biodiversa+
European Biodiversity Partnership

EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP

2024-2025 Call for proposals

BiodivTransform project catalogue

Biodiversity and Transformative Change

Co-funded by
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European Biodiversity Partnership

Biodiversa+

Biodiversa+, the European Biodiversity Partnership, supports excellent research on biodiversity with an impact for policy and society. Connecting science, policy and practice for transformative change, Biodiversa+ is part of the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 that aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. Co-funded by the European Commission, Biodiversa+ gathers partners from research funding and programming, and environmental policy actors in European and associated countries to work on 5 main objectives:

1. Plan and support research and innovation on biodiversity through a shared strategy, annual joint calls for research projects and capacity building activities
2. Set up a network of harmonised schemes to improve monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystem services across Europe
3. Contribute to high-end knowledge for deploying Nature-based Solutions and valuation of biodiversity in the private sector
4. Ensure efficient science-based support for policymaking and implementation in Europe
5. Strengthen the relevance and impact of pan-European research on biodiversity in a global context

More information at: www.biodiversa.eu

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The BiodivTransform partners

1. Austrian Science Fund, AUSTRIA
2. Belgian Science Policy Office, BELGIUM
3. The Fund for Scientific Research - Wallonia, BELGIUM
4. The Research Foundation - Flanders, BELGIUM
5. Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, BRAZIL
6. Brazilian National Council of State Funding Agencies, BRAZIL
7. Bulgarian National Science Fund, BULGARIA
8. Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, CZECH REPUBLIC
9. Innovation Fund Denmark, DENMARK
10. Estonian Research Council, ESTONIA
11. The Faroese Research Council, THE FAROE ISLANDS
12. Research Council of Finland, FINLAND
13. French National Research Agency, FRANCE
14. German Research Foundation, GERMANY
15. VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH (on behalf of BMBF), GERMANY
16. National Research, Development and Innovation Office, HUNGARY
17. Icelandic Centre for Research, ICELAND
18. Environmental Protection Agency, IRELAND
19. Ministry of Environmental Protection, ISRAEL
20. Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen, ITALY
21. Ministry of Universities and Research, ITALY
22. Latvian Council of Science, LATVIA
23. Research Council of Lithuania, LITHUANIA
24. National Agency for Research and Development, MOLDOVA
25. Dutch Research Council, THE NETHERLANDS
26. Research Council of Norway, NORWAY
27. National Science Centre, POLAND
28. Regional Science and Technology Fund, Azores, PORTUGAL
29. Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding, ROMANIA
30. Slovak Academy of Sciences, SLOVAKIA
31. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, SLOVENIA
32. Department of Science and Innovation, SOUTH AFRICA
33. Centre for Technological Development and Innovation, SPAIN
34. Spanish Biodiversity Foundation, SPAIN
35. Spanish State Research Agency, SPAIN
36. Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning, SWEDEN
37. Swiss National Science Foundation, SWITZERLAND
38. National Science and Technology Council, TAIWAN
39. Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, TUNISIA
40. Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye, TÜRKIYE

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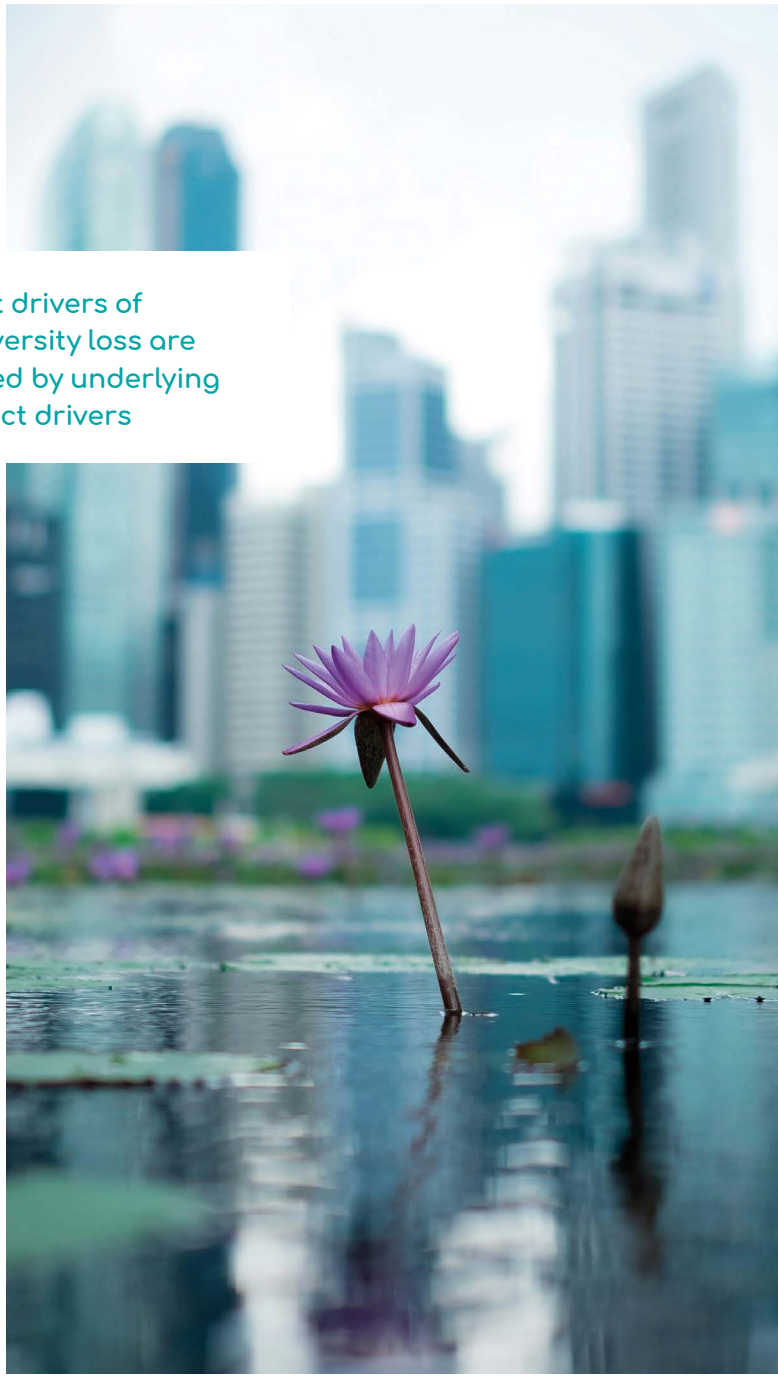

Humanity is currently facing the interlinked global polycrises of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution. Biodiversity underpins human well-being and life-supporting systems, many of which are now at risk (IPBES 2019, IPBES 2022). The polycrises are directly driven by anthropogenic pressures such as changes in land and sea use, overexploitation of wild species and the spread of invasive alien species, and they interact and reinforce one another, amplifying their overall impacts (IPBES 2019). These direct drivers are shaped by underlying indirect drivers, such as production and consumption patterns, economic growth imperatives, resource extraction pathways and unsustainable practices in agriculture, forestry and energy systems (UNEP 2021). Addressing these shared root causes is therefore essential to overcoming the polycrises and achieving long-term sustainability.

Direct drivers of biodiversity loss are shaped by underlying indirect drivers

Significant knowledge gaps remain concerning society and its interdependence with biodiversity, and even where evidence-based solutions exist, they are frequently not reflected in policy and decision-making (IPBES 2019). Moreover, as observed also in the context of climate change and pollution, many current policies, plans and actions aiming at mitigating challenges related to biodiversity and ecosystems have proven ineffective or even counter-productive, resulting in further environmental damage or exacerbation of socio-economic disparities and injustices that themselves intensify key drivers of biodiversity loss (Chan *et al.* 2007, Koplow and Steenblik 2022).

Transformative change should raise ambition, mobilise new agents of change, and enable integrated action

As a consequence, there is growing recognition of an urgent need for rapid, coordinated and large-scale transformative change (CBD 2022; European Commission 2021; IPBES 2019). Such change must account for the environmental, social (including cultural and behavioural), economic, political, health and justice dimensions of sustainability. Integrating pluralistic values and general principles – such as human rights, inter- and intragenerational justice, anti-discrimination and personal and political freedom – into how biodiversity is conceptualised and represented is necessary for research, decision-making, governance and programme design. This requires approaches that enable inclusive deliberation, recognise the social and cultural complexity of valuing nature (i.e., biocultural diversity), integrate the gender dimension and learn from as well as incorporate Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' knowledge and visions (Pascual *et al.* 2021). Holistic approaches that integrate goals across societal sectors are essential for identifying synergies and managing trade-offs between policies and projects at local, national, regional and global levels. They are also key to strengthening collaboration between research communities, decision-makers and social justice initiatives. Reversing biodiversity loss requires rapid, decisive and integrated action (Leadley *et al.* 2022).

Holistic, cross-sector approaches are essential

Transformative change toward a just and sustainable world is urgent, necessary and challenging, yet achievable. The IPBES Transformative Change Assessment provides authoritative and target-oriented guidance and principles to support this transition (IPBES 2024). IPBES defines transformative change as 'fundamental system-wide reorganisation across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values needed for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity' (IPBES 2019). This definition explicitly moves beyond incremental adjustments or the scaling-up of business-as-usual approaches, instead targeting root causes and structural drivers of change. Transformative change should raise ambition, mobilise new agents of change and enable integrated action across biodiversity, climate and environmental objectives, while ensuring equitable and sustainable societal outcomes. Such integrated action should recognise rights and responsibilities, incorporate a plurality of values, paradigms and knowledge systems in decision-making and avoid or mitigate perceived trade-offs between environmental crises (Pörtner *et al.* 2023). Drawing on conclusions from IPBES, UNEP, the European Environment Agency and others, it is therefore crucial to identify how levers for transformative change can be operationalised to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, translating ambition into concrete actions, targets and pathways that deliver positive outcomes for both biodiversity and society (Abson *et al.* 2017; Bulkeley *et al.* 2020; CBD 2022; Chan *et al.* 2020; European Commission 2021).

BiodivTransform will deepen our understanding of trade-offs and links between global polycrises

In September 2024, Biodiversa+, the European Biodiversity Partnership, launched the BiodivTransform Call, inviting proposals for three-year research projects. The call supports interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral research and innovation that will deepen our understanding of the trade-offs and links between the global crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, and contribute actionable knowledge on the transformation processes needed to safeguard biodiversity by mitigating threats and halting – or even reversing – its decline and the decline in the benefits it provides to people.

The response to the call was remarkable, receiving 269 pre-proposals and 105 eligible full proposals. These were rigorously evaluated by an independent Evaluation Committee, which carefully assessed and ranked the submissions. Based on this ranking, the Biodiversa+ Call Steering Committee, composed of all participating funding organisations, selected 35 research projects for funding. This represents a major investment of more than €40 million, including contributions from the European Commission. The funded projects demonstrate strong scientific excellence and address urgent scientific and societal challenges. They bring together a diversity of disciplines and actively engage a wide range of stakeholders.

€40 million will fund 35 projects selected from 269 proposals

We congratulate the winning consortia for the excellent quality of their proposals and for their commitment to provide tools and knowledge for efficient implementation of necessary nature-positive transformation processes in our societies and economies.

Our sincere thanks go to the evaluation panel members and the external reviewers who provided their expertise to ensure a high-quality evaluation process. We also express our gratitude to the ministries and funding agencies that participated in this call. Their efforts and contributions allowed a smooth implementation of the call and the funding of a high number of top-ranked proposals. Furthermore, we thank the European Commission for continuous support, especially those colleagues that provided valuable input to the call development.

This catalogue gives insight on the call process, from the call development to the selection of proposals and their follow-up. It also provides an overview of the submitted proposals and a short description of each of the 35 projects selected for funding.

We wish you a pleasant reading!

