

## **Contribution to Track #6 Nature-Based Solutions by the EU/European Commission drawing on existing policies and strategies**

### **Joining forces and prioritising nature-based solutions with safeguards**

#### ***Context and rationale***

Science is clear: *half a degree matters – each year matters – each choice matters*. Climate change interacts with and exacerbates other drivers of biodiversity loss, and vice-versa. Both IPCC and IPBES reports describe the increasing impacts of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the crucial role of ecosystem services for climate regulation.

Climate, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability objectives can only be achieved through addressing climate change, land, and ecosystem degradation in an integrated manner. Better alignment between policies to phase out counterproductive measures, emphasis on multiple benefits, and scaling up action through more integrated approaches are vital and urgent.

The principles and safeguards laid down in the voluntary guidance adopted at CBD CoP14 for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction<sup>1</sup> could serve as a basis for safeguards for nature-based solutions/natural climate solutions.

#### ***An overview of the contribution***

This submission includes a number of examples of how the European Commission promotes nature-based solutions (NBS). Depending on the user community, NBS are shaped also as ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), Green Infrastructure (GI), ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (EcoDRR), or Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM). They all deliver multiple benefits, based on the assumption that ecosystems, if in healthy condition, deliver at the same time important services for human well-being and address economic, social, and environmental targets, including climate change adaptation and mitigation and biodiversity conservation, enhancement, and restoration.

Improved implementation of the current policies and strategies will contribute to reducing carbon emissions and climate vulnerability and increasing carbon capture, climate resilience and food security. The implementation of nature-based solutions creates jobs and business opportunities and these ecosystem-based approaches are ready for use and easily accessible. NBS can significantly contribute to the transformative change needed to revert the climate and ecological crises, as outlined in the IPBES global assessment on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

#### ***EU Strategies and Policies in support of nature-based solutions***

- The [EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change](#) (2013) commends ecosystem-based approaches (EbA) for their cost-effectiveness under different scenarios, for being easily accessible, and for providing multiple benefits.
- The EU [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) (2013) consolidates actions on green infrastructure, and recommends using ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation and disaster risk

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<sup>1</sup> CBD COP14/5 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-05-en.pdf>

reduction. At the core of the Green Infrastructure is the Natura 2000 network, the largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world stretching over 18% of the EU's land area and almost 10% of its marine territory.

- The EU [Biodiversity Strategy for 2020](#) (2011) calls upon Member States to map and assess, with the assistance of the European Commission, the state of ecosystems and their services in their national territory, including the important role that ecosystems play in mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts as essential ecosystem services.
- The EU "Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources" recognises the role of [Natural Water Retention Measures](#) for preventing flood risk when producing co-benefits.
- The [EU Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) covers ecosystem-based approaches to DRR under priority 3 'Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience'.
- The [EU policy on international ocean governance \(2016\)](#) sets out a series of actions with a nature-based solution approach. The EU has recognized the importance of the oceans and climate nexus and is promoting and developing ocean-related action to implement the Paris Agreement, including nature-based solutions.

### ***Investment in Nature-based solutions***

- The [Research and Innovation policy initiative on Nature-based solutions](#) triggered a portfolio of projects on nature-based solutions supported with €156 million (€200 million up to 2020) under the Current Framework Programme, Horizon 2020.
- The [Urban Agenda for the EU](#) includes a partnership on sustainable land use and nature-based solutions.
- The [Global Climate Change Alliance Flagship](#) since 2007 has supported 77 countries (37 LDCs, 39 SIDS) in implementing actions for tackling climate change (including disaster risk reduction), from which 72% are directly related to nature-based solutions.
- The EC is the major funding institution for an [Eco-DRR Programme](#) implemented by UNEP.
- The [Natural Capital Financing Facility](#), set up by the EC and the European Investment Bank with a budget of €185 million, provides loans and investments to projects delivering on natural capital, including adaptation to climate change.
- Since 2017, the EU has dedicated specific funding to restore marine and coastal ecosystems in different regions around the world, including the Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and the ACP countries for a total of more than €90 million.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Knowledge hubs and knowledge items***

OPPLA, the EU knowledge repository on NBS, Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services holds a [database of more than 100 NBS case studies](#). A knowledge repository on natural water retention measures has been developed with key stakeholders (<http://nwrn.eu>), as well as guidance on inter alia [finance instruments](#). A set of common indicators for assessing the impact of NBS in urban areas, [guidelines on how to finance NBS](#), innovative NBS business models framework are being developed through the on-going projects. The indicators address climate mitigation and adaptation (carbon emissions reduction, carbon sequestration, temperature decrease, flood peak and runoff reduction), water quality and availability, air quality, accessibility and connectivity of green infrastructures, as well as different social and economic issues (social cohesion, health, well-being, or creation of green jobs).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52019SC0104&from=EN>