



NATMed

Policy recommendations

FOR POLICY MAKERS AT LOCAL LEVEL

STRATEGIC DESIGN AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Base NbS planning on **documented local evidence**, including ecological status and socio-economic drivers.

Require NbS projects to establish a clear and documented **biodiversity and ecosystem baseline** covering both the intervention site and the surrounding landscape.

Introduce structured implementation roadmaps to guide NbS projects through **design, tendering, construction, operation, and maintenance phases**.

Ensure NbS strategies include **measurable outcomes** and allow for **adaptive adjustments** during implementation.

Require NbS projects to **link proposed actions to expected well-being and biodiversity outcomes**.

Systematically identify **societal challenges and their drivers** through participatory, place-based processes before designing NbS interventions.

Require NbS selection processes to be based on **structured and transparent comparison of alternative solutions**, including nature-based and conventional options.

Ensure that NbS interventions are designed, implemented and managed through integrated approaches that jointly **address water-related objectives, biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, governance arrangements, economic viability and the management of trade-offs**.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Institutionalise **stakeholder involvement throughout the NbS lifecycle, from diagnosis and co-design to operation and maintenance**.

Ensure that the **identification of societal challenges** informing NbS design is based on participatory processes and local stakeholder input.

Ensure **inclusive participation of local communities, vulnerable groups, and key economic sectors** throughout NbS design, implementation, and monitoring.

Ensure that **risk identification and mitigation measures are co-designed** with stakeholders, particularly those most exposed or vulnerable.





SYNERGIES AND CROSS-SECTOR INTEGRATION

Require NbS strategies to explicitly identify and manage **interactions between environmental, social and economic systems**, including impacts on livelihoods and productive activities.

Require systematic **mapping of existing projects, sectors and initiatives** to identify synergies and avoid conflicts when implementing NbS.

Promote **stakeholder-led processes to co-design synergies between NbS and local economic activities**, including agriculture, tourism and circular economy initiatives.

ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Require NbS projects to **assess economic feasibility using cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit approaches** that account for both direct and indirect benefits over the medium and long term.

Encourage the **identification of beneficiaries and economic co-benefits of NbS** to support local acceptance and long-term sustainability.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Require all locally implemented NbS projects to include a formal **Monitoring and Evaluation plan** aligned with the project's objectives and local policy priorities.

Establish **clear ecological and socio-economic baselines** and use **Key Performance Indicators throughout the full lifecycle of NbS interventions** to support adaptive management and detect potential adverse effects.

Ensure transparent communication of monitoring results and **involve local stakeholders in monitoring activities**.

RISK ANALYSIS AND BALANCING TRADE-OFFS

Require NbS projects to conduct a **structured risk and trade-off analysis from the design phase**, addressing social, economic, and environmental interactions within and beyond the intervention area.

Require NbS projects to develop and regularly update a **Risk Management Plan, including safeguards, thresholds, contingency measures, and links to monitoring indicators**.

Ensure that **risk identification and mitigation measures are co-designed with stakeholders and coordinated with authorities** in other potentially affected areas.

TENDERING AND PROCUREMENT

Adapt public procurement procedures to explicitly accommodate NbS, including ecological performance, co-benefits and adaptive management criteria alongside cost considerations.

Require early regulatory screening and preliminary site investigations to reduce uncertainty and delays in NbS tendering processes.

Integrate operation and maintenance requirements, including flexibility for ecological adaptation, into NbS tender specifications.

Use NbS tendering processes to stimulate local economic development and green jobs, particularly among SMEs and local contractors.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION

Require NbS projects to develop a Maintenance and Operation (M&O) plan covering the full lifecycle of the intervention from the early design phase.

Integrate M&O responsibilities into local administrative structures to ensure continuity beyond project lifetimes.

Ensure that M&O plans are linked to continuous monitoring and adaptive management mechanisms.

Promote the use of local available plant species, material and workforce to enhance operability, maintenance efficiency, and regional economic benefits.

Promote stakeholder involvement, including local administrations and users, in long-term M&O arrangements to increase acceptance and resilience.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

Require NbS projects to develop a Communication and Dissemination Plan from the outset, covering the full project lifecycle from design to monitoring.

Ensure that NbS communication activities clearly explain local societal challenges, their drivers and the rationale for NbS in accessible and locally appropriate formats.

Use communication activities to transparently present both benefits and challenges of NbS interventions, including trade-offs and risks.

Promote on-site visits, workshops and local dissemination activities to support learning, awareness, and long-term ownership of the NbS interventions.

MAINSTREAMING AND POLICY UPTAKE

Use NbS pilot projects as policy learning tools to inform the revision or development of local environmental, water and climate policies.

Ensure continuity of NbS implementation and governance beyond project lifetimes by embedding responsibilities within permanent local administrative structures.

Facilitate direct interaction between policy makers and NbS sites through site visits, demonstrations and participatory events.



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>



NATMed

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



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