

From EU NBS Task Force Activities to “GoNaturePositive!”

Starting 2017, the European Commission initiated what would become a highly impactful agenda of Horizon Research and Innovation projects channelling extensive resources to enable active experimentation and piloting with Nature-based Solutions (NBS) at the local and regional level. The agenda has evolved to span not only the EU but also connects with other parts of the world. Today, way more than 20 large-scale projects, featuring more than 150 cities and a range of scientific institutions, companies, NGOs, etc., engaging in devising, implementing and evaluation the resulting activities. The programme has accumulated a rich, still evolving portfolio of concrete experience of engagement by cities and citizens with NBS.

To stimulate systematic learning and diffusion of lessons, six task forces were formed related to the initiative. By comparing results across projects under varying circumstances, these task forces draw conclusions what works/does not work on themes deemed of high importance for the success and impacts of NBS. Consider two of these in some detail:

- i) – Task force III: *Governance, Business Models and Financial Mechanisms*, promotes the systemic integration of NBS into sustainable urban and land planning and management, adopting a co-management, co-design, co-development and co-implementation; and creates new business opportunities, growth and jobs. The objective is to contribute to the development of a green economy, shifting public and private investments from conventional to nature-based or effective combinations of nature/grey solutions to societal challenges. As a particular element, NBEs play an important role in realising value streams of NBS by innovating in the development of marketable services, and/or so as to achieve sustainable value generation for local communities;
- ii) Task force VI: *Co-creation and Co-governance*, picking up on a wealth of ongoing efforts of relevance to the co-creation of various NBS, taking account of diverse community and stakeholder interests. A special theme, addressed by the URBiNAT project, concerns inclusion of disadvantaged groups and how to link NBS in support of healthy corridors countering fragmentation and the polarisation of cities¹.

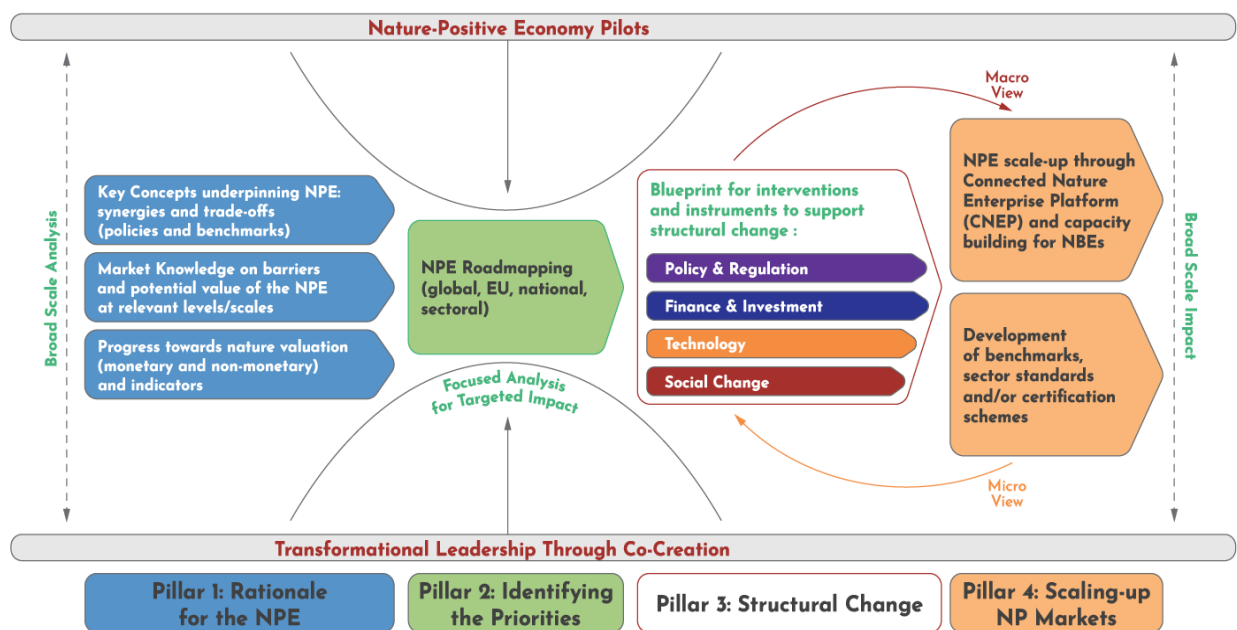
Apart from these two task forces, others cover communication, indicators and data management, and - as introduced later - implications for education. Following extensive engagement in the above, IKED represented the EU NBS task forces at COP28 in Sharm-El-Sheikh, in November 2022, coordinating and moderating panel sessions which features significant participation both on-site and on-line. Following, this event, IKED followed up with partners to arrange a Multi-stakeholder Forum in Davos on January 17, 2023, on “Revamping

¹ www.urbinat.eu, see also <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/dd7b9f43-9a33-11ee-b164-01aa75ed71a1> for relevant work pursued by Task Force VI.

of Green Investment”. Follow-up to that event is on-going in work to operationalise a framework for sharper definition and implementation of Impact Investment.

In parallel, IKED engaged with partners from NBS Task Force III on a new activity to pursue an integrated research and implementation agenda in support of a Nature-Positive Economy (NPE). The resulting EC-funded project project, GoNaturePositive!, started on January 1st, 2024 and is set to last for 4 years. As illustrated in Figure 1, the project is divided into two parts. As the basis, there is theoretical work, examining and concluding on ways forward in instituting transformational leadership in advancing towards a Nature-Positive Economy (NPE). On top of that, there is more practically oriented work focusing on NPE pilots and drawing lessons from the experience of those.

Figure 1: Conceptual Map, NPE



Source: GoNaturePositive! (2023)

thinking. It cannot be brought about by philanthropy or merely good intentions². There is a need though, of a genuine shift in corporate culture. For that, in turn, to happen, incentives and driving forces for the private sector must evolve decisively. The information issues that cloud what actions are taken, and are not taken, must be addressed. Competences and capacity-building must back up new awareness creation, behaviours, and manage social aspects, as well as investments and innovation.

What we will experience ahead critically comes down to the degree to which there will be a tangible matching of the conditions shaping access to technology and finance, the cost of capital, and access to supply chains, on the one hand, and what represents real impetus on sustainability, on the other hand.

² See, for instance, <https://genevasolutions.news/climate-environment/wwf-chief-philanthropy-won-t-be-enough-to-reverse-biodiversity-loss>