Magnus Tannerfeldt
Biodiversa+ Co-Chair

Rainer Sodtke
Biodiversa+ Co-Chair

Ron Winkler
Biodiversa+ Co-Chair

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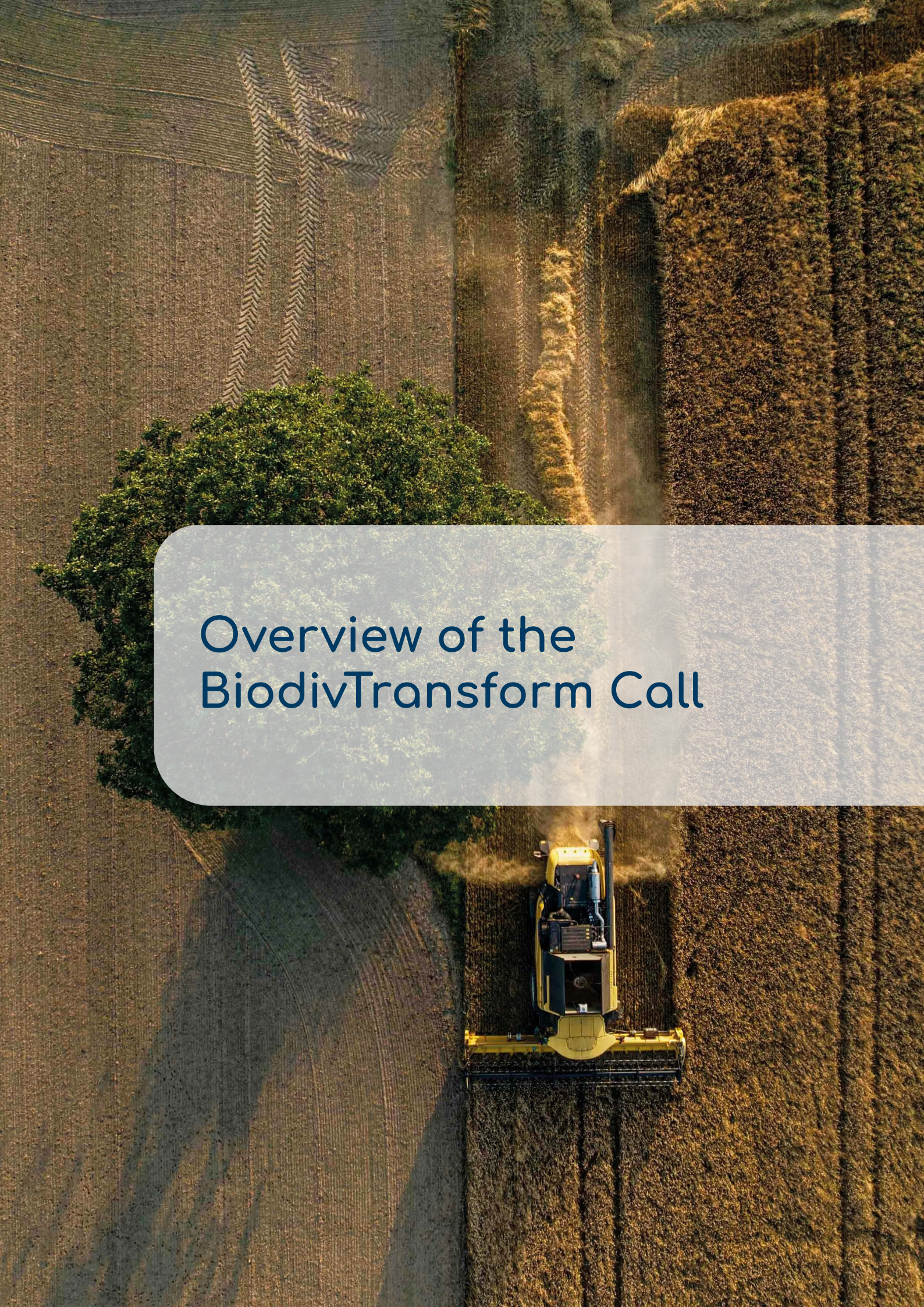

Overview of the BiodivTransform Call

Summary of the Call

The purpose of the BiodivTransform call is to support transnational research projects with potential for local, regional and/or global societal and policy impact regarding biodiversity, aiming to connect science, society, policy and practice for transformative change.

It selected projects that have a holistic approach, a clear view to societal transformation and demonstrate potential to generate knowledge of high relevance to science and society that will:

- help understand trade-offs and cross-linkages between the worldwide crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution;
- identify, analyse and comprehend transformation processes that may safeguard biodiversity and ecosystems by mitigating threats and halting – or even reversing – its decline, as well as the benefits it may provide to people.

The call was not restricted to specific environments or geographic areas, encompassing all realms (terrestrial, marine, coastal and freshwater) and all ecosystems experiencing various levels and sources of disturbance. This included transition zones and interfaces (such as coastal areas, wetlands, urban-rural gradients and forest-agriculture boundaries) as well as integrated land- and seascapes. It also did not target any particular societies, cultures or economic models.

Proposals had to focus on actual and actionable solutions to remove barriers to nature-positive transformative change, dealing with both direct and indirect drivers of its decline.

In contrast to previous Biodiversa+ calls (2008-2023), BiodivTransform did not define sub-themes but provided an opportunity for the best bottom-up proposals in the emerging research field of transformative change and biodiversity research.

Type of research funded

The call targeted 3-year transdisciplinary research projects involving teams from at least three different countries participating in the call. The added value of international collaboration, and the level of cooperation between teams from different countries, had to be clearly demonstrated to allow for upscaling of knowledge beyond the national level or for comparative approaches across different local contexts. Contributions to global research programmes, assessment bodies and multilateral environmental agreements were encouraged.

Given the nature of the research supported through this call, proposals had to engage different disciplines, including biological, natural, technical, social, economic and political sciences and/or the humanities. With the objective of breaking down silos between research and practice, projects also had to demonstrate both scientific excellence and societal impact, including policy impact.

Call process

The topic of the BiodivTransform call is one of the priorities for Biodiversa+, as defined in the Biodiversa+ Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). The call solicits interdisciplinary projects on 'Biodiversity and Transformative Change' to identify, analyse, and comprehend transformation processes that may halt and reverse biodiversity decline. It is co-funded by the European Commission.

The content and procedures for this joint call were defined by the 40 national and regional funding organisations from 33 countries that participated in the call. ANR, the French National Research Agency, and NCN, the Polish National Science Centre, hosted the Call Secretariat and thus played key roles in the implementation and success of the call.

The call was launched on 10 September 2024 with a deadline for submitting pre-proposals on 8 November 2024. Eligible pre-proposals were evaluated by an independent Evaluation Committee, and the shortlisted pre-proposals were invited to submit full proposals by 11 April 2025. The eligible full proposals were evaluated by the independent Evaluation Committee as well as by external reviewers between April and early July 2025. Based on the results of the evaluation process, and without modifying the ranking of the projects established by the independent Evaluation Committee, the funding organisations agreed on the number of projects to be recommended for funding in September 2025, allowing the funded projects to start between 1 December 2025 and 1 April 2026.

All the projects have a 3-year duration. During their lifetime, they will be required to submit a mid-term and a final report.

Evaluation Committee

The composition of the Evaluation Committee was very similar between step 1 and 2.

Scientific experts

Chair of the scientific Evaluation Committee: Mariel Aguilar Stoen, University of Oslo, Norway

Ronit Amit, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica

Kęstutis Arbačiauskas, Nature Research Centre, Lithuania

Anni Arponen, Tampere University, Finland

James Bullock, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, UK

Regina Birner, University of Hohenheim, Germany

Yu-Chung Chiang, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

Gabor Foldvari, Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary

Jonas Geldmann, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Susan Janse van Rensburg, South African Environmental Observation Network, South Africa

Jan Komárek, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Czech Republic

Judith Krauss, University of York, UK

Marc Leandri, University Paris-Saclay, FRANCE

Carolyn Lundquist, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Julia Martin-Ortega, University of Leeds, UK

Frank Matose, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Ingrid Nesheim, Norwegian Institute for Water Research, Norway

Alice Newton, University of Algarve, Portugal

Iago Otero, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Jerneja Penca, Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia

Zbyněk Polesný, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Czech Republic

Tavis Potts, University of Aberdeen, UK

Osamu Saito, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Japan

Simo Sarkki, University of Oulu, Finland

Marie Stenseke, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Stephen Swearer, University of Western Australia, Australia

Csaba Vad, Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary

Mariana Walter, Institut Barcelona d´Estudis Internacionals, Spain

Allan Watt, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, UK

Policy/management experts

Chair of the policy-management Evaluation Committee: Claire Brown, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, UK / **Judith Fisher**, Fisher Research Pty Ltd, Australia

Cengiz Akandil, University of Zurich, Switzerland

Karma Bouazza, Lebanon Reforestation Initiative, Lebanon

Jeff Camkin, University of Western Australia, Australia

Marlon Cárdenas Madrid, United Nations, Italy

Peter Cochrane, Sydney Institute of Marine Science, Australia

Andrew Farmer, Institute for European Environmental Policy, UK

Adriana Ford, Imperial College London, UK

Keisha Garcia, ANSA Merchant Bank, Trinidad and Tobago

Simon Gardner, Natural Environment Research Council, UK

Carlos Mario Gomez, Universidad de Alcalá, Spain

Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Ecuador

Gail Hall, Greener Infrastructure Consulting, Australia

Bob Harris, University of Sheffield, UK

Katia Hueso-Kortekaas, National Federation of Nature Education, Spain

Eduard Interwies, InterSus - Sustainability Services, Germany

Neeraj Khera, India

Maitreyi Koduganti, Urban Biodiversity Hub/PlanAdapt, USA/India

Manuel Lago, Ecologic Institute, Spain

Francesca Leucci, Wageningen University, Netherlands

Juana Lucia Marino de Posada, Gestion Urbana y Tecnológica S.A.S, Colombia

Ivone Pereira Martins, European Environment Agency, Denmark

Isabel Mesquita, Global Landscapes Forum, Brazil

Christian Prip, The Fridtjof Nansen Institute, Norway

Cecília Simões, Brazil

Sunandan Tiwari, Local Governments for Sustainability, Germany

Evaluation process

The submitted proposals were evaluated by an independent Evaluation Committee at step 1, and by an independent Evaluation Committee together with external reviewers at step 2. Both the Evaluation Committee and the external reviewers consisted of scientific experts as well as policy-management experts and practitioners.

The proposals were evaluated following specific guidelines and according to the criteria below, which were predefined and communicated in advance to the applicants:

- Criteria applied at step 1 (pre-proposal stage): (1) fit to the scope of the call; (2) novelty of the research; and (3) impact.

- Criteria applied at step 2 (full proposal stage): (1) scientific excellence; (2) quality and efficiency of the implementation; and (3) impact.

At each step, three scores corresponding to the above criteria were assigned to each proposal. While the three criteria had the same weight at step 1, they carried different weights at step 2, with scientific excellence weighted slightly higher than impact, and impact weighted higher than implementation. Threshold scores were defined for each criterion, and proposals scoring below these predefined thresholds were neither ranked nor considered for funding.

For the first step, the Evaluation Committee meeting was held virtually from 22 to 24 January 2025. For the second step, the Evaluation Committee meeting was organised in Prague (Czech Republic) from 24 to 26 June 2025. During these meetings, the Evaluation Committee members discussed the pre-proposals and full proposals and agreed on the final scores to be attributed.

This evaluation process led to the establishment of a final ranking list of the best proposals, which was sent to the Call Steering Committee, composed of the national and regional funding organisations participating in the call. The funding organisations then decided on the maximum number of top-ranked projects to be funded, strictly following the ranking list.

From the Evaluation Committee Chairs

It was a pleasure to serve as Co-Chairs of the Evaluation Committee of the 2024–2025 Biodiversa+ call entitled 'Biodiversity and Transformative Change' (BiodivTransform). This call aimed to support interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and/or cross-sectoral research and innovation projects. Proposals were asked to focus on helping to understand trade-offs and cross-linkages between the worldwide crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, as well as identifying, analysing and comprehending transformation processes that may safeguard biodiversity by mitigating threats and halting – or even reversing – its decline, together with the benefits it may provide to people.

