



**Ecologic Institute**

Science and Policy  
for a Sustainable World

# **Mainstreaming Nature-based Solutions:**

Insights and practical examples from  
the Urban Governance Atlas and  
'Climate Adaptation Naturally' project

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**INTERLACE**  
RESTORING URBAN ECOSYSTEMS  
RECUPERANDO ECOSISTEMAS URBANOS

2020-2024



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## **Natürlich Klimaanpassung!**

**Naturbasierte Lösungen für Kommunen**

Nov 2022 - Mai 2026

**Umwelt  
Bundesamt**

# Why do NbS remain the exception rather than the status quo?

## Growing ambition – clear direction



### EU policy momentum

EU Biodiversity Strategy and Urban Nature Plans, EU Nature Restoration Regulation – Article 8, European Climate Resilience and Risk Management Framework, etc.



### Local strategies on the rise

Local strategies for climate adaptation, biodiversity enhancement and urban greening



### Abundance of urban NbS initiatives

Hundreds of projects and programs mapped in the Urban Nature Atlas ([una.city](http://una.city))



### Strong and growing evidence base

Documented benefits for climate resilience, biodiversity, health and well-being

## Persistent challenges



Administrative and sectoral silos



Fragmented responsibilities and policy coherence



Limited staff, skills and resources



Competing land-use priorities and short-term decision-making










Insufficient stakeholder inclusion and coordination



Scaling beyond pilots remains difficult

# What do municipalities tell us they need?

Municipal Need / Enabling Condition	What it means in practice	Examples of approaches and instruments
 <b>Clear political mandates</b>	Strong political leadership, formal commitments, and integration into city strategies and plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban Nature Plans; climate adaptation strategies; biodiversity strategies</li> <li>• Council resolutions; mayoral commitments</li> </ul>
 <b>Cross-departmental coordination</b>	Breaking down silos and aligning objectives across departments and governance levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdepartmental task forces; cross-sector working groups</li> <li>• Joint planning processes; metropolitan governance platforms</li> </ul>
 <b>Long-term financing</b>	Securing predictable resources for implementation, maintenance, and scaling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-year municipal budgets; dedicated green funds</li> <li>• Participatory budgeting; public-private partnerships; incentive schemes</li> </ul>
 <b>Capacity and staff resources</b>	Building institutional knowledge, technical expertise, and sufficient staffing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training programmes; peer-learning networks</li> <li>• Technical guidance documents; dedicated NbS coordinators or teams</li> </ul>
 <b>Practical implementation examples</b>	Learning from proven approaches and adapting them to local contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban Governance Atlas case studies; pilot projects</li> <li>• Demonstration sites; city-to-city exchange and mentoring</li> </ul>
 <b>Stakeholder engagement methods</b>	Involving communities and key actors throughout planning and implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design workshops; citizen assemblies</li> <li>• Participatory budgeting; community agreements; digital engagement platforms</li> </ul>
 <b>Monitoring and evaluation approaches</b>	Tracking progress, learning from experience, and adapting over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicator frameworks; citizen science programmes</li> <li>• Monitoring plans; impact assessments; adaptive management processes</li> </ul>

# Urban Governance Atlas (UGA)

A collection of more than **250 policy instruments** supporting nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration



## Welcome to the Urban Governance Atlas

A collection of more than 250 good practice policy instruments supporting nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration.

[Download our guidance on how to enter a policy instrument](#)

EN ES

## Aims to:

- **Foster ecologically coherent, inclusive planning** for urban ecosystem restoration and green space planning.
- **Inspire global action through good practice instruments, i.e.**
  - inclusive
  - sustainable
  - locally appropriate
  - upscalable/replicable
  - effective
  - support multifunctional NbS
- **Represent diverse contexts** (institutional/ geographic) – bottom up & top down.
- **Highlight lessons learned**



# Four types of policy instruments



## Knowledge, communication and innovation:

try to influence behavior by disseminating information to actors or involving actors in critical processes in innovative ways to inspire voluntary behavioral changes – overall: 12% of all instruments



