

HORIZON2020

Clustering Action

**TRANSFORMING CITIES, ENHANCING
WELLBEING: INNOVATING WITH NATURE-
BASED SOLUTIONS**

UNIVERSITY OF A CORUNA (SPAIN),

16-18 MAY 2018



ADDRESSING SOCIETAL CHALLENGES THROUGH NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

Cities have become a point of intersection of problems characterized by complexity and uncertainty, among which are the negative effects of climate change, increasing physical and psychological health problems, inequality, alienation, dwindling economic opportunities for many, social fragmentation and conflict. At the same time, they have been hailed as sites of experimentation and direct democracy, and as constituting the most appropriate scale for co-production of solutions (Garcia-Mira & Dumitru, 2014). Transforming cities into vibrant, sustainable and resilient living places has become a key global priority, reflected in numerous policy documents, city-to-city agreements, and calls for design and implementation of innovative solutions to tackle multiple problems.

Against this background, nature-based solutions have been proposed as a unifying concept that could capture both the end goals and the pathways or methods through which to support transitions to vibrant, healthy, resilient and sustainable communities in urban environments. Nature-based solutions have been defined as “actions which are inspired by, supported by or copied from nature” (EC, 2015) and have recently emerged as one of the main policy drivers for transitioning cities since these fulfill multiple, simultaneous objectives.

Many cities in Europe are living labs of experimentation with nature-based solutions to multiple societal problems. Several H2020 European projects have undertaken the complex task of implementing and assessing the effects of these types of solutions on societal wellbeing and risk resilience.

This H2020 Clustering Action is a joint initiative of [Connecting Nature](#) and the coordination platform [Think Nature](#), and is co-organized by the University of A Coruña (Spain), in collaboration with the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions and the City of A Coruña.



The event will bring together representatives from the European Commission, the European Environmental Agency and other international institutions such as UNEP or the European Investment Bank. Five large scale research projects, Connecting Nature, Think Nature, [Urban GreenUP](#), [GROW GREEN](#) and [UNALAB](#), will be present. Pioneer cities, public institutions, green businesses, financial institutions, civil society, media and culture organisations and researchers will come together for a lively debate on a diversity of urban experiments and to share the lessons learnt.

The Clustering Action will focus on 3 main themes:

- **Sustainable Urbanization in Cities and Restoration of Degraded Ecosystems.** Critically reviewing the lessons learnt from the practical implementation of nature based solutions in cities and distilling what is best practice in achieving more liveable and resilient cities through nature-based solutions.
- **Robust assessment of NBS impacts: creating the evidence base to inform urban policy-making.** How the latest developments on monitoring, evaluating and data gathering can contribute to make the evidence on the comparative advantage of these interventions stronger.
- **Enhancing innovation potential through new governance and funding models for NBS.** Focusing more on the management side of nature-based solutions, and the role these new approaches may play in upscaling the multiple benefits of this type of interventions.

The event will adopt the highly dynamic and interactive format of a pressure cooker, with guiding questions and specific outcomes prepared for each day aimed at maximising learning and exchange among participants.

Discussions, sharing of experiences and showcasing activities will have an equal share in this event, which will gather together leading experts and practitioners with a view to systematise evidence on how the multifunctionality of NBS can be used to improve our cities' liveability in face of climate change. In parallel a fair will be organised where cities and other green businesses and initiatives will be invited to present their NBS experiences publicly.

1.1 Specific objectives

The Clustering Action adopts a quintuple helix approach to creating an exciting learning forum among European stakeholders, and builds on the current nature-based solutions EU programme and outcomes in order to:

- Present experiences, projects and successful NBS initiatives.
- Facilitate the collection and sharing of knowledge on NBS in relation to a set priority areas.
- Define barriers (scientific, technical, policy, legal, organizational, social and economic) for NBS
- Identify relevant NBS and critically assess their potential (real life examples) in urban transitions towards sustainability.
- Co-produce with lead international stakeholders an impact assessment framework to monitor the performance of NBS, so that incremental knowledge is guaranteed and feedback used to improve future interventions.
- Explore the scope for replication and/or scale up of NBS projects, including synergies and tradeoffs between different dimensions of their impact
- Develop and plan deployment of specific measures that maximise cost effectiveness and co-benefits.
- Exploring what kind of new business and investment models are necessary for the large scale deployment of NBS.