Globally, we face the multiple and interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and social inequality. As set out in the IPBES Transformative Change Assessment, there is an urgent need for change despite the challenges involved in implementing rapid transformative approaches to ensure a just and sustainable world. It is widely recognised that promoting and accelerating transformative change is required to meet many agreed global targets, such as those of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The call attracted an exceptional response, with 269 eligible pre-proposals and 105 eligible full proposals received. The 35 funded transdisciplinary and innovative research projects represent a substantial financial commitment of over €40 million, including contributions from the European Commission. These projects showcase academic excellence while addressing pressing scientific and societal challenges. They foster collaboration across diverse disciplines and engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

Over the 2024–2025 period, we worked with a multinational, transdisciplinary and dynamic group of Evaluation Committee members. Despite vigorous discussions about the scientific, policy and applied content of the proposals, we were able to reach consensus across this diverse group of dedicated reviewers. We are grateful to the Evaluation Committee members for their candid and constructive assessments of the quality of the pre- and full proposals and for their instrumental role in assembling external reviewers and considering their comments. The high level of collegiality made chairing the scientific and policy sub-committees both easy and enjoyable, and ensured fair and rigorous evaluation of each submission. We are also grateful to the Call Secretariat, who worked efficiently and made the whole process run smoothly. We were privileged to be hosted in person for our final evaluation meeting in Prague by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, which allowed for effective and efficient discussion, debate and final decision-making.

This call was a fantastic opportunity to support interdisciplinary projects that will generate knowledge to help safeguard biodiversity and ecosystems, and the benefits these may provide to people, through transformative change to mitigate and reverse biodiversity threats. Furthermore, these 35 projects focus on actual and actionable solutions to remove barriers to nature-positive transformative change, addressing both direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity decline.

Mariel Aguilar Stoen
Co-Chair of the scientific Evaluation Committee

Claire Brown
Co-Chair of the policy-management Evaluation Committee

Judith Fisher
Co-Chair of the policy-management Evaluation Committee

Analysis of the call results

Analysis of the call results

Overall figures of the call

	No. of proposals	No. of teams	Budget
Eligible pre-proposals	269	1 530	312.1 M€
Eligible proposals	105	740	133.2 M€
Funded projects	35	261	44.7 M€

Table 1: Overall figures of the BiodivTransform call: project submission and selection figures with associated total budget requested (pre-proposals for the first step of evaluation; full proposals for the second step).

Out of the 269 eligible pre-proposals submitted, involving 1 530 participating teams (Table 1), the BiodivTransform call advanced 105 eligible full proposals to the second step of the evaluation process. These full proposals gathered 740 teams and requested a total budget of €133.2 million.

At the end of the evaluation process, the BiodivTransform Steering Committee selected 35 projects for funding, representing 261 teams with a total requested budget amounting to €44.7 million. Overall, this corresponds to a success rate of 13.0%, calculated on the basis of eligible pre-proposals. This rate is lower than that of the BiodivNBS 2023–2024 call (18.6%), which remains the highest observed across Biodiversa+ calls to date, but comparable to the BiodivMon 2022–2023 call (12.6%). These figures highlight the high level of competition and the substantial increase in proposal submissions in the most recent funding cycle.

When considering only eligible full proposals, the BiodivTransform 2024–2025 call reached a success rate of 33.3%, slightly higher than the BiodivNBS 2023–2024 call (31.5%) and the BiodivMon 2022–2023 call (30.6%). This demonstrates that, once proposals pass the first evaluation step, the level of selectivity at the full-proposal stage remains broadly consistent with previous Biodiversa+ calls.

Reserved budgets

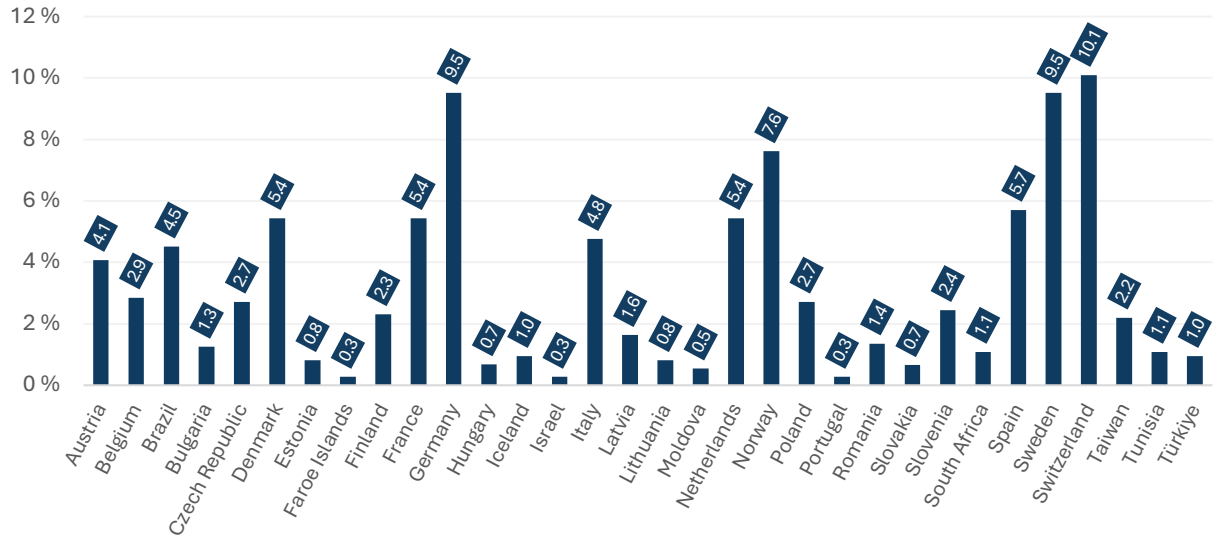

Figure 1: Distribution of the reserved budget among participating countries in the call. Percentages are calculated on the total reserved budget.

Funding organisations announced national reserved budgets at the launch of the call, with individual funding caps per project, which may have influenced the budget requests submitted by applicants. The total reserved budget across all participating countries amounted to €36.8 million (Figure 1), with the largest contributions provided by Switzerland (3.71 M€, 10.1%), Germany (3.50 M€, 9.5%), Sweden (3.50 M€, 9.5%), Norway (2.80 M€, 7.6%), Spain (2.10 M€, 5.7%), Denmark (2.00 M€, 5.4%), France (2.00 M€, 5.4%), The Netherlands (2.00 M€, 5.4%), Italy (1.75 M€, 4.8%), Brazil (1.66 M€, 4.5%), Austria (1.50 M€, 4.1%) followed by Belgium, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Taiwan and Latvia (each contributing between 2.9% and 1.6%). The remaining countries provided smaller but essential contributions, collectively amounting to 4.05 M€ (11%).

As in previous Biodiversa+ calls, in some cases, national reserved budgets were insufficient relative to the financial demand of top ranked proposals. However, the flexibility of the funding scheme and the availability of a common pot, including part of the European Commission co-funding, ensured that all 35 top-ranked projects could be funded according to the ranking list established by the Evaluation Committee. Conversely, some funding organisations did not fully use their reserved budgets, reflecting the lower representation of their research communities among successful applicants. Ultimately, the 35 top-ranked projects could be funded, following strictly the ranking list established by the Evaluation Committee.

Requested budgets

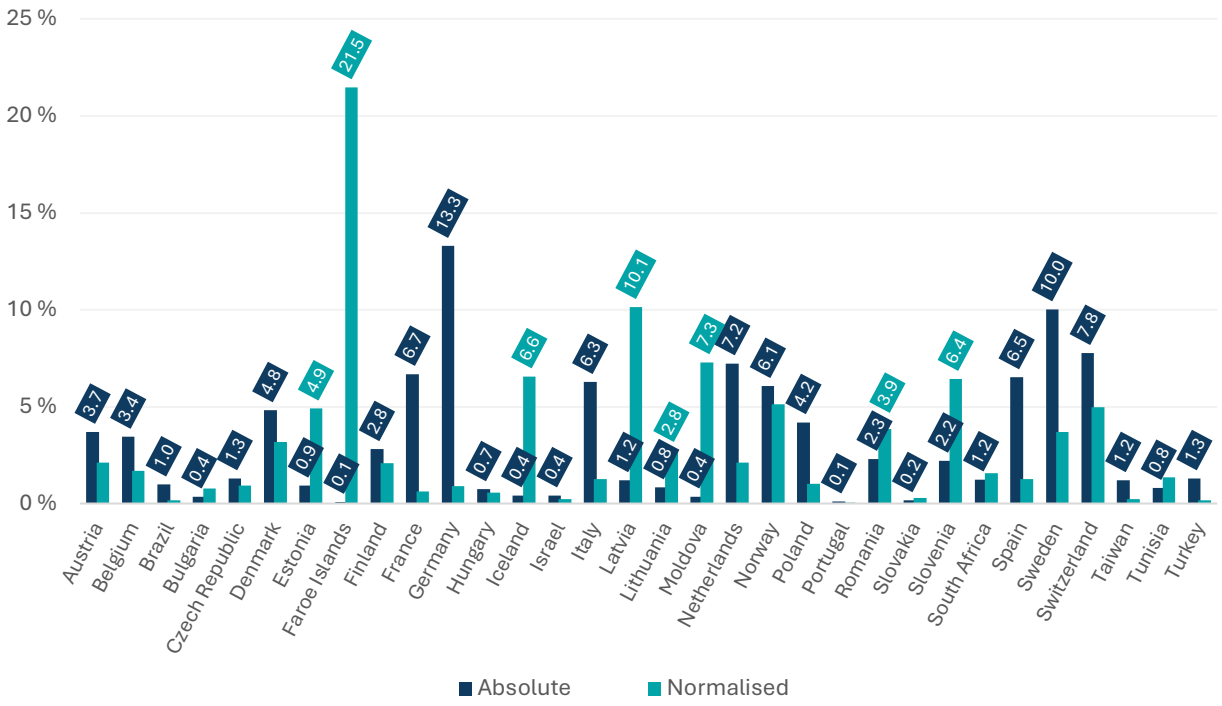

Figure 2: Distribution of the total budget requested by applicants at the pre-proposal stage, expressed as absolute values and values normalised according to the size of the national research community[1]. Percentages are calculated on the total requested budget.

At the pre-proposal stage, the distribution of the total requested budget largely mirrors the structure of national research systems and participation levels (Figure 2). Countries with large and well-established research communities (Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy and Norway) account for the highest shares of requested funding in absolute terms. This pattern is consistent with observations made in previous Biodiversa+ calls and reflects both research capacity and strong engagement in the call.

When the requested budgets are normalised according to the size of the national research community, a complementary picture emerges. Several countries with smaller research systems (most notably Slovenia, Iceland, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova and Romania) display high levels of requested funding relative to their number of researchers. As already observed in the BiodivNBS call, this indicates a particularly strong mobilisation of researchers in these countries, suggesting that the call topics resonate well beyond the largest national research systems. This normalised perspective provides valuable insight into national engagement beyond absolute funding volumes. However, it should be noted that the lack of specific data on the size of national biodiversity research communities limits the precision of this comparison.

