Network Nature

Report

NbS Task Forces Cluster Meeting

WP1

IUCN EURO

2/05/2024

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Executive summary

The NetworkNature Tasks Forces (TFs) Cluster Meeting took place virtually on March the 20th, 2024, gathering the members of the Nature-based Solutions (NbS) Task Forces and focusing on the topic of standardisation. After the opening remarks from Piret Noukas (European Commission, REA) and Bettina Wilk (ICLEI), the key outcomes of each TF were presented. The NbS co-creation tool, currently under development, was introduced for the first time by Sean Bradley (Groundwork London), as the main product of TF6, on NbS co-creation and governance. A panel discussion ensued, enabling all TFs to delve into their respective future roles, aspirations and challenges. After that, Maria Nunez (IUCN EURO) introduced the NetworkNature Labs and the TFs Operational Fund, highlighting forthcoming opportunities for projects' partners. New NbS projects were then given the floor to introduce themselves in seven thematic breakout rooms. Aligning with the meeting's main topic, presentations revolving around standardisation commenced with an introduction by Holger Robrech (ICLEI). Susanna Gionfra (IUCN EURO) provided an overview of IUCN Global Standard on Nature-Based Solutions, followed by Alhassan Ibrahim (MERLIN) who presented application examples within the MERLIN project. In a parallel session hosted by HSBooster, René Lindner, Nicholas Ferguson and Diana Soeiro held a workshop on raising awareness about standardisation. A mentimeter session concluded this meeting, engaging the audience with questions regarding the potentials of standardisation.

Welcome and introduction

Participation

The NetworkNature Nature-Based Solutions Taskforce Cluster Meeting brought together more than 142 participants, from Task Forces members and prospective members, NetworkNature, the European Commission (European Research Executive Agency and DG Research & Innovation), as well as new NbS projects representatives. All Task Forces members and prospective members were represented as shown in the graphs below.

Number of attendees
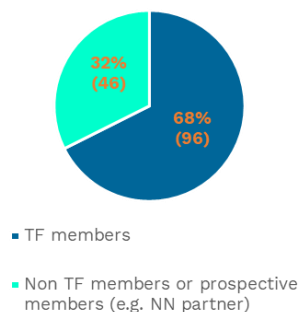
Number of TF representatives

Number of representatives from each project
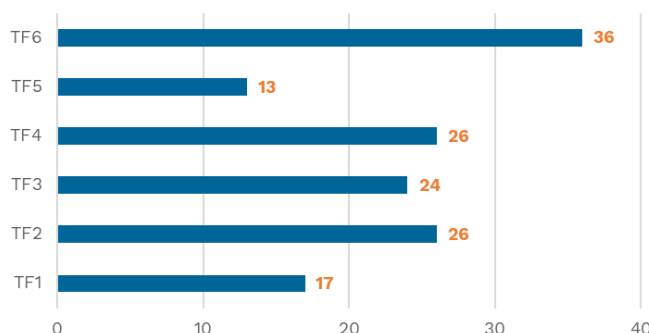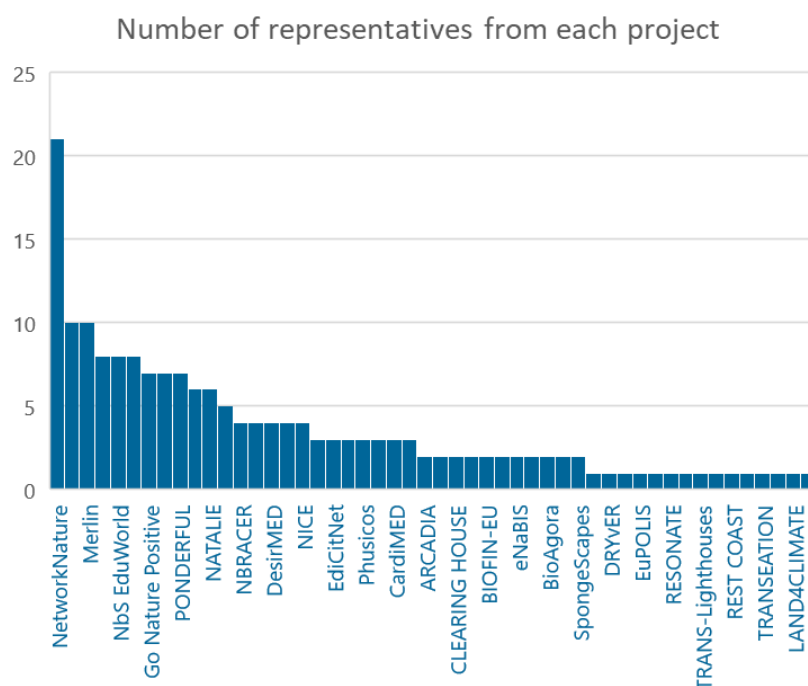
Welcome speech | Piret Noukas, European Commission

As the climate and biodiversity crises gain increasing attention, Piret Noukas (European Commission, REA) stressed the key role of the TFs in scaling up NbS, capitalising on the extent of their impacts, and reaching Europe and beyond. The TFs were encouraged to continue their joint efforts, contributing to the evidence base on NbS, and responding to the need to provide better clarity to society on NbS, especially regarding their design, finance and co-governance.

"TFs are well placed to provide guidance on NbS as these collaborations serve to streamline different concepts, highlighting best

practices, while also pointing out the limitations, and adapting to local conditions"

Introduction by NetworkNature on the meeting structure and objectives | Bettina Wilk, ICLEI

Bettina Wilk (ICLEI) restated the focus of the meeting on optimising standardisation and managing the leap from R&I products to market. She highlighted the increasing recognition of standards around NbS, at both global (IUCN NbS Global Standard) and European levels (CENELEC). The objective of focusing on standardisation is to provide the TFs with a better understanding of the topic and leveraging potential opportunities by building on the work accomplished during the first phase of NetworkNature. The meeting was also an opportunity to welcome new NbS projects and to present the new NbS co-creation tool (developed within TF6).

The agenda of the meeting is provided in Annex I.

NbS Task Forces: Building on the past, working for the future

Main outcomes of the Task Forces | Susanna Gionfra, IUCN

Susanna Gionfra (IUCN EURO) presented the main outcomes of the NbS TFs.

