
Nature-based Solutions in European and National Policy Frameworks

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Nature-based solutions (NBS) are increasingly being adopted as an effective tool to address urban challenges, as they provide a range of ecological, social and economic benefits. But, to what extent do current policy frameworks support or hinder their implementation? This report examines if and how the concept of NBS is addressed in select EU and Member State policies and funding instruments. In understanding the coverage and sectoral support of NBS as well as what types of NBS are most supported, both the EU and MS levels can better target their efforts to operationalise NBS and maximise their potential to address societal challenges and provide multiple benefits. The report was published within the Horizon 2020 project NATURVATION and is available for download.

The report utilised desk research and expert interviews to identify relevant EU and MS policy instruments (i.e. directives, strategies, programmes and financing instruments at EU and MS level) across a range of sectors and gather impressions about the national policy discourse and upcoming developments. Ultimately, 23 EU strategies, directives and dedicated funding instruments were selected alongside a range of German, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish, Hungarian and English instruments (reflecting the case study countries of the NATURVATION project). A targeted review explored how NBS are addressed in each instrument, including e.g. the explicit inclusion of NBS or directly related terminology or implicit references to the use of nature as a potential solution for addressing a set of identified societal challenges.

Results of this research indicate that while multiple MS and EU policy instruments explicitly acknowledge NBS-related concepts, they rarely contain quantitative and measurable targets relating to NBS deployment and quality. Relevant policies often require no or only voluntary action in this regard. The reviewed policy frameworks also largely neglect urban areas when considering NBS and - when included - focus heavily on maintaining and restoring existing green and blue areas as opposed to deploying NBS to create new green and blue spaces.

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Table of contents

1. Introduction
2. Aim and scope
3. Review of EU policy framework
 - 3.1. Selecting key policy instruments
 - 3.2. Developing and applying a framework to assess support for NBS
 - 3.3. EU analysis and findings
4. Review of Member State policy frameworks
 - 4.1. Methodological approach to gaining insights on MS support for NBS
 - 4.2. Assessment of national NBS discourses across reviewed Member States
 - 4.3. Member State analysis and findings
5. Comparative European and Member State analysis
6. Future perspectives and conclusions
 - 6.1. Planned developments and support for NBS
 - 6.2. Concluding remarks
- References
- Annex A: Template and key for EU policy framework review
- Annex B: Questionnaire for Member State phone interviews
- Annex C: MS policy instruments reviewed

Keywords

[Adaptation](#)
[Agriculture](#)
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[Cities](#)
[Climate](#)
[Coastal + Marine](#)
[EU](#)

[Evaluation](#)

[Governance](#)

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