1. Normalised values are calculated by dividing the requested budget by the estimated number of full-time equivalent (FTE) researchers in each country. Data on national research communities are derived primarily from OECD Main Science and Technology Indicators (MSTI), complemented by World Bank data where necessary. Population and researcher data refer mainly to 2023, with exceptions detailed in the data sources. Depending on national rules, requested budgets may or may not include salaries for permanent positions

Awarded budgets

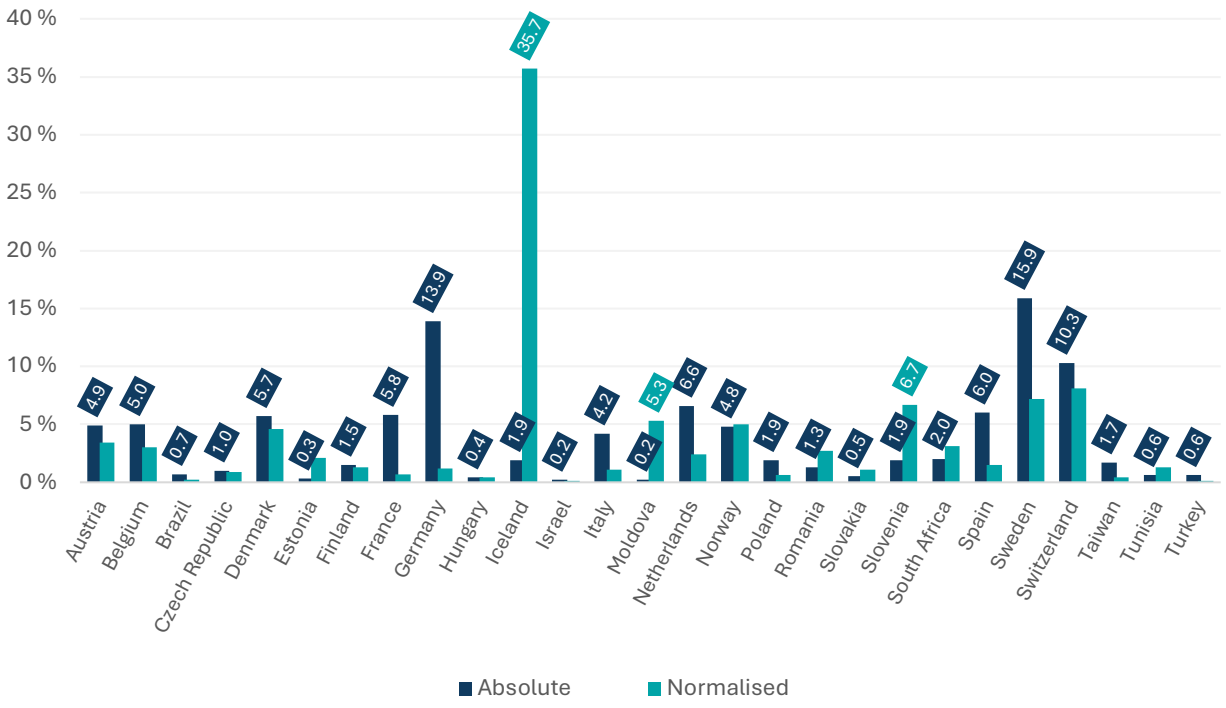

Figure 3: Distribution of the awarded budget to funded projects, expressed as absolute values and values normalised according to the size of the national research community. Percentages are calculated on the total awarded budget.

The 35 funded projects under the BiodivTransform call involve teams from a wide range of participating countries (Figure 3). In absolute terms, the largest shares of the awarded budget were allocated to Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Spain, France, Denmark, and Norway, reflecting both the strong presence of these countries among the highest-ranked proposals and the scale of their research communities.

Once the awarded budgets are normalised by the size of the national research community, countries such as Iceland, Slovenia, Switzerland, Romania, and Denmark stand out, receiving comparatively high funding levels relative to their number of researchers. This confirms that, beyond absolute funding volumes, the BiodivTransform call achieved a broad and balanced geographical distribution of funding, rewarding excellence across research systems of very different sizes.

Overall, the comparison between requested and awarded budgets confirms that the BiodivTransform call maintained a broadly consistent level of geographical balance and selectivity across countries of very different sizes. As in previous Biodiversa+ funding cycles, excellence rather than national size appears to have been the primary driver of funding allocation, reinforcing the inclusiveness and competitiveness of the programme.

Success rate per country

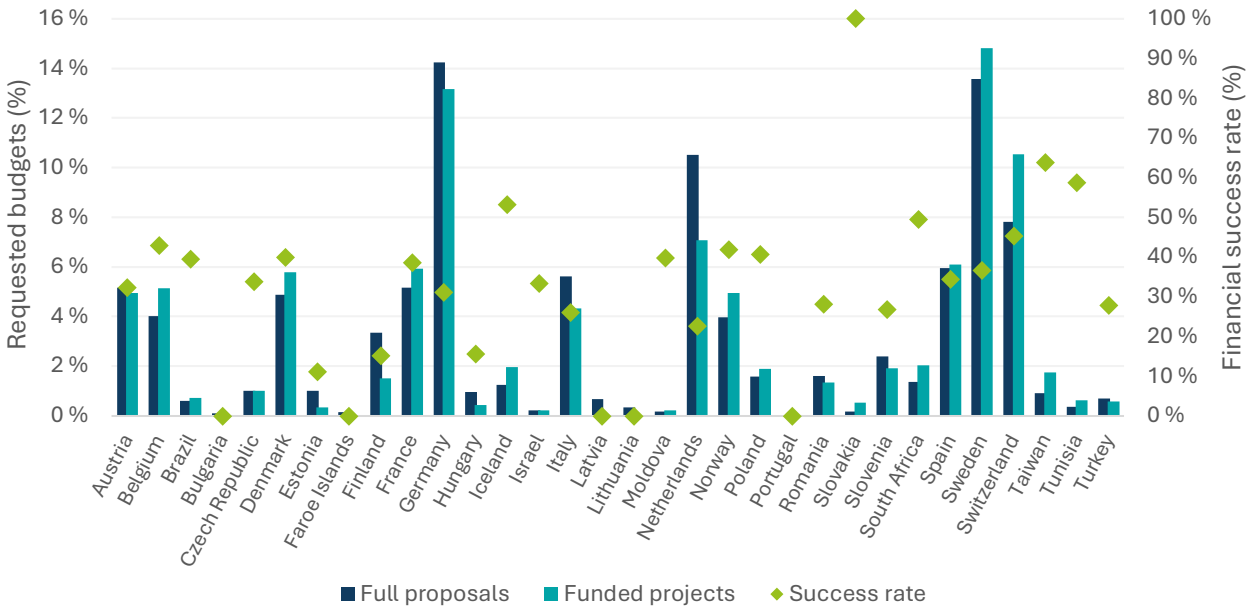

Figure 4: Percentage of budgets requested at the full-proposal stage (step 2) and after selection (funded projects) for each participating country, together with the corresponding financial success rate.

At the full-proposal stage (step 2) of the call, financial success rates varied across participating countries (Figure 4), reflecting differences in proposal quality, portfolio composition and national participation levels. Several countries achieved high success rates above 40%, including Slovakia (100%), Taiwan (63.8%), Tunisia (58.8%), Iceland (53.2%), South Africa (49.4%), Switzerland (45.3%), Belgium (42.9%), Norway (41.9%), Poland (40.6%) and Sweden (40.3%). As in previous Biodiversa+ calls, these high success rates should in some cases be interpreted with caution, as they may reflect a limited number of submitted full proposals, which can amplify country-level effects.

Countries with larger volumes of requested funding, such as Germany, France, Spain, Italy, The Netherlands and Sweden, generally displayed moderate success rates (around 25–40%), consistent with earlier calls and indicative of strong competition within large research communities. Notably, Germany shows a slight decrease between requested and final funded amounts, illustrating the effect of budget adjustments during the funding decision phase. In contrast, some countries (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and the Faroe Islands) did not obtain funding at the full-proposal stage. As in the BiodivNBS call, this outcome highlights the strong selectivity of the second evaluation step and the decisive role of proposal quality at this stage.

Overall, the distribution of success rates in the call closely mirrors patterns observed in previous Biodiversa+ funding cycles. While national participation levels strongly shape the distribution of requested budgets, funding decisions remain primarily driven by excellence, resulting in a broadly balanced allocation across countries of different sizes and research capacities.

Geographical origin of the applicants

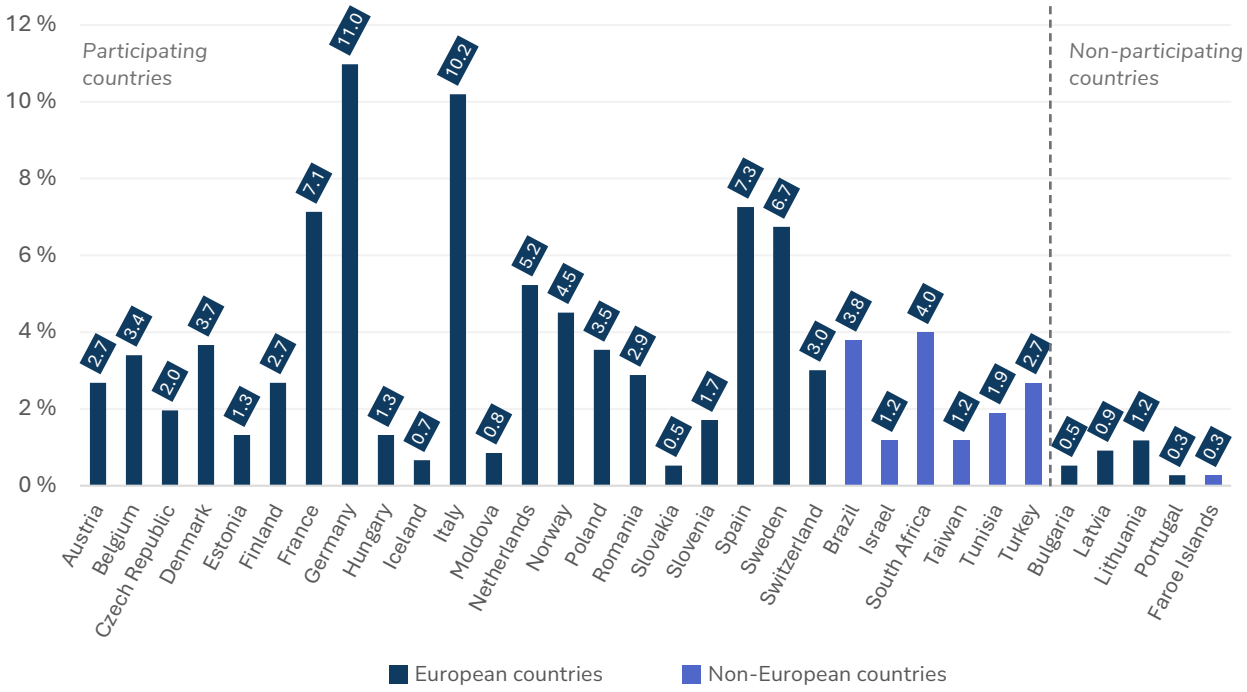

Figure 5: Geographical origin of the applicants participating in the pre-proposal stage of the BiodivTransform call.

The vast majority of applicant teams (96.9%, Figure 5) originated from countries participating in the funding of the call, highlighting the high level of engagement of the funding organisations involved.

Within this group, European participating countries accounted for the largest share, with 1 257 teams (82,1%), reflecting a broad and well-balanced geographical distribution across Europe. The highest numbers of applicant teams were observed for Germany (11.0%), Italy (10.2%), Spain (7.3%), France (7.1%), Sweden (6.7%), The Netherlands (5.2%) and Norway (4.5%), alongside contributions from a wide range of other participating European countries.

In addition, non-European participating countries represented a substantial proportion of applicants (225 teams; 14.7%), with particularly strong participation from South Africa (4.0%), Brazil (3.8%) and Turkey (2.7%), as well as contributions from Tunisia, Israel and Taiwan.

Only a limited share of applicant teams (48 teams; 3.1%) originated from non-participating countries, mainly European.

Compared with the BiodivNBS 2023–2024 call, which recorded 82% of applicant teams from participating countries, the BiodivTransform call shows a markedly stronger alignment between funding participation and proposal submission. At the same time, it maintains a degree of international openness, confirming the increasing maturity and targeted design of Biodiversa+ calls.