Task Forces' main outcomes

Task Force	Main outcome
TF1: **NbS Data and Knowledge sharing**	Expansion of NbS case study repository (hosted by Oppla and shared with NN)
TF2: **Integrated Assessment Framework**	Publication "Evaluating the impact of nature-based solutions - A handbook for practitioner"
TF3: **Business, Governance and Finance models**	Publication "The vital role of nature-based solutions in a nature positive economy"
TF4: NbS Communicators	Video series "What are Nature-based Solutions?"
TF5: NbS Education	Launch of new Task Force

TF6: Co-creation and co-governance	Publication "Guidelines for co-creation and co-governance of Nature-based Solutions insights form EU-funded projects"

More information is provided in the slides (6-13).

Presentation of the NbS Co-creation tool | Sean Bradley, Groundwork London

Sean Bradley (Groundwork London) introduced for the first time the NbS co-creation tool - Decision Support System (DSS), which is estimated to be 45% complete. The tool, representing one of the key ongoing outcomes of TF6 (co-creation and co-governance) is built on a dynamic checklist and contains a *Catalogue of Notes*, *Considerations*, and *Tech Notes* to help the users build their co-creation process. It is expected to be an online flexible tool, as it is designed to allow users to add notes, new considerations, and links to resources they think will be useful to other members of their projects or the wider community of practice working in this area. The users can then generate the output in a PDF format that could stand as a guidelines book.

The main interface of the DSS tool
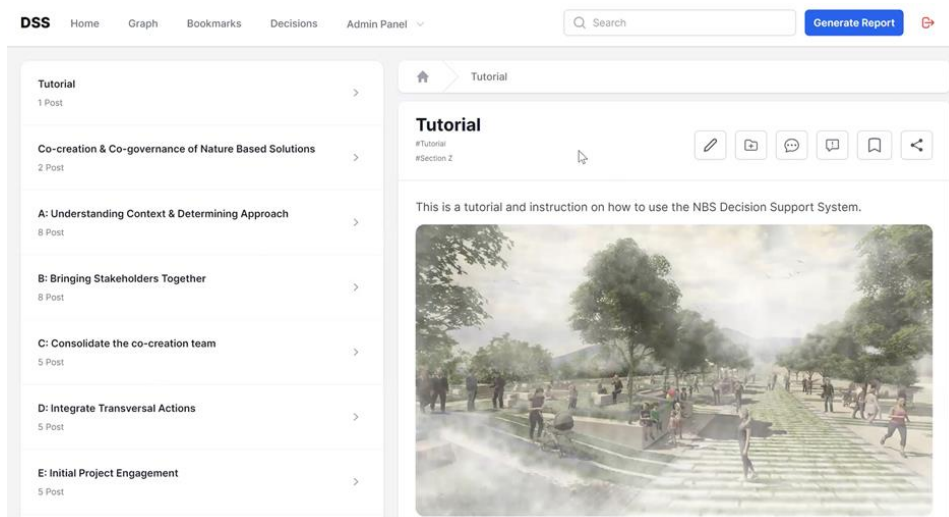
There will be different ways to navigate the online site. One of them will be through a graph function that will enable to go from the main topics (letters A, B, ...) to corresponding sections (A1, A2, ...) and subsections (A1.1, A2.1, ...). The work is ongoing to make the DSS interface more user-friendly.

Graph function interface
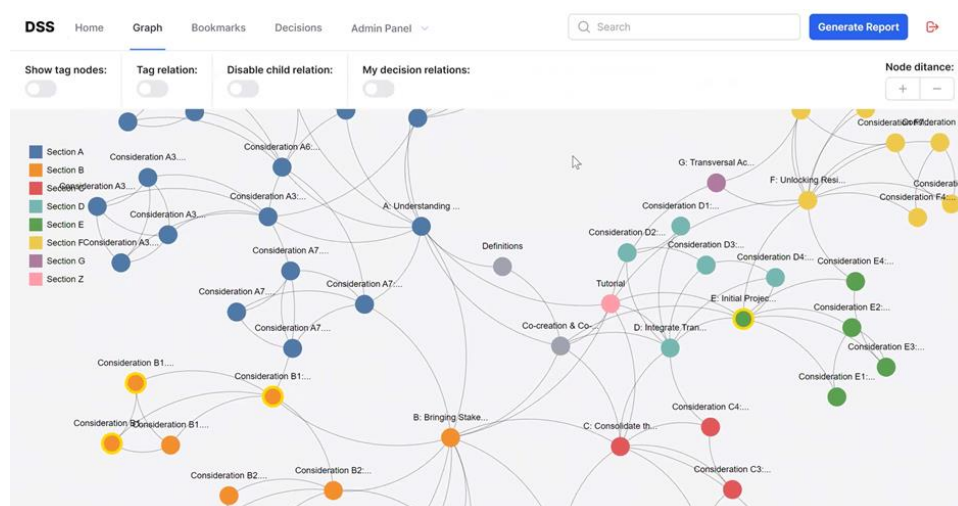
As a test link is being generated, Sean called out for contributions from the TFs members. People interested in contributing to this online co-creation tool can contact him through his email sean.bradley@groundwork.org.uk .

Panel discussion: Roles and wishes of the Task Forces

The panel, moderated by Susanna Gionfra (IUCN EURO), gathered representatives of all TFs to discuss their future work and expected challenges. The panel was composed of:

TF1: Paul Mahony, Oppla
TF2: Stuart Connop, University of East London
TF3: Victoria Blessing, Steinbeis
TF4: Kassia Rudd, ICLEI
TF5: Conor Dowling, Trinity College Dublin
TF6: McKenna Davis, Ecologic