The Clustering Action will provide the latest information on NBS and priorities for forward work, development from different angles and working sessions on best practices, addressing the following main questions:

- **What are the main lessons learnt on how NBS may contribute to sustainable urbanisation and restoration of degraded ecosystems?**
- **How improving environmental quality in cities benefits social cohesion, wellbeing and overall city liveability?**
- **What are the best governance models for favouring NBS foster networking among different stakeholder groups in city transformation and risk mitigation?**
- **How can financing models and initiatives contribute to urban sustainability and citizens' wellbeing?**
- **How can NBS foster the emergence of new bussiness models?**
- **What are the most promising indicators for capturing trade-offs and synergies among different dimensions of impact from NBS?**
- **How can the reference framework for NBS be best used for continuously feeding back into performance and design improvement measures?**
- **What is best practice in long term and cost-effective assessment of the performance of NBSso that legacy can be ensured?**
- **What are the best data management strategies for knowledge exchange and systematising evidence on NBS performance?**
- **How can this indicator framework capture the variations in the impact for the different stages of development of NBS and different temporal and geographical scales?**

1.2 For whom?

The event will bring together key actors (e.g. business representatives and market actors, scientists and experts, policy makers and end users such as municipalities, local and regional authorities) from across the EU and from overseas. Over 150 delegates from the Member States, the UNEP, EEA and the European Commission are expected to attend.

2. Format

The Clustering Action will offer a programme of activities following a pressure cooker format; allowing dialogue, constructive critique and self-reflection. The action is a joint effort of 5 different H2020 Projects, organised by Think Nature and the University of A Coruna, partner in the Connecting Nature project.

This landmark event will combine:

- **Inspirational talks by lead experts in the study and implementation of Nature Based Solutions.**
- **Parallel Interactive working sessions around the design and impact of NBS, which will provide a platform to discuss technical and more detailed aspects of NBS application.**
- **A NBS Innovators-Fair where pioneer cities, SME's and other stakeholders will showcase their successful experiences and lessons learnt regarding the implementation of NBS.**
- **An early stage career workshop, where young researchers will share their work in the NBS field.**
- **H2020 NBS task force working meetings where key lessons and way forward agendas will be shared.**
- **Wrap-up plenary sessions where the main points and lessons raised each day will be summarised and gathered together under a “Roadmap for Research and Action”format.**
- **An excursion to see local Nature Based Solutions, hosted by the A Coruña City Hall and other optional free time-organised leisure activities.**

3. Expected Outcomes:

The main conclusions from the 2018's Clustering Action "Transforming cities, enhancing wellbeing: innovating with nature-based solutions" will be elaborated to take the form of a "Roadmap for Research and Action on establishing a reference framework for NBS in addressing social challenges". This document, will be made publicly available and will mark a milestone in the streamlining of efforts from both cities, policymakers and academics for accelerating transitions to more vibrant cities and sustainable cities in Europe and beyond.

Also, and based on the main discussions regarding the NBS impact evaluation, a **white paper** will be produced offering an overview of the current developments in the NBS field, identifying new tools and opportunities for long term monitoring of NBS and showing the added value of it, all illustrated with real life examples and aimed at informing the EU urban planning & sustainability policies.

In all, participants will find in this Clustering Action:

- **Why Nature Based Solutions? A Forum for the reflective sharing of experiences.** Meet your peers and showcase your start-ups and initiatives. Share what works and what does not for NBS. Learn from good practices demonstrated across the EU and worldwide, but also from failures, targeting new areas of interest and collecting open questions.
- **Towards a reference framework for NBS: best ways to monitor and evaluate their effects.** Distilling lessons learnt on impact evaluation of NBS. Identify synergies and ways of working together to exchange information on the performance of your NBS exemplars, allowing comparisons and advancing the evidence on them.
- **Where are we headed? Defining a roadmap with a view to ensure NBS meet social needs.** Meet and network with other relevant stakeholders in the field to discover how the design, implementation and maintenance of NBS can be adjusted to address specific challenges at different geographical and temporal scales. Exploring the potential for its application in accountability and transparency strategies.
- **A Bottom-up approach to inform policies.** Be part of a key EU policy development (also local and regional policy) and feed into concrete recommendations for European and international action regarding NBS and interventions alike.

**PLEASE SAVE THE DATE! 16-18TH
MAY!**

**LOOKING FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO THIS EXCITING
EVENT IN A CORUÑA NEXT MAY**

Want to find out more on the location? Please click [here](#)