Geographical origin of project coordinators

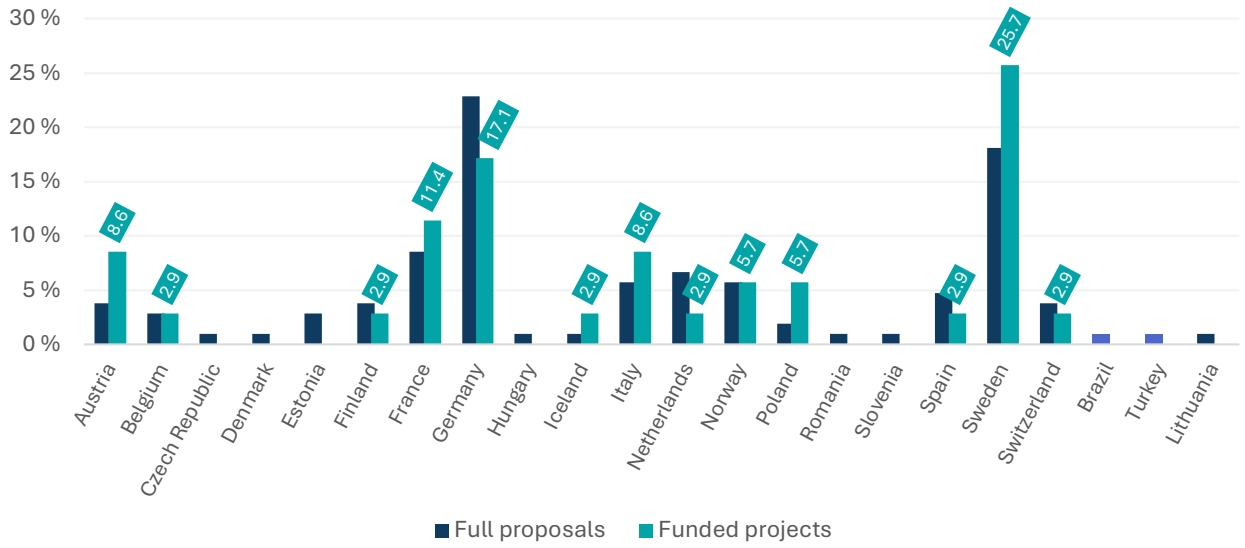

Figure 6: Geographical origin of project coordinators in the submitted full proposals and in the funded projects.

At the full-proposal stage, project coordinators represented 22 countries participating in the call (Figure 6). Most coordinators came from Germany (22.9%), Sweden (18.1%), France (8.6%), Netherlands (6.7%), Italy (5.7%), Norway (5.7%) and Spain (4.8%), highlighting the strong engagement of these national research communities.

At the end of the evaluation process, the coordinators of the 35 funded projects came from 13 countries. Coordinators from Sweden (25.7%), Germany (17.1%), France (11.4%), Italy and Austria (8.6% each), were particularly successful, while several countries that were represented at the full-proposal stage (e.g., Brazil, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey) did not have projects selected for funding.

These figures should be interpreted with caution, as they reflect only the geographical origin of project coordinators, not the full composition of project teams. Nevertheless, they provide a clear overview of the distribution of leadership across countries and highlight the relative success of coordinators from countries with traditionally strong biodiversity research communities.

Gender balance in the consortia

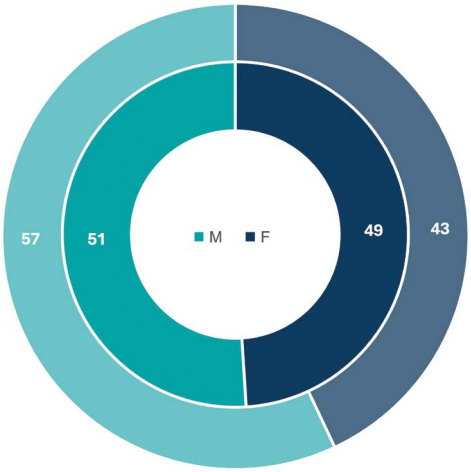

Figure 7: Gender balance (F for female, M for male) for the coordinators and principal investigators of teams in the submitted full proposals (outer ring) and funded projects (inner ring) consortia. Percentage based on applicants' declarations.

At the full proposal stage, consortia were composed of 43% female and 57% male coordinators and principal investigators (Figure 7). By the end of the selection process, the gender balance among funded consortia showed a notable shift toward parity, with 51% females and 49% males among project coordinators. This increase suggests that the evaluation process maintained and, in some cases, enhanced female representation at the leadership level of funded projects.

Private/Public organisations balance

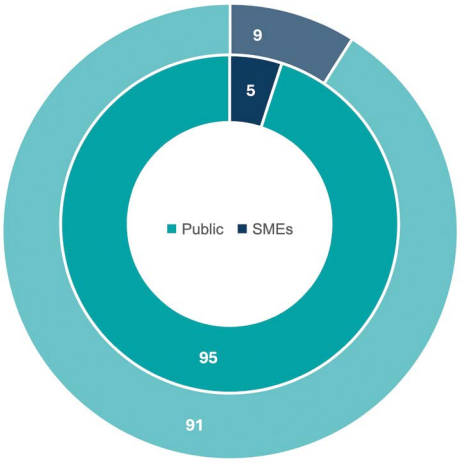

Figure 8: Distribution of requested funding in submitted full proposals (outer ring) and funded projects (inner ring) by types of organisations. Private organisations include small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and exclude associations, private foundations, and private universities. Percentage based on applicants' declarations.

The distribution of public and private organisations remained broadly stable throughout the selection process. At the full proposal stage, 91% of participating organisations were public, while 9% were SMEs (Figure 8). At the final funding stage, this composition shifted slightly, with 95% public organisations and 5% SMEs. This indicates that the call was primarily driven by public institutions, while private sector participation was maintained at a moderate but consistent level, reflecting a balanced engagement of different types of organisations.

Studied environments

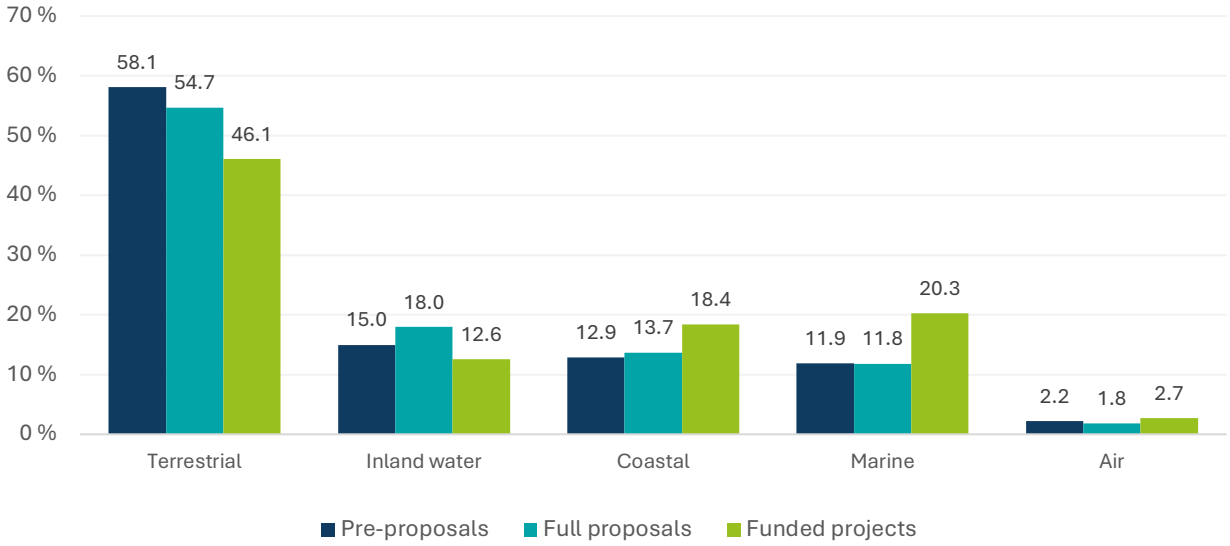

Figure 9: Distribution of pre-proposals, full proposals and funded projects by studied environment. A proposal may address more than one environment.

Across all stages of the BiodivTransform call, terrestrial ecosystems represented the largest share of applications, accounting for 58% of pre-proposals, 55% of full proposals, and 46% of funded projects (Figure 9). This confirms the strong and sustained engagement of the research community in terrestrial biodiversity and ecosystem transformation.

At the same time, the final funding portfolio reflects a broader environmental balance. Coastal and marine environments increased in relative importance at the funding stage, with coastal topics rising from 13% of pre-proposals to 18% of funded projects, and marine environments from 12% to 20%. This progression highlights the competitiveness and quality of proposals addressing aquatic and coastal systems within the call.

Inland water ecosystems maintained a stable presence throughout the evaluation process (15% of pre-proposals and 13% of funded projects), while air-related research topics remained more limited in scope (2-3%), yet consistently represented.

Overall, while terrestrial systems continue to structure most submissions, the funded projects illustrate a diversified environmental coverage, reflecting the call's capacity to support transformative research across multiple ecological domains.

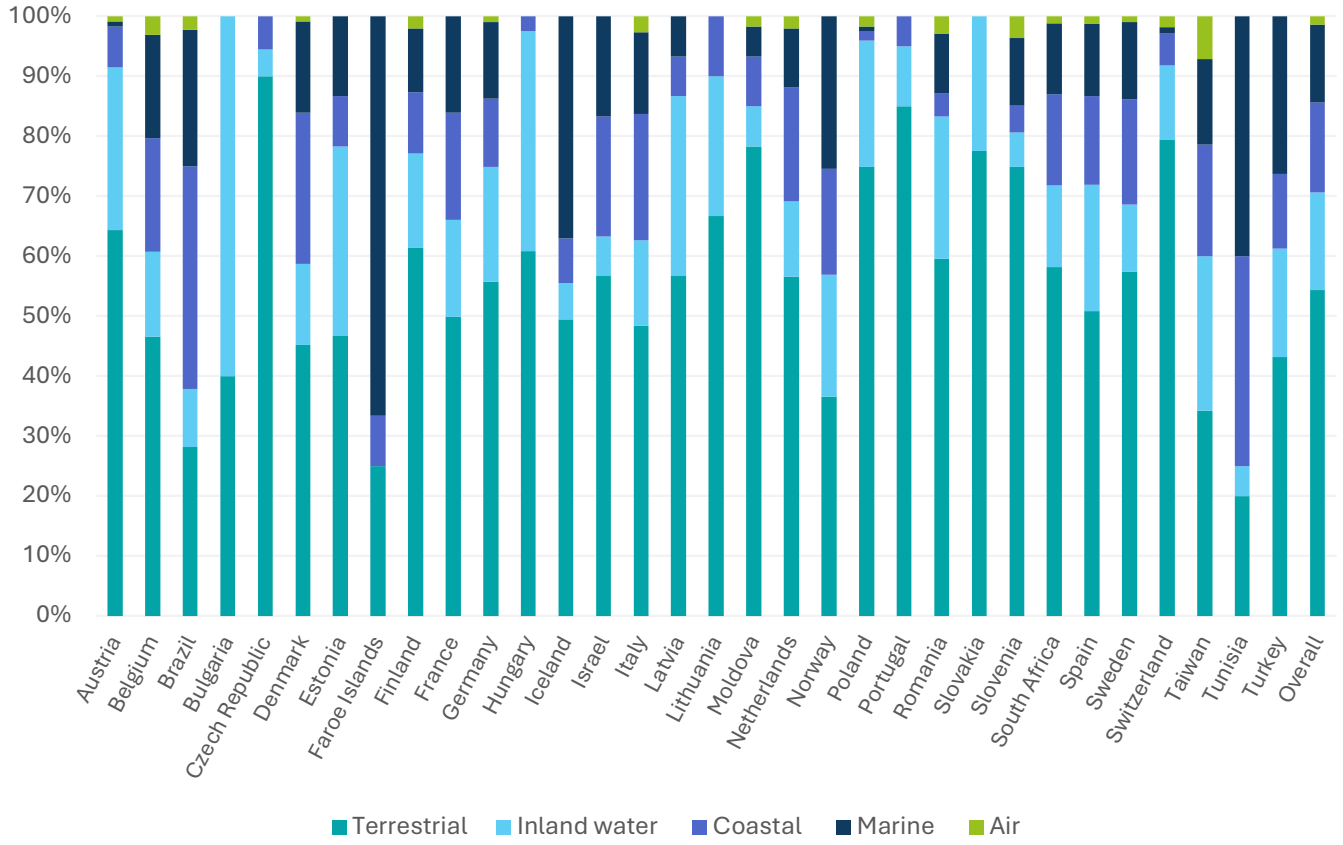

Figure 10: Distribution of studied environments in full proposals by country.