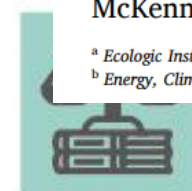
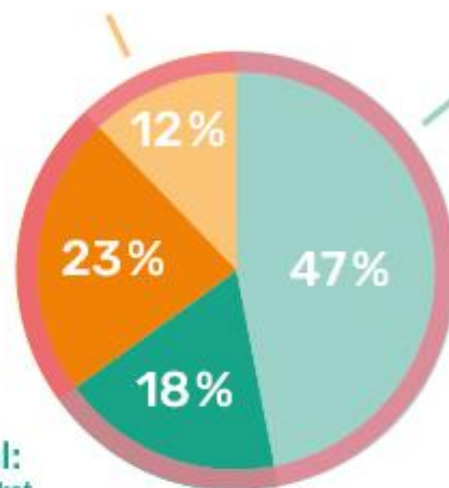
## Agreement-based or cooperative:

instruments in which the government and/or involved actors jointly and on a voluntary basis decide to behave in a certain way – overall: 23% of all instruments



## Economic and fiscal:

instruments that influence market mechanisms through for instance disincentives, incentives, payments, subsidies, financing mechanisms and market-based instruments – overall: 18% of all instruments



## Legislative, regulatory, strategic:

usually binding laws and regulations as well as strategies that set visions and strategic goals – overall: 47% of all instruments

## Transforming ambition into action to catalyse nature-based solutions: Insights from 250 good practice policy instruments

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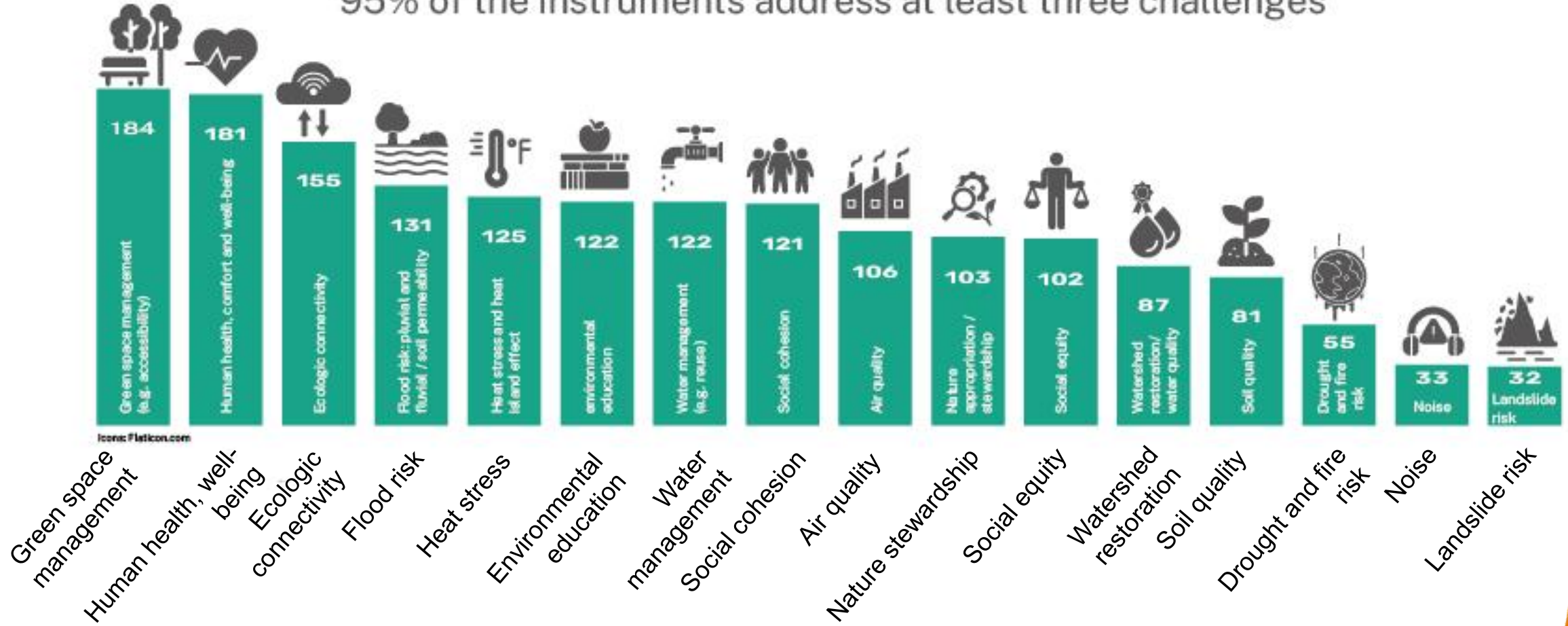
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# Challenges addressed

95% of the instruments address at least three challenges



# Four governance levers to facilitate NbS mainstreaming

## 1 Coordination

Aligning departments, sectors and governance levels to work together towards shared goals.