Task Force's future work and challenges

Task Forces	Future work and activities	Challenges to overcome and actionable items
TF1	Work with the EC around standardisation of projects data • Selection of 10 priority indicators from the Handbook of TF2 and develop a data template • Involve other TFs • Start the process of standardisation between projects	• Equipping the EC with the best evidence and framework to influence policy and politicians • Measure and evidence NbS, difficult as it is scattered
TF2	Standardisation • Developing the handbook further: enhance usability, broaden the scope, update, and adapt the evaluation approach (e.g. biodiversity), standardise the indicators • Ambition to produce a mini handbook on biodiversity assessment: 10 indicators, broader diversity of projects • Opportunity to pick up with new projects (e.g. UGP+)	• Measuring and evidence • Green finance and policies: investors need confidence on the ROI and ensure a well-targeted investment • Need of an adaptive management • Manage the trade-offs decisions
TF3	• Extensive consultation to plan for TF3 and its workstreams • Mobilising finance and investment • Reflecting the approach of Nature Positive Economy: TF's title in discussion, creating BM and supporting entrepreneurs • Doing an update of the previous EC expert publication	• Policy barrier in finance and investment: workstreams on policy and regulation • Packaging the expertise in a form that will influence policy: Organising workshops at international fora • Help investments on NbS
TF4	• Peer-to-peer learning sessions on data and	• Raising awareness through events and publications, building

	inclusion, open to other TFs • Communalities in tasks and outputs between projects: making sure that outputs complement each other instead of duplicating work • Create welcome kit for new people in TF4	understanding of NbS, boosting public will, highlighting successes • Alignment in policy briefs among projects
TF5	• Kick-off meeting in January • Great engagement • Survey of TF5 members to set objectives, teams, and work areas: creating sub-clusters (local authority – develop case studies, academic partners – research papers) • A lot of engagement in the development of guidelines on how to bring NbS to education	• Choosing and maintaining the target group • Moving away from traditional education and bringing NbS into people's day-to-day life • Identifying existing curricula on nature and how NbS can complement them
TF6	Organising co-governance and co-creation in practice • Inclusive workshop series to produce good practices, guidelines and capture lessons learnt from research communities and practitioners • Internal kick off meeting of dedicated workstream on 19/03 • Welcoming all interested members to join	• How to reach and maintain the engagement of stakeholders in practice • Bring information together and provide references and resources to support approach with research community and policy makers, and how to include marginalised communities

"The way municipalities report on biodiversity and NbS is quite varied among cities, regions, countries and

across Europe. […] It's one of the big problems in data"

NetworkNature Labs & the Task Forces Operational Fund

Maria Nuñez (IUCN Euro) introduced the NN Labs and TFs Operational Fund.

NN Labs are multi–step calls that aim to promote and facilitate the development of new activities, initiatives, tools, standards, guidelines, publications, materials, etc. in relation to NbS within the Task Forces. These concrete outputs would be supported through the NetworkNature TFs Operational Fund for their implementation.

NetworkNature grants a **TFs Operational Fund** of 112 000 euros. The allocation of this fund will be enabled through the NN Labs.

The following approach for the NN Labs and allocation of the TFs Operational Fund was presented.

NN Labs Approach
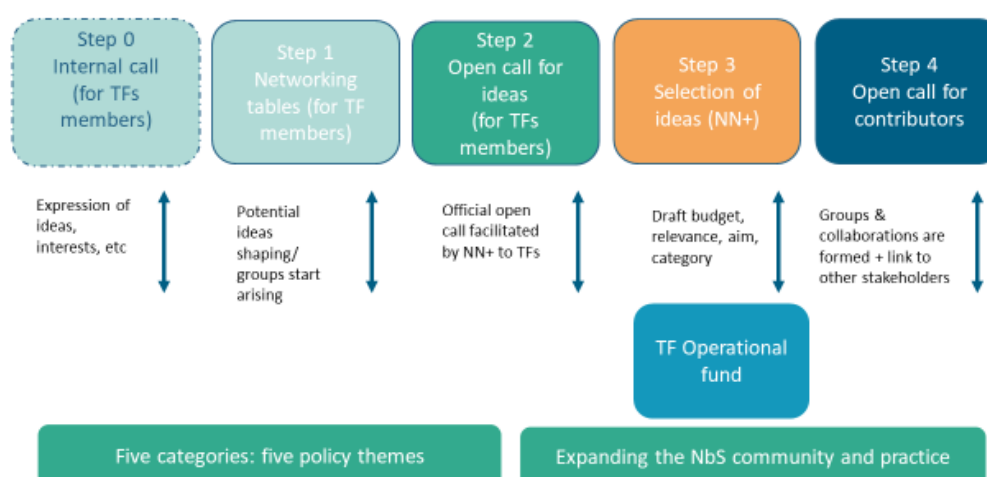
A series of open-calls is planned in the context of the NN Labs to enable and guide TFs members in the proposition and development of ideas to be funded

through the TFs Operation Fund and in forming collaborations. Detailed information on these open-calls is provided here (please note that the first open call is open until 1st June 2024).

TFs members were invited to disseminate NN Labs calls among their projects' partners and to invite them to join the TFs in order to be able to participate in the NN Labs.

NN Labs timeline

Step 0 1st Open Call (for TFs members)	Ongoing (May 2024)
Step 1 Networking tables (for TF members)	In-person & virtual tables September 2024
Step 2 Open call for ideas (for TFs members)	October – November 2024
Step 3 Selection of ideas (NN+)	December 2024
Step 4 Open call for contributors	After December 2024

More information is available in the ppt (17-29).

Introducing new NbS projects

Seven breakout rooms were organised to present new NbS projects from the Horizon Europe and EU Missions programmes.

New projects' description

Room 1: Hybrid NbS

Transeation
The TRANSEATION project aims to validate hybrid blue-grey marine and coastal infrastructures for ecosystem-based management. It integrates nature-based solutions, social involvement, and digitalization to preserve and restore marine ecosystem health. Specific objectives include analyzing benefits and trade-offs and developing digital monitoring solutions. The project also seeks to identify limitations in existing initiatives like LEED and establish links with previous projects. Overall, it strives to advance marine conservation through Nature-based innovative Solutions and sustainable approaches.

DuneFront
DuneFront aims to showcase blue-grey coastal infrastructure as a sustainable response to climate change, combining static hard infrastructure with dynamic aeolian and vegetated sediments. Mainstreaming biodiversity into these solutions is crucial for protecting human assets, blue economy activities, and restoring biodiversity. By identifying key biological, physical, and socio-economic factors, DuneFront will develop roadmaps for hybrid NbS design, supported by physical and digital twins. The project will pilot a Decision-Support-System and create blueprints for coastal infrastructure, installing prototypes along vulnerable European coasts. Stakeholders will receive business plans for hybrid NbS through a co-creation process, translating research and innovations into actionable strategies.

