



NATMed

Policy recommendations

FOR POLICY MAKERS AT EU LEVEL

STRATEGIC DESIGN AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Promote **Full-Water Cycle Nature-based Solutions (FWC-NbS) frameworks** as practical implementation tools supporting EU water, climate adaptation, biodiversity, and nature restoration objectives.

Encourage or require the use of structured implementation roadmaps in EU-funded NbS projects to **support transition from design to long-term operation and maintenance**.

Encourage or require the **use of recognised NbS standards** in EU-funded NbS projects to ensure quality, comparability, and credibility.

Support **harmonised approaches for diagnosing, designing, and implementing NbS** to improve transferability and comparability across regions.

Strengthen NbS policy frameworks by **complementing strategic ambitions with operational decision-support tools that provide guidance on technical specifications, governance arrangements, maintenance requirements and economic feasibility**, supporting local authorities and practitioners, particularly in smaller municipalities with limited technical capacity, in selecting and designing appropriate NbS options.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Require **NbS-related policies, programmes, and funding instruments to be informed by systematic identification of societal challenges and their underlying drivers**, ensuring that interventions address root causes rather than symptoms and are tailored to specific territorial contexts.

Support the documentation and dissemination of **governance practices and stakeholder engagement outcomes to enable replication and scaling-up**.

Encourage **NbS governance frameworks that foster long-term community ownership, entrepreneurship and institutional collaboration** beyond project lifetimes.

Promote structured **participatory governance approaches**, including stakeholder mapping, co-design, and multi-sectoral collaboration, as standard requirements for NbS-supported initiatives.

SYNERGIES AND CROSS-SECTOR INTEGRATION

Promote **NbS approaches that explicitly support policy coherence** across water, biodiversity, climate adaptation and agricultural policies, including the Water Framework Directive, EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Common Agricultural Policy.

Promote the **integration of NbS into EU green and blue infrastructure planning** to enhance ecological connectivity across landscapes and borders.

Support **cross-project and cross-sector collaboration platforms** to facilitate replication, shared monitoring and scaling of synergistic NbS approaches.

Encourage Natura 2000 management plans and conservation measures under the Birds and Habitats Directives to **systematically integrate NbS that deliver biodiversity conservation together with water management and climate adaptation benefits**, supported by participatory governance and monitoring frameworks.

Encourage the implementation of the **Nitrates Directive to be complemented by NbS that address diffuse agricultural pollution at landscape scale**, supported by integrated governance, CAP instruments and outcome-oriented monitoring frameworks.

ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Promote **decision-support approaches that compare NbS with conventional alternatives** to support informed and evidence-based NbS uptake.

Promote the systematic **inclusion of indirect socio-economic, environmental and ecosystem service benefits in NbS economic assessments**.

Encourage **transparent documentation and sharing of NbS economic evidence** to build confidence and support mainstreaming.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Introduce **mandatory and harmonised NbS monitoring frameworks within EU water-related policies and EU-funded initiatives, complementing grey infrastructure metrics and capturing full water-cycle, biodiversity and socio-economic impacts** to support comparability, learning and cross-border cooperation.

Encourage the **integration of NbS monitoring results into European policy reporting frameworks** (for example, in frameworks related to biodiversity, climate adaptation, habitat, soil etc.).

RISK ANALYSIS AND BALANCING TRADE-OFFS

Strengthen EU NbS-related policy frameworks by requiring **systematic risk and trade-off analysis as a condition for funding and approval**, complementing existing environmental safeguards.

Promote **harmonised approaches to identifying, monitoring and managing NbS risks and trade-offs** across EU-funded initiatives and relevant EU policies, including water, biodiversity, climate adaptation and agricultural frameworks, to support learning, comparability and coherent implementation.

TENDERING AND PROCUREMENT

Support the **evolution of EU public procurement frameworks to better enable NbS**, including flexibility for innovation, adaptive management and ecological performance criteria.

Promote **standardised evaluation frameworks for NbS procurement** to support comparability, learning and replication across EU-funded projects.

Encourage **alignment of NbS procurement with EU policy objectives on biodiversity, climate adaptation, water management and sustainable agriculture**, including the Common Agricultural Policy.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION (M&O)

Encourage **alignment of NbS M&O practices with EU water, biodiversity and agricultural policies**, including long-term monitoring and risk prevention obligations.

Strengthen EU NbS-related policy frameworks by **explicitly recognising Maintenance and Operation as a critical condition for long-term effectiveness and resilience**.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

Promote **communication and dissemination as a core pillar of NbS mainstreaming** within EU-funded initiatives, alongside technical implementation.

Encourage the systematic **sharing of NbS results, monitoring outcomes and lessons learnt** through EU platforms and networks.

Promote inclusive and ethical communication approaches that ensure **access to information for vulnerable groups and support informed participation**.

MAINSTREAMING AND POLICY UPTAKE

Promote the use of **decision-support systems to operationalise the integration of NbS into river basin management plans, flood risk management plans, climate adaptation strategies and ecosystem restoration planning**, ensuring consistency with EU water, climate and biodiversity policies.

Use **evidence from NbS demonstration projects to inform the operationalisation of EU water, climate adaptation, biodiversity and agricultural policies**.

Strengthen EU policy frameworks by **addressing regulatory and governance gaps identified through NbS implementation experience**.

Support **structured policy impact strategies within EU-funded NbS projects** to ensure systematic engagement with policy makers throughout the project lifecycle.

Encourage the use of **EU platforms and networks** to disseminate policy-relevant NbS evidence and lessons learned.

Encourage **NbS projects to act as policy innovation pilots**, informing the development of new instruments such as water reuse strategies, payment for ecosystem services and carbon sequestration schemes.



Background and further information

The recommendations presented in this policy brief are based on the evidence and experience generated by the NATMed project, which designed, implemented and monitored Full Water-Cycle Nature-based Solutions across five Mediterranean case studies in Spain, Greece, Italy, Türkiye and Algeria.

Building on real-world interventions, harmonised monitoring frameworks and validation against the IUCN Global Standard for NbS, NATMed translated scientific findings, technical implementation lessons and stakeholder engagement processes into concrete, actionable guidance for decision-makers.

The full set of structured recommendations, covering strategic design, governance, financing, monitoring, risk management, procurement, maintenance and mainstreaming at local, national and EU levels, is available in Deliverable “D5.6 Policy Guidelines” on the project website <https://natmed-project.eu>



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Nature-based Solutions on existing infrastructures for resilient Water Management in the Mediterranean



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