The environmental focus of full proposals varies substantially across participating countries (Figure 10), reflecting national research profiles and ecosystem priorities. While terrestrial ecosystems dominate in most countries (exceeding 70% of full proposals in countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Switzerland and Portugal), several countries display more diversified portfolios. Inland water ecosystems represent a particularly significant share in Bulgaria (60.0%), followed by Hungary (36.7%), Estonia (31.7%), and Latvia (30.0%), indicating strong engagement in freshwater-related research within these national communities. Coastal environments account for a substantial proportion of proposals in Brazil (37.2%), Tunisia (35.0%), and Denmark (25.2%), while marine-focused proposals are especially prominent in the Faroe Islands (66.7%), Tunisia (40.0%), Iceland (37.0%), and Turkey (26.3%). A small but visible share of proposals addresses air-related topics, with the highest proportion observed in Taiwan (7.1%), although this thematic area remains marginal overall.

Given the relatively limited number of applicant teams originating from some countries, these percentages should be interpreted with appropriate caution. Nonetheless, the data illustrate the geographical diversity of environmental research priorities across the call.

Conclusions

The BiodivTransform call demonstrates a strong mobilisation of the research community at both European and international levels. A total of 1 530 teams submitted pre-proposals, of which 465 were fully eligible, reflecting the high relevance of the call topics and the increasing engagement of participating countries. The call attracted a broad geographical distribution of applicants and project coordinators, with particularly strong participation from Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands and Norway, while also ensuring meaningful contributions from smaller research communities and non-European countries.

The selection of 35 projects for funding, representing 261 teams and a total budget of €44.7 million, confirms the capacity of the BiodivTransform call to support high-quality, transformative research. While the overall success rate based on pre-proposals was 13.0%, slightly lower than previous calls, the success rate at the full-proposal stage (33.3%) indicates a consistent level of selectivity and competitiveness across participating countries. The distribution of awarded budgets, both in absolute terms and normalised by national research community size, illustrates a broadly balanced allocation that rewards excellence across diverse research systems.

The funded projects also demonstrate a diversified environmental focus, with terrestrial ecosystems representing the largest share, complemented by significant engagement in coastal, marine, and inland water systems.

Gender balance in funded consortia improved relative to the full-proposal stage, and the participation of public and private organisations remained broadly stable, reflecting an inclusive and equitable approach to project selection.

Overall, the BiodivTransform call highlights the effectiveness of the Biodiversa+ funding model in promoting scientific excellence, geographical diversity, and environmental breadth, while maintaining a competitive and transparent evaluation process. These results provide valuable insights for the design of future calls, particularly regarding strategies to enhance the participation and success of underrepresented countries and research communities.

Presentation of the 35 funded projects

East Carpathian biosphere reserve, a transboundary conservation area

ACT – Advancing transformative governanCe through Transboundary conservation and collaborative learning

Context

Global biodiversity loss is occurring at an unprecedented rate, driven by root causes such as inadequate governance, weak cross-sectoral planning, inequity, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, and narrow societal values. These drivers underpin complex and persistent problems in biodiversity conservation, including human-wildlife conflict, habitat fragmentation, and the marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Such challenges typically involve multiple stakeholders with competing interests and unequal resources and capacities, making good governance increasingly difficult, especially in a context of geopolitical tensions and funding constraints. This complexity is amplified in transboundary conservation, where cooperation across international boundaries is essential to achieving conservation goals. Well-governed Transboundary Conservation Areas are critical for ecological connectivity, protection of migratory species, and enhancing climate change responses, while also supporting socio-economic, cultural, political, research, and management objectives. ACT examines how transboundary governance (based on shared decision-making, collaboration, adaptation, integration, and pluralism) can enable system-wide societal transformation to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, strengthen social-ecological resilience, and support the achievement of global and European biodiversity targets.

Main objectives

The overarching aim of ACT is to identify and assess the main elements of transformative governance in a transboundary context, providing a practical contribution of transboundary governance to societal transformation processes that lead to halting and reversing biodiversity loss, and support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Main activities

To examine how transformative governance can drive societal change, ACT will use participatory engagement across four Transboundary Conservation Areas in Europe and southern Africa, representing a Global South-North gradient and differing ecological, socio-cultural, political, and governance contexts. ACT will identify region-specific challenges, risks, opportunities, and common enabling factors of transformative governance. We will apply innovative tools and established social and behavioural science methods (including participatory diagnostics, community dialogues, and a dedicated social science 'toolkit') to build shared understanding, address conflicts, and co-develop pathways for transformative change. The project will generate new scientific insights into how transboundary governance strengthens social-ecological resilience. These findings will be translated into practical outputs, including case study-based strategies for enabling transformative change, comparative analysis, and a policy-oriented guidebook supporting replication, policy uptake, and alignment with European and global biodiversity goals.

ACT's communication strategy will ensure wide dissemination of results through targeted outreach. By enabling knowledge exchange, co-learning and capacity building across regions, ACT will contribute to empowerment, improved management practice, and the development of long-term solutions that align ecological and socio-economic goals.

Partners of the project

Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, Trondheim, Norway

Department of Ecological Analyses, Institute of Landscape Ecology Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia

European Regional Centre for Ecohydrology PAS, Łód, Poland

DSI/NRF SARChI Chair in Biodiversity Value and Change, University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa

Foundation National Center for Sustainable Development, Bucharest, Romania

GreenFormation Kft., Budapest, Hungary

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.0 mil €

More information

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ACTSustainably – Enabling Transformative Actions to Leverage Sustainability of Eurasian Grasslands

Context

Grasslands are among the largest terrestrial ecosystems, yet are highly threatened due to long-term transformations such as fragmentation, degradation, and land-use change across Eurasia. Addressing biodiversity loss in these systems requires understanding and leveraging the roles of institutions, social norms, and plural biodiversity values that underpin human-nature relationships and shape governance outcomes. ActSustainably investigates how these deep leverage points can impact societal sustainability transformations by aligning formal and informal rules with collective actions for sustainable grassland use across Austria, South Tyrol, Denmark, Hungary, and Kazakhstan. The project's relevance lies in providing actionable knowledge for policy and practice to prevent biodiversity loss and improve governance effectiveness across diverse socio-economic and geopolitical contexts. It advances an integrative approach to identify values, institutions and technologies that enable biodiversity-positive transformations, linking institutional regimes, social norms, and plural values to the sustainability of grassland socio-ecological systems.

Main objectives

- Diagnose patterns, drivers, and implications of past, current, and future grassland transformations for biodiversity across environmental and socio-economic gradients in Eurasia.
- Evaluate historical and contemporary rules of access, actor coalitions, and institutional regimes and identify informal rules and institutional complementarities critical for sustainable resource governance.
- Elicit and analyse plural biodiversity values, social norms, and usage regimes within local communities to understand leverage points for sustainability transformations.
- Co-develop with actors cooperative rules, actionable future scenarios, and pathways for integrating informal institutions into formal governance and policy instruments to enable collective action to restore biodiversity or reduce biodiversity loss.

Main activities

- Map grassland dynamics, associated land uses, and their impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services, including scenario-based projections of biodiversity under alternative futures.
- Develop an Institutional Resource Regimes (IRR) conceptual model; conduct structured actor mapping; analyse institutional complexity.
- Investigate historical and contemporary rules of access; assess complementarities and conflicts between formal and informal institutions; and analyse social and cultural values, traditional ecological knowledge related to grassland, land-use practices and biodiversity.
- Implement continuous science-society interactions, using co-creative workshops, futuring and scenario processes, but also continuous feedback loops to integrate diverse knowledge systems and avoid extractive interactions, ensuring mutual learning and local impacts.

Generate actionable, co-produced knowledge that can be integrated into policy instruments and local practices across diverse settings, improving the sustainability of grassland socio-ecological systems.

Extensively used mountain hay meadow with high nature value in the Austrian alpine region

Partners of the project

Department of Landscape, Water and Infrastructure, Institute of Landscape Planning, BOKU University, Vienna, Austria

Life Sciences and Facility Management, Institute of Natural Resource Sciences, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Wädenswil, Switzerland

Department of Environmental Science, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

Institute of Ecology and Botany, HUN-REN Centre for Ecological Research, Budapest, Hungary

Institute of Landscape Ecology, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research Group, University of Münster, Münster, Germany

Graduate School of Public Policy, Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Duration

01/02/2026 - 31/01/2029

Total grant

Approx. 2.2 mil €

More information

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https://boku.ac.at/lawi/ilap/projekte

Flat oysters in Sweden

Partners of the project

Department Food Research and Innovation (Unit Sustainable Food Systems), RISE Research Institutes of Sweden, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Department of Education, Stichting Van Hall Larenstein, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.

Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen, Frederiksberg, Denmark

Ecosystem Group (Unit Environmental Intelligence), IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, Fiskebäckskil, Sweden

School of Biosciences and Veterinary Medicine, University of Camerino, Matelica, Italy

Oceanographic Center of Vigo (COV), Spanish Institute of Oceanography, Spanish National Research Council (IEO-CSIC), Vigo, Spain

Department of Business and Sustainability, University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg, Denmark

Mediterranean Aquaculture Association, Rome, Italy

County administrative board of Västra Götaland, Strömstad, Sweden

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.6 mil. €

More information

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ATTITUDE – A transformation through improved practice: targeting urgent sustainable development needs by enabling restorative aquaculture

Context

Our food system is a major driver of biodiversity loss. The concept of 'restorative aquaculture' entails a form of food production that also provides ecological benefits, potentially resulting in net positive environmental outcomes. A candidate sector in Europe is bivalve aquaculture. The implementation of restorative bivalve aquaculture practices involving flat oysters (Ostrea edulis) and mussels (Mytilus spp) offers many opportunities to address coastal restoration needs (e.g., restore lost biogenic reefs, mitigate eutrophication).

Today, the sector is instead struggling, despite ambitions for growth. Barriers include a low social licence to operate, regulatory constraints and poor profitability, with varying conditions across Europe. Given current challenges and opportunities, and several commitments and ambitions related to the blue economy and biodiversity, a transformative change in bivalve aquaculture governance is warranted as a means of fulfilling goals for both biodiversity and food systems.

Main objectives

ATTITUDE aims to generate the key knowledge needed on current barriers and opportunities for implementing restorative bivalve aquaculture practices across Europe. The long-term goal is a transformative change in coastal governance in which viable restorative bivalve aquaculture becomes common practice, providing net benefits to biodiversity and coastal restoration (i.e., an integration of food production, biodiversity restoration, and conservation).

Main activities

The ATTITUDE project design comprises transdisciplinary collaborations centred on a diverse set of case studies across different sea basins. This approach generates significant transnational value through cross-learning, capacity building and identification of good practices derived from different socio-ecological conditions and scientific disciplines.

The project will investigate:

- strategies to improve socio-economic viability,
- the existing and needed natural science evidence base for effective marine management,
- stakeholder and governance landscapes including social acceptability and values.

Co-created and actionable strategies will support the transition from theory to practice in effective integration of bivalve aquaculture with conservation goals, with relevant policies spanning from global down to local. Project outputs will include recommendations for a just transformation of bivalve aquaculture in Europe, enabling maximised positive interactions between production, coastal biodiversity and ecosystem restoration.

Effective stakeholder engagement and communication are essential to ensure the credibility, relevance, legitimacy and accessibility of results. This will be ensured by tailoring activities and outputs to end-user needs. Planned activities and dissemination formats beyond scientific publications include policy briefs, workshops, interviews and seminars. The expected impact of ATTITUDE consists of exploitable results for marine authorities, the bivalve industry and society for the adoption of restorative bivalve aquaculture practices in national policies, enabling protection and restoration of wild bivalve populations and coastal ecosystems and sustainable growth of production.