URBREATH
URBREATH vision is to develop, implement, demonstrate, validate and replicate a comprehensive, community participation and NBS-driven urban revitalisation, resilience and climate neutrality paradigm that will ultimately radically enhance the social interactions, inclusion, equitability and liveability in cities. Specifically, the aim of the URBREATH project is to implement hybrid/Natural Base Solutions putting at the heart of the decision-making process the communities within a city. Advanced techniques, particularly Local Digital Twins and AI, and social innovation will facilitate the achievement of its vision. The project will have four phases: 1. Inception, 2. Development, 3. Piloting, 4. Transition. The preliminary results of a single Phase are evaluated within the following Phase so to allow for feedback before releasing the final version. The Inception phase will define the methodology to be followed for the project development and will deliver the project functional and technical requirements. The second phase will release the URBREATH technical framework, consisting of tools to manage the whole data value chain and to support end-users to collaborate on the design and creation of NBS to be used in the city/district. It will be used to monitor and take decisions on the NBS to be implemented/deployed in the Piloting phase (evidence-based decision making), that involves 4 Front Runner Cities in 4 different climatic zones: Cluj-Napoca (RO - Continental), Leuven (BE – Atlantic), Madrid (ES – Mediterranean), and Tallin (EE – Boreal). During the Transition phase, all the information, results and lessons learnt from the previous steps will be collected and analysed to provide recommendations and foster replication activities and the uptake of project outputs at the end of its lifespan.

To this aim, 5 Follower Cities are involved: Aarhus (DK), Athens (EL), Kajaani (FI), Parma (IT), Pilsen (CZ), linked to the Front Runners for climatic zone and/or dimension.

Room 2: Health

GreenME

GreenME is a Horizon Europe consortium project that aims to identify ways in which effective nature-based therapy and a broader green care framework which considers access to nature-in-everyday-life and nature-based health promotion can be scaled-up to improve adult mental health and wellbeing equity while contributing to multiple socio-ecological co-benefits.

RESONATE

RESONATE (Building individual and community RESilience thrOugh NATurE based therapies) is a four year (2023-2027) Cluster 6 EU Horizons Europe looking at how direct engagement with natural settings can build individual's biopsychosocial resilience resources to help them prevent and combat a range of different stressors. RESONATE's focus is on preventive and therapeutic uses of nature, including Nature Based Therapies. Because the successful implementation of nature-based therapeutic interventions depends on a whole host of local stakeholders and actors from land owners and managers through to health service providers and local planners and politicians the project also takes a deep dive into these relationships to see how Social Innovation Actions can be used to establish interventions in the long-term and build more community wide resilience in line with social-ecological resilience approaches of Nature-based Solutions.

NATURELAB

HE NATURELAB (2023-2027) aims to go beyond the present knowledge by exploring the advantages of Nature-based Solutions (NBS)/ green and blue spaces in preventing and rehabilitating health and promoting resilience to climate extreme events. NATURELAB will develop tailored Nature-based therapeutic (NBT) programmes, and engage around 4 000 participants from across five European and Latin American countries, aiming at a consistent representation of culture, gender, age and socioeconomic backgrounds. It will also introduce metrics to evaluate the potential health benefits of nature, and provide guidelines for assessing these benefits, along with recommendations for the uptake of NBT in the health sector. The findings will be used in the management of NBS and therapeutic gardens.

Room 3: Transformative change

COEVOLVERS

COEVOLVERS -project (Coevolutionary approach to unlock the transformative potential of nature-based solutions for more inclusive and resilient communities) seeks to find new practices for designing and implementing nature-based solutions. COEVOLVERS co-creates new NBS governance models by co-developing innovative techniques and tools in seven different communities of inquiry, Living Labs, across Europe.

TRANS-Lighthouses

TRANS-Lighthouse if a 3-years (2023-2026) project funded by HORIZON Europe Research and Innovation programme under Cluster 6. It aims to gather evidence on material and immaterial results of NBS in order to rethink and reframe the main elements that compose the complexity of creating social and ecologically just NBS. TRANS-lighthouses adopts a non-linear perspective and opens up space for the adoption of a fluid and organic position that is able to integrate the diversity of subjects, institutions, knowledge(s), practices and values. TRANS-lighthouses' ambition is to become a European reference on socio-political challenges for supporting NBS projects and solutions.This ambition will be achieved by assessing the benefits and limitations of NBS co-creation that have already been implemented and designed, tested and disseminated economically and socially fairer guidelines for NBS implementation. For this purpose, the project will conduct a thorough assessment, grounded on a transdisciplinary approach and critical analysis. Constituting a well-oiled network of citizens, local governments, scientific institutions and civil society-based partners which acts across borders, disciplines and sectors, TRANS-lighthouses will lead research on activities aiming to implement socioeconomic and political changes capable of enabling pathways for a socially and ecologically just implementation of NBS. TRANS-lighthouses integrates a network of NBS lighthouses for urban, rural, coastal and forested areas in 10 EU countries and 6 non-EU.

DESIRMED

DesirMED is a project funded by HORIZON Europe Research and Innovation actions in support of the implementation of the Adaptation to Climate Change Mission (HORIZON-MISS-2022-CLIMA-01). DesirMED aims at increasing ambition, ownership and capability of regional Mediterranean leaders and communities through proven transformative climate change adaptation approaches prioritizing Nature Based Solutions. To this aim DesirMED involves a multi-level set of actors in 5 Demonstrating and 3 Replicating Regions working hand-in-hand with scientific partners to foster holistic approaches to implement transformative adaptation. By engaging at the regional level key institutions in a multi-level governance framework, it will act as a catalyst to trigger and accelerate the necessary actions to increase regional climate resilience over the long run.

Room 4: Transformative change (2)

ARCADIA

ARCADIA is a 4,5 year Horizon Europe project, started in january 2024, involving 43 partners. ARCADIA will mobilise 8 European regions and communities to accelerate the adoption of Nature-based Solutions as a strategy to reach climate resilience. In ARCADIA, the definition of regional ambitions and of methodologies and approaches co-developed at consortium level, will be followed by the implementation of 15 co-innovation labs with the engagement of the interested communities and societal partners; the learning across policy areas will be exploited to up-scale and deploy at large scale the solutions in the regions, developing robust policy and economic tools (regulations, funding schemes, business models, investment tools). Technical and research partners will support and assist the regions to build capacity facilitating their access to up-to-date, evidence-based actionable knowledge, guidance, knowledge-intense tools and services, mutual learning and networking opportunities.

