meeting provided relevant inputs for potential topics for collaboration and related approaches. The concept of citizen laboratories was discussed extensively, providing the opportunity to generate open calls for topics/projects, and for collaborators. This would enable the creation of dedicated, smaller collaborations on specific goals from the TFs, to be enabled during the TFs meetings. This need was reflected also in the policy discussion where a cross-cutting approach in the TFs was proposed to support policy impact by focusing on specific policy goals and therefore policy-related products. The communication session also shed light on the need to broaden the audiences to be reached, and the requirement to make products adapted to them, taking advantage of the skills of the NbS community of practice. In addition, given the NbS project partners also represent various organizations and research entities and different actors, TFs offer a very good opportunity for networking and establishing partnerships for joint actions.

As a result, the idea of workstreams can be redefined to enable also a more flexible approach, where members of different taskforces can work together on a specific product (jointly defined) during a limited timeframe, if necessary. The workstreams which have been consistently active can remain in place.

## Increasing Taskforces' membership and defining roles

While the number of EU NbS projects engaged in the Taskforces remains considerable, more can be done to increase TFs membership, especially to ensure the participation of projects' partners beyond coordinators.

To facilitate the workflow and to harness the potential within the TFs, an updated onboarding package developed by NetworkNature+ would facilitate the engagement of the new TF members. It would be beneficial to compile a list of projects containing information on their focus, type of intervention and involved stakeholders, gathered from the projects themselves. This would help different TF members in identifying potential synergies and possible areas of collaborations.

In addition, other EU projects, beyond cluster 6, working on NbS and related topics may benefit from engaging (to different degrees) with the taskforces, creating synergies with other transversal topics (e.g. rewilding, soil management). Such involvement will be guided by the European Commission DG RTD and REA, which will systematically map new projects to involve, based on their priorities and goals, as well as on the needs and direction of the TFs' objectives. NetworkNature+ will support the engagement of these projects at different levels.

As regards to the membership, some Taskforces have tried to implement a diversification in the type of membership based on efforts required, distinguishing between active members and followers. Such a diversification will be officially implemented in all Taskforces and regularly updated in NetworkNature+. This would help redefining roles and expectations from TFs members.

## Enabling collaborations between taskforces and hubs

Local outreach and uptake of NbS remains a high priority. The TFs represent a great entry point for further engaging local partners and bringing forward the TFs' outcomes through the growing number of NbS hubs. Further collaborations between the TFs and the hubs are expected to be systematised in NetworkNature+ (e.g. creating opportunities and common spaces). This would ensure that research needs and gaps arising from the local experience of the hubs are fed into the TFs, so that more targeted outcomes can be produced. Similarly, useful TFs outputs and products can better serve the hubs communities. Leveraging the knowledge and experience generated through the EU projects coupled with the expertise of the TF members, NetworkNature is well positioned to support the provision of assistance for individual countries for uptake and mainstreaming NbS from policy, finance and knowledge perspectives coordinated by the hubs.

In addition, in order to leverage local impact, collaboration with other hubs and networks (e.g. city networks) will be explored in NetworkNature+, also for knowledge transfer and information sharing with the TFs, and in view of the outreach to new target audiences (e.g. local authorities, businesses). This also includes collaboration with the "network of national representatives for SMEs interested in NbS".

## Brainstorming roles for the Taskforces

EU NbS projects representatives, members of the Taskforces, bring together different knowledge, experience, expertise and outcomes. NetworkNature+ aims to capitalise on such diversity as well as on their complementary elements to jointly build the NbS evidence and resource base. This is crucial for the joint identification of key outcomes to be produced by the Taskforces. EU NbS project partners also hold NbS sectoral and thematic perspectives, which could be utilized for successful uptake and implementation at the local level. For this reason, clear roles for the Taskforces will be explored to assess the contribution of different projects to this effort.

Further, building on the new features proposed for take-up in NetworkNature+ (e.g. the production of specific policy-relevant products, the enabling of citizen laboratories, the contributions to effective and inclusive communication on NbS, etc.), efforts will be made to clarify roles for the Taskforces to support these activities, enabling cross-TFs work.

Lastly, in order to maximise the outreach and accessibility of the TFs' and projects' outcomes, NetworkNature+ will identify key opportunities (e.g. by establishing dedicated meetings) with other networks, such as BioAgora, CO-OP4CBD, Biodiversa+.





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



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 887396.