BIODENCITY – Reversing Biodiversity Decline in Densification Strategies using Innovative Sensing, Systemic Solutions and Data Driven City modelling for Transformative Change

Context

Urban densification is widely promoted as a sustainable strategy to reduce land take, emissions and infrastructure costs. However, compact city models often understate their ecological consequences, accelerating habitat loss and biodiversity decline within urban areas. At the same time, cities can host substantial biological richness and, if designed and managed properly, can support both human wellbeing and nature. BIODENCITY addresses this challenge by asking how urban densification and greening can be combined to halt and reverse biodiversity loss while improving quality of life in cities. Focusing on microorganisms, insects, birds and bats as indicators of ecosystem health, the project explores how dense urban environments can become places where people and nature coexist and thrive.

Main objectives

BIODENCITY aims to develop a roadmap for biodiversity-sensitive urban densification, demonstrating that density and biodiversity need not be opposing goals. The project seeks to generate robust scientific evidence on how urban form and green infrastructure influence biodiversity across diverse European contexts, and to translate this knowledge into practical tools for urban planning and policy. Through open-access datasets, interactive maps, AI-based biodiversity monitoring systems and design guidelines, BIODENCITY supports cities in embedding biodiversity considerations into planning, design and decision-making processes. In doing so, the project contributes to healthier, more climate-resilient urban environments and supports the implementation of European biodiversity and nature restoration policies.

Main activities

BIODENCITY combines ecological research, digital innovation and participatory approaches across four European cities (Tampere, Gothenburg, Amsterdam and Milan). The project maps urban density and green infrastructure patterns and links them to biodiversity outcomes using advanced geospatial analysis and AI-enabled sensing technologies, including acoustic, visual and microbial monitoring. Living Biodiversity Labs are established as real-world testing environments where researchers, planners, policymakers and citizens co-design and assess biodiversity-friendly densification scenarios. Stakeholder engagement, citizen science activities and policy dialogues ensure that scientific results are translated into actionable guidance. Project outcomes are disseminated through open-access publications, interactive tools, training activities and a transnational community of practice, enabling knowledge transfer and supporting uptake by cities across Europe and beyond.

Field-based biodiversity data collection in the BIODENCITY Sensing Garden, combining citizen science with advanced acoustic and video-based monitoring

Partners of the project

Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden

Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Polytechnic University of Milan, Milan, Italy

Department of Architecture and the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands

Subcontracted partner 3a: AMS Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Faculty of the Built Environment, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Division for Environment and Green Spaces, Municipality of Milan, Milan, Italy

Department of Sports and the Amsterdamse Bos, City of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Duration

01/01/2026 - 21/12/2028

Total grant

Approx. 1.1 €

More information

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Baboons in Cape Town

Partners of the project

Stockholm Resilience Center, Stockholm, Sweden

Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources, University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany

Team Nature & Society, The Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO), Brussels, Belgium

Subcontracted partner 4a: Studio Lein, Kessel-Lo, Belgium

Faculty of Architecture & Arts, Hasselt University, Hasselt, Belgium

Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.0 mil €

More information

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BiodiverCities – A Roadmap for Fostering Human Wildlife Coexistence in Greening Cities

Context

Greening cities and the expansion of urban areas into biodiversity-rich landscapes induce unplanned effects: urban wildlife. Entirely new human-wildlife encounters and cross-species learning are taking place at rapid evolutionary scales, making the multispecies cities of the future an important arena for potentially establishing new forms of coexistence. Coexisting with urban wildlife is not without challenges. Wildlife in cities has typically been given triage treatment of immediate problems rather than targeting underlying drivers. Urban wildlife increasingly gives rise to social polarisation, with some residents wanting to 'save everything' and others to 'kill everything'. There is a need to consider human-wildlife coexistence in cities beyond previous categories of either a mere wildlife problem to be resolved through short-term deterrence of animal behaviour, or a human problem that can go away by fostering pro-environmental attitudes. Instead, multispecies cities will require the development of an interspecies etiquette that recognises that problems and solutions are distributed across humans and wildlife and in their interplay.

Main objectives

BiodiverCities aims to address the complex challenges of urban biodiversity management by developing a comprehensive framework called an 'interspecies etiquette', which aims to both problematise and actively guide coexistence between human and non-human residents in cities. The interspecies etiquette will ultimately provide principles for biodiversity management at multiple levels, serve as practical decision-making support in human-wildlife conflicts, and engage communities in shaping their local urban environments. The interspecies etiquette comprises wildlife literacy, relationality and stewardship as its building blocks.

Main activities

BiodiverCities works with four principal case studies: Stockholm, Genk, Freiburg and Cape Town. While each case is unique, they represent globally generalisable wildlife conflict tropes and correspond to typical phases of wildlife exposure in their cities: from first encounters and initial enthusiasm to resistance, through backlash and polarisation, onto different pathways of management. In each city, a mixed-methods approach will first be used to map manifestations of interspecies etiquette. Surveys, semi-structured interviews, content analyses of local neighbourhoods, Facebook groups and news media, as well as spatiotemporal encounter analysis, encounter stories, reviewing of wildlife disturbance report data, and integrated community occupancy models will be used. In subsequent work packages, human-wildlife challenges for studied cities will be synthesised together with stakeholders through the following ways:

- uncovering hidden preferences, policies and practices toward urban wildlife and examining how wildlife respond, adapt, and shape encounters and attitudes;
- developing strategies to enhance wildlife literacy, fostering stewardship, and navigating controversial interventions such as relocation, rescues, letting be and culling;
- producing communication tools to manage social polarisation around wildlife;
- enhancing training and educational resources for wildlife monitors, city officials, and pest controllers;
- building preparedness and infrastructure for public participation at various scales.

BIOGAIN – Enabling biodiversity-positive transformation of energy planning towards climate neutrality

Context

Regions face growing pressure to deliver renewable energy (RE) alongside a variety of other land uses in limited amounts of area while combating climate change and the decline of biodiversity. Planners often lack recent, reliable, and comparable data on ecosystems and species. This limits their ability to robustly link land-use change to the multiple dimensions of biodiversity. To reach a climate-neutral and biodiversity-friendly society, we need decisions that curb and meet energy demand while prioritising nature-positive outcomes that acknowledge nature's contributions to people (e.g., clean water, flood protection, recreation).

Main objectives

- To learn how far novel (digital and AI-supported) data on biodiversity and associated ecosystem dynamics enable net-gain planning.
- To enhance transparency of how predicted effects of RE on species and their habitats are integrated with preference trade-offs to inform planning decisions.
- To investigate what prioritisation is needed to follow a net-gain strategy reflecting the various competing interests and need for multi-functional land use.

Main activities

BIOGAIN involves consultants, authorities, NGOs and SMEs in the fields of AI and biodiversity data science to examine hypotheses regarding the role of quality and availability of novel data and its interpretation to contribute to:

- reshaping power dynamics: Increased access to accurate data creates knowledge and transparency and reduces the impact of outdated or limited information; and
- encouraging nature-positive planning: Transparent biodiversity-impact predictions allow planners to integrate preference trade-offs thoughtfully, leading to informed, balanced decisions that support both nature and climate goals.

The project focuses on actors at multiple planning levels, particularly in subnational and regional contexts where spatial energy planning remains underinformed by digital technology. Specifically, BIOGAIN will address planning for wind and solar energy infrastructure, examining how these RE sources intersect and impact biodiversity. BIOGAIN integrates, supported by AI, up-to-date digital biodiversity data and ecosystem models to inform the current state (baseline data) and the effectiveness of measures (e.g., in place for former energy infrastructure projects).

A 'serious game' lets participants explore real planning scenarios safely, learn from outcomes, and compare options side-by-side.

Structured workshops, as part of a collaborative decision analysis and accompanied by a Discrete Choice Experiment, investigate how stakeholders weigh objectives based on forecasted outcomes of decision options.

Exemplary landscape with renewable energy and biodiversity measures, combined with symbolic data collection approaches (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Passive Acoustic Monitoring, Wildlife cameras) to assess their effectiveness in achieving biodiversity net gain

Partners of the project

Department Landscape, Water and Infrastructure & Department of Ecosystem Management, Climate and Biodiversity, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria

Environmental Assessment Research Group, Technical University Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Department of Systems Research, Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Wroclaw, Poland

Department of Sustainability and Planning, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Duration

01/03/2026 - 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.3 mil €

More information

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Bioreforest is sampling (deadwood, leaves, soil) across European forest sites to disentangle best reforestation approaches

Partners of the project

Department of Applied Natural Science and Health, University of Applied Science and Arts Coburg, Coburg, Germany

Department of Agricultural and Food Science, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

Department Forest Health and Biotic Interactions, Swiss Federal Institute WSL, Birmensdorf, Switzerland

Institute for Natural Science, Design and Sustainable Building, Mid Sweden University, Östersund, Sweden

Department of Forest- and Soil Sciences, Institute for Forest Ecology, BOKU University, Vienna, Austria

Department Ecological Mindsets, Acteon, Grenoble, France

Department Computer Language and Sciences, University of Malaga, Malaga, Spain

Mountain Ecosystems and Societies Laboratory, National Institute for Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Research, Saint Martin d`Heres, France

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 2.3 mil €

More information

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BIOREFOREST – Reforestation of forests and orchards after disturbances: A transformative action plan balancing socioeconomic and biodiversity needs

Context

The BIOREFOREST project aims to initiate a societal transformation towards optimising reforestation strategies for forests and orchards, integrating biodiversity as a key factor in the planning process. The project focuses on European forest sites affected by natural disturbances and reforested as monospecific stands (including orchards) or mixed-species stands, as well as naturally regenerated sites with minimal management intervention. Reforestation sites and their spatial and temporal development will be identified using satellite data from the past 50 years. Policy makers, forest and orchard owners will be engaged throughout the project to ensure reforestation strategies are practical, adopted widely, and aligned with the EU Forest Strategy, the Nature Restoration Law, and the Soil Mission.

Main objectives

The main objectives of BIOREFOREST are to:

- assess the impacts of different reforestation strategies on biodiversity and economic outcomes across spatial and temporal scales;
- evaluate the interaction between disturbance and reforestation success;
- develop site-specific reforestation approaches that balance ecological and economic needs, and provide tailor-made strategies for stakeholders;
- create a decision-support system that helps balance biodiversity goals and economic needs using eXplainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI);
- identify and extract key taxonomic and functional indicators to monitor current and future reforestation effects on biodiversity and to predict the impacts of reforestation strategies.

Main activities

BIOREFOREST will combine advanced data collection, modelling, AI and participatory approaches to guide reforestation decisions. The project will engage landowners and policy makers in a collaborative activity network, collecting site-specific information through customised surveys. At selected sites, systematic sampling of soil, leaves and deadwood will be carried out to gather ecological data. Plant biodiversity will be monitored using citizen science tools, which will not only provide valuable observations but also empower participants, increase their environmental self-efficacy, and encourage behavioural change. Multitrophic biodiversity will be analysed using metagenomics, and the resulting data will be functionally annotated. Remote sensing information, together with metadata from forest and orchard sites and biodiversity measurements, will support the modelling of ecosystem services and carbon sequestration using the LPJ-GUESS model. All collected data will then be used to train, validate and test XAI models capable of assessing site-specific reforestation strategies and identifying important markers for decision support. Throughout the project, forest and orchard owners, land managers and policy makers will participate in workshops, training sessions and self-sampling campaigns to ensure that reforestation strategies are practical, widely adopted and aligned with relevant EU policies.

BRET – Evidence-Based Strategies for a Biodiversity-positive Renewable Energy Transition

Context

The shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydropower, and bioenergy is essential for climate mitigation, but increasingly conflicts with biodiversity conservation. Large-scale renewable energy deployment often encroaches on natural ecosystems, causing habitat fragmentation, soil degradation, species displacement and disruption of terrestrial and aquatic systems. This creates a critical paradox: climate mitigation solutions may undermine biodiversity if ecological considerations are not integrated into planning and implementation. Although European policies endorse 'do-no-harm' principles, they offer limited guidance for renewable energy transition (RET) planning. Regulatory frameworks lack robust, standardised criteria to prevent biodiversity loss and assess cumulative impacts across landscapes. Addressing these gaps is urgent and strengthening biodiversity safeguards within decarbonisation pathways is fundamental to sustainable development, ecosystem resilience and the long-term credibility of climate and energy policies.