NATALIE

NATALIE is a project funded by the European Commission Horizon Europe research program (Grant agreement No 101112859) that aims to Accelerating and mainstreaming transformative NATure-bAsed solutions to enhance resiLIEence to climate change for diverse bio-geographical European regions". NATALIE will address the risks posed by climate change and its impacts and proposes to advance the concepts of "ecosystem-based adaptation" in Europe combined with climate resilient development pathways, as the means for impact driven Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), to accelerate and mainstreaming the adoption of NBS for resilience to climate change, which is also the cornerstone identified in the recent IPCC AR6 WGII Report.

CARDIMED

CARDIMED (Climate Adaptation and Resilience Demonstrated in the Mediterranean Region) is a HEU Mission Adaptation project, that started in September 2023 (duration 54 months / 51 partners). The vision of CARDIMED is to enable systemic transformation for regional climate resilience in the Mediterranean, by unifying and mainstreaming NBS and other engineered infrastructure in 9 Demonstration Sites which include 20 locations, 47 NBS types and 83 NBS interventions. The project is structured along 4 pillars: (1) Digital technologies for climate adaptation, (2) Socio-economic resilience, (3) WEFE Nexus, and (4) Nature-based Solutions, aiming to holistically connect these solutions at a systems level.

Room 5: Finances / Education

BIOFIN-EU

BIOFIN-EU focuses on redirecting financial resources for biodiversity recovery and protection by creating a unified framework that categorises nature-based solutions, streamlines the investment process, and incorporates a data analytics and underwriting engine. Real-life case studies validate the approach, contributing to a dual green and digital transition that simplifies transactions. Outcomes will identify taxonomy gaps and provide evidence-based policy recommendations for the European financial services industry, supporting the EU's biodiversity goals.

GoNaturePositive!

GoNaturePositive! is a 4-year Horizon project to foster a nature-positive economy, engaging policymakers, investors, businesses, and the wider community. It seeks to define and establish a conceptual framework for a nature-positive economy, offering research, demonstrations, and leadership to tackle systemic challenges. The project outlines policy pathways, showcases the benefits of nature-positive practices, and leverages a committed Impact Board to promote a unified vision. Through pilot projects, GoNaturePositive! demonstrates real-world applications and impacts, aiming to gather insights for economic transformation and leadership. It employs a dual strategy, spotlighting nature-positive sectors like agroecology and green buildings, while also setting benchmarks for mainstream businesses to adopt nature-positive transitions.

ENABls

The eNaBLS project will set the basis of networking and collaboration to promote, embed, and unfold Nature-based Solutions concepts, and approaches within universities and vocational schools, the professional sphere, and society at large through transdisciplinary dialogue. 7 Living Labs will be created in partner countries (DE, NL, FI, AT, LT, EL, CZ), incorporating all 'voices' and leaving no one behind. The goal is to mainstream biodiversity and NBS in higher education and Technical and Vocational Education & Training (TVET) by developing and upscaling new forms of teaching, learning, and capacity building that are more relational, systems-oriented, and applied.

Room 6: Liveable cities

GreenInCities

GreenIn Cities is a HORIZON-funded project that aims to develop, test and validate methodologies and tools aimed to operationalize collaborative climate mitigation and adaptation urban planning approaches and to co-create innovative "greening" and renaturing solutions for regeneration, repurposing, rehabilitation and pollution abatement in deprived areas.

UGP+

As supranational policies fall short in addressing critical aspects of biodiversity conservation, there is urgent need for transformative approaches to reverse decline and unlock benefits that nature can provide to society. Bottom-up initiatives, often overlooked, must complement national strategies to drive meaningful change. The EU-funded UGPplus project will address the need for coordinated top-down and bottom-up initiatives, engaging city- and community-driven efforts to complement national sustainability plans. Specifically, 12 academic partners and 5 European cities will explore innovations and barriers related to Urban Greening Plans. UGPplus will take learning from this process to bridge gaps, foster collaboration, and propel a next-generation strategy for urban ecosystem transformation, aligning with the EU's vision for biodiversity by 2030 and the Nature Restoration Law.

Room 7 : Water/ Risk reduction

SPONGESCAPES

The EU-funded SpongeScapes project will consolidate, expand and disseminate scientific knowledge on the potential contribution of Nature-based Solutions for water retention in rural catchments, paving the way for climate-resilient landscapes through innovative sponge strategies and collaborative stakeholder engagement. Specifically,

the project will review and demonstrate natural water retention measures in 140 existing cases linked to the www.nwrm.eu database and an in-depth understanding of 14 individual case studies. These insights will be upscaled through co-designed sponge strategies at the landscape scale, involving various stakeholders. By providing realistic evaluations of strategies, SpongeScapes equips stakeholders with the tools to map opportunities and enhance sponge functioning.

SPONGEBOOST

"SpongeBoost" is a collaborative project bringing together 10 partners from 7 European countries to improve the natural sponge functions of freshwater ecosystems for sustainable Green Deal solutions. Through interdisciplinary research and innovative management strategies, the project aims to compile best practices for restoring water retention in landscapes. By collecting and providing literature and solutions in a database and testing innovative measures at seven case study sites, the project aims to identify the most impactful and cost-effective nature-based solutions. A roadmap will engage communities in transformative action. By showcasing successful examples, SpongeBoost wants to facilitate stakeholder engagement and support regions in successfully implementing nature-based solutions for societal benefit.

MOUNTRESILIENCE

Mountains cover 30% of the land, and 17% of the EU population resides in these areas. They play a crucial role in providing resources, but they also face challenges due to climate change. MountResilience will support European regions located in mountainous areas to increase their capacity to adapt to climate change and to transition towards a climate-resilience society. Through the involvement of 6 regional demonstrators and 4 replicator regions the project will conceptualise, test, and scale up multi-level, multidimensional and re-applicable climate change adaptation and nature-based solutions to assess specific climate impacts in mountainous regions.

Standardisation

Introduction to standardisation | Holger Robrecht, ICLEI

Holger Robrecht (ICLEI) highlighted the shared ambition of projects to not only provide inputs but also create impacts towards addressing the triple planetary crisis, as well as towards the objectives of the EU Green Deal. He reminded the audience that substantial EU funding has been dedicated to NbS projects to drive ambitious ideas and innovative outputs.

