



**Proposal for Europe-INBO 2019 workshop on
“Integration of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) into Water Framework Directive
Programmes of Measures (PoMs)”**

Governance, implementation, assessment”

Concept note

June 2019 – V3

Context and Objectives

Nature based solutions (NBS) are trending as they simultaneously have the capacity to restore degraded ecosystems, to improve society resilience and risk management, to mitigate climate change impacts, and to offer solutions for sustainable land management and planning. However, the potential of NBS for water management should not be undervalued: they constitute a key towards better integration and linkages between biodiversity and water management policies, by providing cross-sectoral and practical solutions.

They are defined by IUCN as “*actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits*”.

The Convention on Biological Diversity from 1992 and its most recent development with the Aichi targets is also an incentive towards restoring ecosystems. At the same time, the EU Research and Innovation policy agenda on Nature-Based Solutions and Re-Naturing Cities aims to position the EU as leader in ‘Innovating with nature’ for more sustainable and resilient societies. In this context, it defines nature-based solutions to societal challenges as *solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience*. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions.

NBS can take very diverse forms, from a better use or protection of existing natural ecosystems to the design and management of new ecosystems. They need to be considered at a larger scale than local individual measures in a systemic approach, i.e. to consider the natural cycles including River Basins. They also constitute of changes in land use and activities aiming to enhance natural features of already existing practices. In the frame of water management, NBS include for instance restoration of wetlands, reconnection of rivers to floodplain, but also replacement of urbanised area by permeable pavements. In Europe NBS for water have been further elaborated with the support of DG Environment in a concept called Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM, see nwrms.eu) with a conceptual framework and benefit matrices allowing better define the different types of possible solutions.

However, the multiple effects and co-benefits of integrated NBS still lack clear quantification of efficiency to achieve intended results. In fact, there's a general consensus on the lack of knowledge on the benefits: restore natural functions, provide ecosystem services¹ and meet policy objectives.

NBS are also misunderstood and/or poorly assessed due to the fact many stakeholders (city planners, water managers, farmers, scientists) though familiar now with such measures still work in silos and not in an integrated and articulated manner. What is also clearly at stake is the necessity to plan, deploy and assess NBS holistically (set of measures or integrated NBS) and not individually. Furthermore, the financial mechanisms to share cost of implementation between all beneficiaries are not in place. A form of governance associating all stakeholders involved for efficient management is still lacking as well.

Nevertheless, both the potentialities and contributions that NBS could provide towards reaching the objectives required by the Water Framework Directive (and Floods Directive) but also the necessity of integrated approach advocate for a deeper connection and integration with the River Basin Management Plans and their Programmes of measures.

In this context of emerging tendencies and knowledge development on NBS and continuing the preparation of the third generation of RBMPs, it is proposed to organize a workshop on **"Integration of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) into Water Framework Directive Programmes of Measures (PoMs)"** in the frame of the next conference of the Euro-INBO (June 2019, Finland).

The objective of this workshop is to compare practices and practical experiences of Member States and basin organizations on dealing with the implementation of NBS and its integration into water resources management, flood risk, ecosystems and water quality and promote the exchange of questions and solutions in this domain.

¹ Benefits for human being

Contents

The workshop will offer a reflection and exchange of experiences on different themes with a view to expressing what is working and what is more difficult, based on these experiences.

After an introduction part that will set-up the scene in the EU and Member States in designing and implementing NBS, two themes will be investigated. For each theme, two types of exchanges will be proposed:

-in a first step, some MS will present their own experience and examples on the subject;

-in a second step, round tables will allow participants to exchange and share opinions and experiences on different questions.

The main themes and questions that are proposed to be investigated during the workshop would be, from a RBD authorities and managers point of view, as presented below.

- **Theme 1: Concrete implementation and governance**

Concrete implementation of NBS implies obviously sound technical choices but also necessary strategies and measures which involve various stakeholders, including the local authorities, landowners, citizens. It may also require a territorial approach which may be associated with some other policies.

This work session aims to exchange and compare practices and practical experiences of Member States and basin organizations, and raise strengths and weaknesses of actions – in relation to local contexts - implemented in European countries in terms of operational realization of NBS, and especially of:

- Governance:
 - a) Stakeholders involvement: who is involved in the strategy (development or implementation) and how? Efficiency of the methods used to involve stakeholders and identification of success factors? What are the drivers and barriers which ensure actors mobilization and the success of NBS?
 - b) Territorial approach mobilised to identify suitable NBS (possibly included in or including water bodies good status objectives): strengths, key factors of efficiency
- Which tools (administrative, financial, organizational, legal) and incentives on a voluntary basis and/or on administrative requirements basis are available to develop NBS and facilitate stakeholders involvement?

- **Theme 2: Objectives, assessment and effectiveness of NBS for their integration into Programme of measures**

This work session aims to exchange and compare practices and practical experiences of Member States and basin organizations for effective integration of Nature Based Solutions into RBMPs and Programme of measures.

When seeking this integration a particular attention will be paid to the following topics:

- What are the necessary synergies for integration of NBS strategy in river basin approaches;
 - consideration of the basin-wide impact (local and downstream up to transitional and coastal waters)
 - Contribution to WFD objectives and requirements in terms of Biological Quality Element and ecological status, chemical quality elements and chemical status
- How to have knowledge on the assessment and efficiency of NBS while browsing the potential measures to be included in the PoMs ?
- Which tools (administrative, financial, organizational, legal) from the WFD and FD implementation could directly benefit to the implementation of NBS ?

Participants

The contents of the workshop will not be too scientific nor technically focused as the INBO's audience is made of a variety of profiles, such as river basin policy makers and managers.

Thus the suitable profiles for this workshop are those of "generalist field managers", belonging to WFD competent authorities or basin organizations and members of the Europe-INBO network, involved in water management planning or decision making process. No high level technical profile is required given that the exchanges are not sought to be at a too technical level. Participants of this workshop would be the usual participants of the Europe-INBO's conferences as this workshop would be fully part of the conference agenda.

For any further information or expression of interests, please send an email to:

NBS@riob.org