## 3 Learning

Monitoring, evaluating and adapting to improve effectiveness and respond to change.



## 2 Participation

Engaging communities, stakeholders and private actors in decision-making and implementation.

## 4 Institutionalisation

Embedding NbS in plans, mandates, budgets and procedures to ensure long-term implementation.

# Governance in practice: German examples from the Urban Governance Atlas

## 1 Coordination

Aligning departments, sectors and governance levels to work together towards shared goals.

### Emscher Future Master Plan



REGION:  
EU

COUNTRY:  
Germany

CITY:  
Dortmund, Essen, Duisburg,  
Gelsenkirchen

CITY POPULATION:  
3,500,000

TIMELINE:  
2006 to 2020

LAST UPDATED:  
26 Jul 2023

# Governance in practice: German examples from the Urban Governance Atlas

## 2 Participation

Engaging communities, stakeholders and private actors in decision-making and implementation.

### Berlin Neighborhood Management



### Berlin Rainwater Agency

### Citizen Platforms - Chemnitz

# Who is commonly excluded – and practical approaches to help



## 8 Principles for Inclusive NbS Co-Creation

- 1 Intentional Inclusion** • Deliberately identify and engage underrepresented and marginalized groups.
- 2 Trust Building** • Foster transparency, reciprocity, and long-term relationships.
- 3 Flexible Process Design** • Adapt engagement methods, timing, and formats to participants' needs.
- 4 Equity & Recognition** • Value different knowledge systems and recognize stakeholder contributions.
- 5 Method Diversity** • Use a mix of participatory approaches, tools, and communication formats.
- 6 Cultural Sensitivity** • Respect local contexts, values, traditions, and intergenerational perspectives.
- 7 Shared Expectations** • Establish clear objectives, roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.
- 8 Reflexivity & Learning** • Continuously monitor, reflect, adapt, and improve the process.

# Who is commonly excluded – and practical approaches to help



Stakeholder groups	Practical approaches from the report
<b>Youth &amp; children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Youth councils and advisory groups</li><li>• School-based co-design and engagement</li><li>• Creative and digital engagement methods</li></ul>
<b>Older adults</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessible venues and timing</li><li>• Targeted outreach and personal invitations</li><li>• Flexible and familiar participation formats</li></ul>
<b>Low-income communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compensation for time and costs</li><li>• Local meeting locations and convenient times</li><li>• Remove financial and logistical barriers to participation</li></ul>
<b>Migrants &amp; minority groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multilingual materials and translation</li><li>• Work with trusted intermediaries and community leaders</li><li>• Culturally appropriate engagement approaches</li></ul>
<b>People with disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Universal accessibility of venues and information</li><li>• Adapted communication formats (e.g., easy-to-read, sign language)</li><li>• Inclusive design of engagement processes and materials</li></ul>

# Governance in practice: German examples from the Urban Governance Atlas

## 3 Learning

Monitoring, evaluating and adapting to improve effectiveness and respond to change.

## Green roof strategy - Hamburg



REGION:	EU
COUNTRY:	Germany
CITY:	Hamburg
CITY POPULATION:	1,853,935
TIMELINE:	2014
LAST UPDATED:	26 Jul 2023

# Governance in practice: German examples from the Urban Governance Atlas

## 4 Institutionalisation

Embedding NbS in plans, mandates, budgets and procedures to ensure long-term implementation.

**Open Space Strategy 'Living Green City on the Waterfront' - Leipzig**

**Statute on the design of parking spaces - Chemnitz**

**Masterplan Parkbogen Ost - Leipzig**

**Greening Hannover - Hannover**

# Key takeaways for effective NbS governance





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# Thank you!

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