In that context, turning projects outputs into standards is important as it will help highlight the projects impact and policy implementation by reflecting the available state of knowledge as reference and quality criteria. Through regular revisions and updates, these outputs would thus outlive the project lifetime and continue to drive impact.

In the European Green Deal 2.0., the focus will be on industry policy, where standards can play a great interface between cities, regions, communities, and private sectors and build a bridge between research and innovation and close the chain to market attainment.

IUCN Global Standard | Susanna Gionfra, IUCN

In the context of standardisation, Susanna Gionfra (IUCN) introduced the IUCN Global Nature-based Solutions Standard. Launched in 2020, the IUCN Standard provides a robust framework for designing and verifying NbS that yield the outcomes desired, in solving one or several societal challenge(s). By applying this facilitative standard, users are supported in applying, learning and continuously strengthening and improving the effectiveness, sustainability and adaptability of their NbS interventions.

The standard is composed of 8 criteria and 28 indicators.

The development of such standard responds to the need for greater clarity and precision of what the NbS concept entails and what is required for it to be deployed successfully. It was based on knowledge co-creation, gathering conservation science, social science and traditional knowledge.

The IUCN Standard is composed of three elements: the Standard document, the user-friendly guide, and the self-assessment tool.

The latter is an essential element as it provides users the opportunity to self-assess their NbS against all criteria and indicators, by responding to guiding questions, supported by an explanation of the rational and means of verification. The self-assessment tool has now been launched in its online version, accessible to the public via this link.

Results of the assessment are provided in the form of a table as well as a spider graph, as shown in the picture below.

Overview of IUCN Standard for the [Medmerry case of coastal realignment](#)

Criterion	Your Criterion Score	Maximum Criterion Score	Normalised criterion	FINAL OUTPUT Your Criterion %age
1. Societal challenges	9	9	1.00	1.0
2. Design at scale	8	9	0.89	0.9
3. Biodiversity net-gain	11	12	0.92	0.9
4. Economic feasibility	10	12	0.83	0.8
5. Inclusive governance	13	15	0.87	0.9
6. Balance trade-offs	9	9	1.00	1.0
7. Adaptive management	9	9	1.00	1.0
8. Sustainability and mainstreaming	6	9	0.67	0.7
Total			7.17	0.9
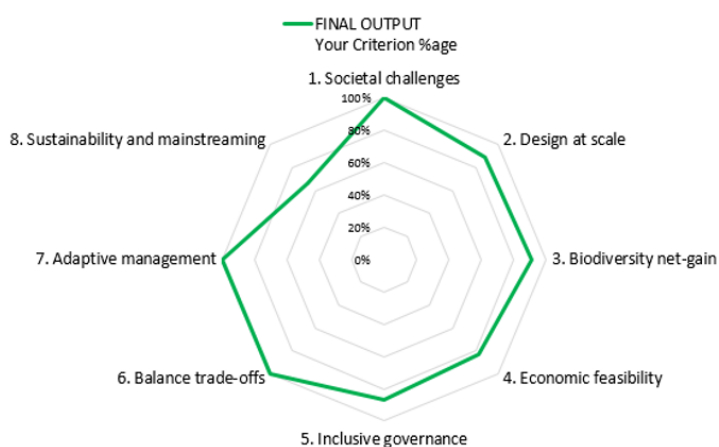
The benefit in applying the standard stand in the opportunity to give credibility to the intervention when speaking to investors, donors and other stakeholders, and in providing recommendations for improvement, using the results as a way to identify gaps and solutions.

The criteria of the IUCN Standard and examples of indicators and applications were presented in a dedicated parallel session. In addition, the development process of the standard was presented.

In order to create an iterative process of learning and a robust method of development for the IUCN Global Standard for NbS, several steps were followed, including gathering information and identifying stakeholders and enabling consultations with them. Two rounds of open consultations were carried out, with more than 800 people contributing across 100 countries. In addition, the standard was developed to be compatible with the ISEAL International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance Code of Good Practice.

The IUCN standard is revised every four years. It will now be revised until its launch in 2025, at the IUCN World Conservation Congress.

More information is provided in the slides ([77-94](#)).

The use of the IUCN Global NbS Standard in MERLIN | Alhassan Ibrahim, MERLIN

Alhassan Ibrahim (The James Hutton Institute) highlighted the application of the IUCN Global Standard in assessing NbS implemented within the [MERLIN project.](#)

Using the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT), the project's alignment to the standard has been evaluated. This process aids in shaping the thinking and practice across different tasks, the three main ones being stakeholder engagement, just transformation analysis, and implementation and monitoring.

The SAT was applied to 16 NbS cases of the MERLIN project at two different stages: at the beginning and in the middle of the project. It will be applied again at the end of the project. Repeating the application of the SAT proved beneficial as it led to a better understanding of the tool, and also showed improvement in the results. Overall, the last application showed that biodiversity net gain (criterion 3) received the most favourable rating, while economic feasibility (criterion 4) remained less favourable.

Alhassan explained how the IUCN Global Standard is shaping their thinking and practice across different tasks.

1. *SWOT analysis & optimisation*

Each MERLIN case study performed a SWOT analysis based on the IUCN SAT criteria to achieve the EU Green Deal goals. The results provide information for drafting an optimisation strategy for restoration efforts.

Scheme of MERLIN's optimization strategy
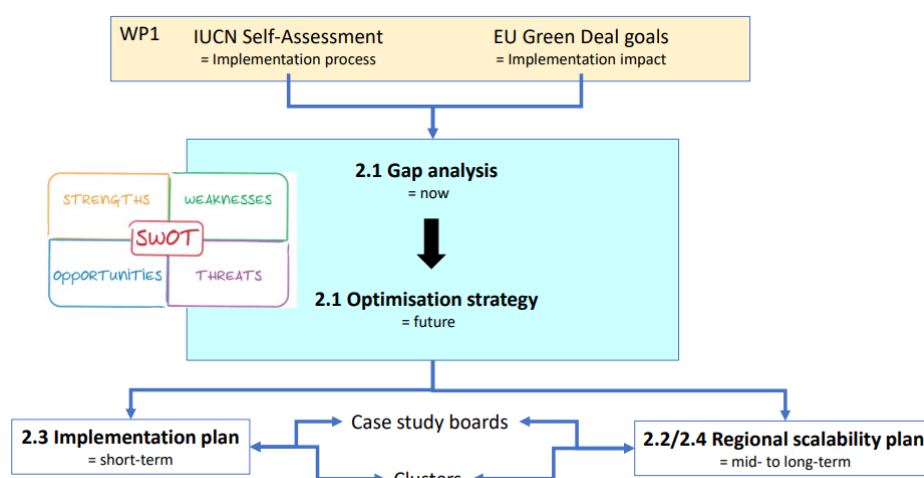
2. Themes for engagement and assessing opinions

The MERLIN project is also using IUCN SAT to assess local stakeholders' views by simplifying the NbS criteria to 8 themes: biodiversity outcomes, funding, challenges addressed, project scale, inclusivity, trade-offs, adaptative management and sharing lessons. This process is leading to the elaboration of a conceptual paper (Ibrahim, A., Marshall, K., Carmen, E., Blackstock, K., Waylen, K. A. 2024. *Engaging stakeholders through the lens of the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-Based Solutions: Navigating the Why, When, Who and How*) which is currently under review.

3. Planning a Just Transformation Analysis

The SAT will be used to conduct Just Transformation Analysis by helping in assessing representation and involvement, understanding how grievance were addressed, assessing ratings on balancing trade-offs and evaluating rationale for ratings.

MERLIN's feedback on using IUCN standard

Usefulness	Difficulties
✓ Clear overview and reflection on status ✓ Very structured and comprehensive ✓ Identify areas to improve ✓ Help to organise difference objectives	✗ Difficult to use and subjective ✗ Limited understanding of some criteria depending on one's scientific background ✗ Defining scale when there are different actions in a single case study

Alhassan concluded that the IUCN Global Standard is helping MERLIN practically and conceptually and that its use has evolved and proved meaningful in structuring different tasks into topics.

More information is provided in the slides ([96-115](#)).

HS Booster and standardisation | René Lindner, Nicholas Ferguson, Diana Soeiro, HSBooster

René Lindner, Nicholas Ferguson and Diana Soeiro, representing HSBooster, held a workshop on raising awareness about standards and standardisation and presented the services they offer to EU research projects.

Standards are developed through a broad consensus among stakeholders from different countries and serve as a crucial instrument to translate innovative ideas into actionable change. They offer a clear, precise presentation of information, reducing decision costs and fostering agreement in complex areas requiring multidisciplinary input. Standards not only guide future regulations and complement legal documents but also ensure impactful, long-term outcomes through regular revisions, typically every five years.

Getting involved in standard development offers benefits like easy access to standards, early market-shaping information, and giving you a voice in standard development. It facilitates collaborative policy delivery and provides a basis for future regulations at EU and international levels. Standards can also support projects in achieving their goals and bridge the gap between science and policy. They can be a valuable resource to engage stakeholders, support tool development, provide policy recommendations or to upscale solution.

ISO (International Organisation for Standardization) and CEN (European Committee for Standardization) are two different organizations that develop standards, the first with an international focus, being a network of national standards bodies of 170 countries; and the second with a focus in developing European Standards, bringing together the National Standardization Bodies of 34 European countries. Noting that all CEN's national members are also ISO members. It is important to note that both ISO and CEN standards are voluntary, don't regulate nor legislate but countries can adopt a standard as a regulation or refer to it in the legislation. Both ISO and CEN have the same

structure and is formed by technical committees formed by working groups, sub-committees and task-groups.

Standards are different from policy reviews or scientific papers - they are written with the user in mind with a clear concise, compact manner and in simple plain language; they have however quite a similar basic structure composed by a title, table of contents, forward, introduction, scope, normative references, terms and definitions, clauses and subclauses, notes and examples, tables and figures, annexes and bibliography.

*How to write a Standard?: ISO 2022. Stages and resources for standards development*
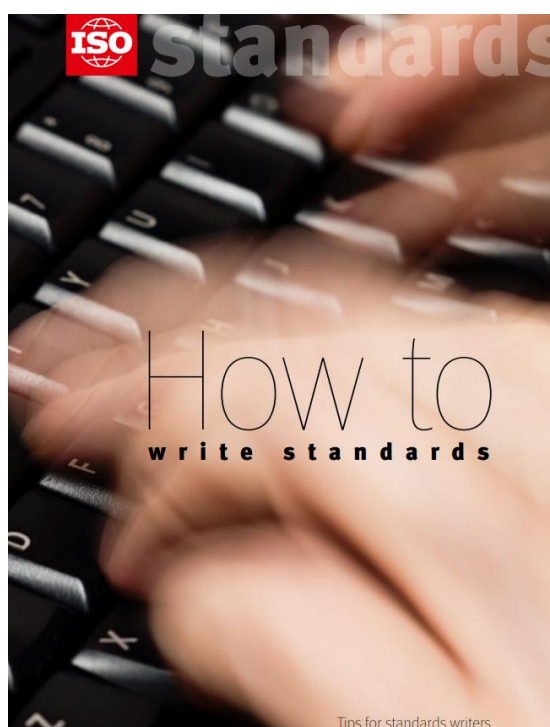
 "*Be clear and concise – but not simplistic – aim to avoid misinterpretation*"

Drafting a standard can be a challenging endeavour and for that the HSboosters provide various solutions to EU projects. Facing challenges like

lack of time, uncertainty about how to begin, or confusion about engaging with ISO or CEN, HSboosters offers comprehensive support. Through a series of workshops, HSboosters can help EU projects get started, identify common needs and priority topics in line with standards, identify way to integrate standardisation in their research projects, find the best option that suits their need to create and manage a standard, and to engage stakeholders.

"HSBooster.eu can help you get started covering all costs and it's a benefit you can reap in future projects"

Methodology to integrate standardisation in research projects
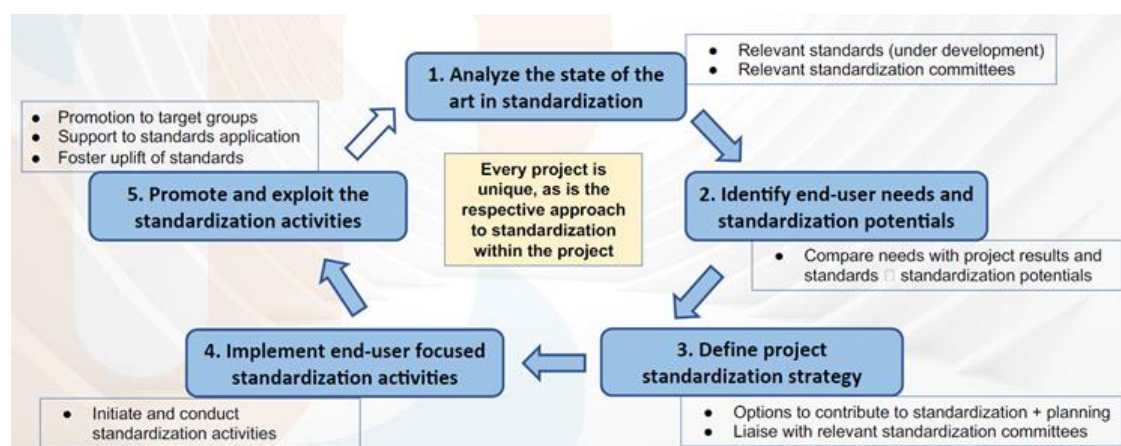
Participants were invited to use the free online resources available at the website HSbooster.eu such as the standards orientation tool (https://sot.hsbooster.eu/) and the HSbooster training academy (https://hsbooster.eu/training-academy) filled with downloadable courses, materials for researchers, skills-based role-playing board game and monthly webinars. For a more tailored support the participants were also invited to take advantage of the free support and services provided by the HSbooster to EU research project by applying through the following link until June the 30th, 2024: https://hsbooster.eu/project/register.

The discussion highlighted the need from participants to learn more about the process, the HSbooster confirmed their plan to host two workshops to have a detailed discussion on knowledge-exchange "*Identifying project's needs, priorities and how to move forward*" and on the roadmap to standardization *"How to?";* they extended this invitation to all TFs members. Further information on these workshops will be shared through NetworkNature.

More information is provided in the slides (38-76).

Interactive session

Using Mentimeter, the audience was asked to participate in a series of poll questions to grasp the main views and thoughts regarding the key topics presented during the meeting, namely standardisation and the NN Labs.

Table 6 – Mentimeter Q&A

Questions	Answers
What is the main use/purpose of standardisation in the context of NbS in your opinion?	
Do you have some ideas on potential TFs/projects' outcomes that could contribute to standardisation?	Joint social media campaigns Educational approaches (e.g. support for workshops with the project's outcomes) Evaluation and monitoring approaches: standardized data points (allowing comparison between projects), standardized living labs Addressing questions and challenges of standardisation (e.g. difficulty of use, balance with specific local solutions) and indicators (outcomes from TF2, Handbook of indicators) Producing structured evidence databases by identifying and collecting best case studies in a standardized format Co-creation & co-governance processes (e.g. document, collaboration with TF1) Impact Assessment Framework by Connecting Nature UrbanByNature approach by ICLEI Processes for establishing NbS (e.g engaging Hubs in monitoring NbS implementation) Reinforcing relationship to nature Maturity

Do you already have some ideas on cross-TFs activities that could be funded through the NN labs?	Communication and visual materials (e.g. NbS images database) Joint social media campaigns Workshops (e.g. for users to sense-check usability of outputs), NbS visit tours Databases/maps/monitoring protocols (e.g. for education) Peer-to-peer exchanges and collaboration between TFs: linking products (e.g. DSS of TF6 for TF5) and activities (e.g. economic/finance standards or guidelines by TF2 and TF3) with the possibility to focus on national issues thanks to Hubs (driving the preparation of cross-TFs project) Cross-overing cultural background Support to south global community

Annex I: Agenda of the Task Forces Cluster Meeting

9.30 – 9.45	**Welcome & introduction** *(10 minutes)* • *Welcome speech (5 minutes)* • *Introduction by NetworkNature on structure and objectives (5 minutes)*	Piret Noukas European Commission, REA Bettina Wilk, ICLEI
9.45 – 10.50	**NbS Task Forces: building on the past, working for the future** *(65 minutes)*	
	• ***Main outcomes of NN TFs*** *(5 minutes)*	Susanna Gionfra, IUCN
	• ***Presentation of the NbS Co-creation tool*** *(10 minutes)*	TF6: Sean Bradley, Groundwork London
	Break (5 minutes)	TF1: Paul Mahony, Oppla TF2: Stuart Connop, University of East London TF3: Victoria Blessing, Steinbeis TF4: Kassia Rudd, ICLEI TF5: Conor Dowling, Trinity College Dublin TF6: McKenna Davis, Ecologic
	• ***Panel discussion*** *Roles and wishes of the TFs (25 minutes)*	
	• ***NN Labs*** *Facilitating self-organization in TFs and TFs Operational Funds Functioning (10 minutes)* *Q&A (10 minutes)*	María Nuñez, IUCN
10.50 – 11.10	**Introducing new projects on NbS** *(20 minutes)*	Projects representatives

	19 projects would by organised by topics, having each topic a different private space (breakout room) *Health* *Transformative change* *Finances* *Education* *Liveable cities* *Hybrid* *Water and risk reduction*	
11.10 – 11.25	**Break** *(15 min)*	
11.25 – 12.05	Standardization *(40 minutes)*	
	Introduction to Standardization (2 min)	Holger Robrecht, ICLEI
	Standardisation as a tool to valorise project's results (15 min)	René Lindner, Nicholas Ferguson, Diana Soeiro, HSBooster
	IUCN Global Standard (10 min)	
	Q & A (10 Minutes)	Susanna Gionfra, IUCN
12.05 – 12.10	**Break** *(5 min)*	
12.10 – 12.55	**Breakout rooms: In depth (45 minutes)**	
	HSBooster & standardisation service	René Lindner, Nicholas Ferguson, Diana Soeiro, HSBooster
	IUCN Standard in depth & MERLIN case	Susanna Gionfra, IUCN Alhassan Ibrahim, MERLIN
12.55 – 13.05	**Reporting back**	
13.05 – 13.10	**Mentimeter session**	
13.10 – 13.15	**Conclusion** *(5 minutes)* Concluding remarks	Susanna Gionfra, 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.