Main objectives

BRET aims to deliver evidence-based guidance for renewable energy planning and implementation. The project will:

- establish robust biodiversity baselines to inform site selection and spatial planning;
- develop a dynamic ecological impact assessment framework covering the full life cycle of renewable energy installations, integrating DPSIR analysis with stakeholder engagement;
- operationalise biodiversity valuation by combining ecological, economic, and socio-cultural perspectives;
- use integrated case studies across Europe to translate scientific evidence into actionable recommendations that strengthen biodiversity safeguards in renewable energy development.

Main activities

The project will generate policy-relevant evidence and guidance for biodiversity-positive renewable energy development. By combining Earth observation, field surveys and microclimate modelling, it will establish robust biodiversity baselines and assess impacts of renewable energy infrastructure on habitats, species and ecosystem functions and services. These insights will inform a practical ecological impact assessment framework, structured around the DPSIR approach, to strengthen biodiversity safeguards. The project will also develop biodiversity valuation methods that integrate ecological indicators with economic and socio-cultural perspectives, capturing how impacts are perceived, valued and contested by different actors.

Strong emphasis is placed on knowledge transfer and stakeholder engagement to ensure societal relevance and policy uptake. Policymakers, energy developers, environmental authorities, NGOs and local communities will be involved through interviews, deliberative workshops and case studies across Europe, enabling co-production of solutions and early testing of policy options. Results will be shared through policy briefs, technical guidance, open-access data and tools, scientific publications and targeted dialogue events aligned with European policy processes. By translating scientific evidence into actionable recommendations, the project will support transparent, biodiversity-sensitive spatial planning and help align renewable energy deployment with European biodiversity and climate objectives, strengthening public trust and long-term policy legitimacy.

Google Map showing Markbygden Wind Farm, a large-scale onshore wind farm in Sami reindeer land, Sweden, consisting of more than 1101 wind turbines

Partners of the project

Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Lund University, Lund, Sweden

Pyrenean Institute of Ecology, Spanish National Research Council (IPE-CSIC), Zaragoza, Spain

Department of Natural Resources, Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands

Faculty of Natural Sciences and Agroecology, Alecu Russo Bălți State University, Bălți, Moldova

Department of Landscape Architecture, Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.3 mil. €

More information

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https://bret-biodiversa.github.io/

Video: https://youtu.be/Mn10FZvV8tU

Bears and humans sharing space

Partners of the project

Department of Socio-Economics Studies, Management and Statistics University G. D'Annunzio of Chieti - Pescara, Italy

Department of Biology and Biotechnologies Charles DarwinUniversity of Rome La Sapienza, Rome, Italy

D-BAUG, PLUS, Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources, Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany

TRAMAS Group. Territory, Rurality, Agriculture, Environment and Sustainability, Institute for Advanced Social Studies, Córdoba, Spain

Department of Evolutionary Ecology, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Spanish National Research Council, Madrid, Spain

Department of Biodiversity and Environmental Management, University of León, León, Spain

Duration

15/03/2026 - 15/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.1 mil. €

More information

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CoexHuB – Leveraging transformative capacities for the governance of human-bear-coexistence in Europe. An integrated socialecological-institutional approach

Context

Addressing the challenge of biodiversity loss requires Social-Ecological Systems (SES) to develop new pathways that reconfigure human-environment relationships. In this context, reconfiguring human-large carnivore coexistence represents a pressing concern for global biodiversity conservation. CoexHuB focuses on brown bears (Ursus arctos), a symbolic and iconic species presenting unique challenges for coexistence management in human-modified European landscapes. By working with local partners to understand the ecological, social, and institutional factors that enable or hinder coexistence and to co-develop innovative solutions for coexistence, the project aims to ensure long-term conditions for human-bear coexistence. The project establishes 'hubs' of human-bear coexistence (CoexHuB) through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration networks across three regions and a gradient of coexistence contexts: the Central Apennines, where bears are highly inbred, stationary and critically endangered; the Cantabrian mountains, where bears are endangered but slowly increasing; and Slovenia, where a high-density bear population is actively managed and of least conservation concern. By adopting a social-ecological-institutional approach to policy design, CoexHuB aims to identify which coexistence actions and institutions are most likely to succeed under different context-specific conditions. This novel approach will provide an in-depth understanding of common barriers and opportunities for coexistence.

Main objectives

The overarching aim of CoexHuB is to build a set of recommendations that guide policymakers in integrating objectives for bear protection and social legitimacy into general and sectoral policies. The following objectives are central:

- integrating ecological, social, and institutional dimensions to identify priority areas for strengthening human-bear coexistence;
- combining scientific and local knowledge to understand and leverage key transformative capacities within SES, fostering human-bear coexistence and the recovery of isolated populations;
- developing and promoting innovative policies to enhance biodiversity protection and coexistence in priority areas.

Main activities

CoexHuB will engage local sectors to explore coexistence from ecological, social-ecological, and legal perspectives. Its interdisciplinary approach is grounded in SES analysis and applies the Coupled Infrastructure Systems framework to integrate research across ecological, social, and institutional domains. For each case study, the SES analysis will link ecological modelling, social-ecological network analysis, and institutional analysis. Throughout the project, key interest groups will participate through workshops, interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. In addition, a serious game will be developed to engage with the wider public, schoolchildren and students. Project results will be disseminated through a final science-policy symposium addressing human-bear coexistence and wider challenges of coexistence between humans and large carnivores.

The aim is to build social capital between researchers and other key parties in all case study sites. This knowledge will help practitioners and decision-makers design effective institutions and align locally tailored action plans and coexistence measures with EU-level policies supporting locally driven transformations toward coexistence.

EcologicalPilgrimage – Ecological Pilgrimage: Engaging with biodiversity through walking interventions

Context

This transdisciplinary project explores how the novel methodology and societal innovation of 'Ecological Pilgrimage' can transform the recreational use of hiking trails to meet biodiversity conservation objectives. Departing from historical connotations of colonial expeditions or religious ceremonies, pilgrimage is approached here as a reparative journey that enables meaningful engagement with non-human communities amid existential ecological crises. The project brings together diverse knowledge systems to generate insights on how biodiversity and human activities can coexist in reciprocal and regenerative ways. This ambition is guided by sustainability scientists who view biodiversity loss as a symptom of a profound relational crisis and highlight human-nature connectedness as key to sustainability transformations at individual and societal levels. The project draws theoretical and methodological guidance from 'ecological reparation' as a bottom-up, relational approach that seeks to mend damaged ecologies and bridge the nature-culture divide. The notion highlights transversal experimentation and the reinvention of lost knowledge, skills, and practices of repair.

Main objectives

The project's scientific objective is to develop and cultivate reparative practices that can transform human-nature relations and safeguard biodiversity in recreational settings. This objective is divided into three research questions: What can 'Ecological Pilgrimage' do as a methodological innovation? How can various stakeholders engage in reparative practices through walking interventions? How can 'Ecological Pilgrimage' be cultivated as an innovation for societal change?

Main activities

The project focuses on situated biodiversity issues along four hiking trails in Norway, Iceland, Finland, and Sweden, within landscapes shaped by industrial, conservation, and recreational activities. The walking interventions are designed to enable transnational learning among project partners, knowledge brokers, local guardians of ecological relations, hikers, outdoor and tourism associations, and representatives from municipalities and regional councils. By exploring how 'Ecological Pilgrimage' can contribute to the development of Nature-based Solutions and healthy ecosystems, the project expands the potential of outdoor recreation and tourism development, informs tourism strategies, and supports the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 to restore nature across Europe.

The routes of the Ecological Pilgrimage project pass through ecosystems shaped by forestry, infrastructure development, agriculture, hunting, tourism, and nature conservation

Partners of the project

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland

Natural Resources Institute Finland, Rovaniemi, Finland

Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Science, Uppsala, Sweden

Department of Business Administration, Umeå School of Business, Economics and Statistics, Umeå, Sweden

Nature and Society Department, Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, Lillehammer, Norway

Subcontracted partner 5a: National pilgrim centre, Trondheim, Norway

Philosophy and Archaeology, Faculty of History, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland

Duration

02/02/2026 - 01/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 973 thsd. €

More information

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https://blogi.eoppimispalvelut.fi/intraliving/ecological-pilgrimage/

Stakeholder engagement and on-site learning in a Danube floodplain area

Partners of the project

Department of Ecosystem Management, Climate and Biodiversity, Institute of Hydrobiology and Aquatic Ecosystem Management, BOKU University, Vienna, Austria

Department of Aquatic Ecology, University of Duisburg-Essen, Essen, Germany

Water Team, Ecologic Institute GmbH, Berlin, Germany

Environmental Sciences, Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen, The Netherlands

WaterITech, WaterITech ApS, Skanderborg, Denmark

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.1 mil. €

More information

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FLOODTRAIN – From knowledge to action: Empowerment and Training of Floodplain Restoration Managers

Context

FLOODTRAIN advances Europe's Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) by translating floodplain science into practical, evidence-based training that accelerates policy-aligned, landscape-scale restoration. By focusing on floodplains – critical for biodiversity, flood retention, drought mitigation, carbon sequestration and ecosystem health – the project targets high-impact societal benefits. It closes the science-practice gap through guidance co-creation with practitioners, land users and local communities.

Based on the MERLIN Academy and web app, interactive tools will support evidence-based planning, financing and monitoring of restoration. Comprehensive meta-analyses synthesise best practices into actionable strategies, improving site selection, methods and success assessment. A training programme for 'Floodplain Restoration Managers' builds capacity across authorities and NGOs and supports consistent implementation across regions. The approach enhances compliance with EU policies and enables measurable progress towards NRR targets. Overall, FLOODTRAIN delivers policy relevance, societal impact and durable stakeholder collaboration to accelerate biodiversity recovery and climate resilience.

Main objectives

FLOODTRAIN aims to advance transformative floodplain restoration by transferring knowledge between science and practice and offering a certified curriculum to restoration managers. It will:

- deepen understanding of ecological and functional restoration outcomes by synthesising scientific knowledge across Europe;
- identify how restoration improves ecosystems and services such as flood protection and water quality, and explain how outcomes vary by context;
- translate science into practical guidance bridging researchers and on-the-ground practitioners;
- design and deliver a transformative training programme with digital tools and certification;
- engage stakeholders to minimise conflicts;
- align with EU policies to scale successful approaches;
- enable shared learning across countries.

Main activities

- Establishing and managing a community of practice based on pre-proposal survey responses from consultancies, water boards, NGOs and government agencies. These insights help to refine needs, prioritise module topics, formats, and languages, and identify additional content experts for co-development.
- Conducting a systematic meta-analysis to quantify the effectiveness of floodplain restoration on ecological (biodiversity, hydrology) and economic outcomes. In parallel, developing a case study database to document restoration projects across Europe.
- Synthesising evidence-based data as the basis of the digital learning modules, covering legal background, ecosystem services, prioritisation/site selection, stakeholder partnerships, effect analysis and case studies. The integration of theory into practice is achieved by videos, hands-on exercises and GIS cartography (MERLIN web app).
- Disseminating the course and certification through a targeted outreach to professionals, social media campaigns and practitioner journal publications. First test-runs will be carried out within the established community of practice before being upscaled to the European context.

ICE BRIDGE – Bridging Ice Climate Technologies and Governance for Biodiversity in the Arctic

Context

The Arctic Ocean is in crisis, with accelerating sea ice loss threatening global biodiversity, climate stability, and Indigenous livelihoods. While climate engineering technologies, specifically sea ice geoengineering (i.e., technologies designed to manipulate the region's albedo and thermal energy) are increasingly proposed to restore ice, the current legal framework is fragmented and lacks a single international regulation governing these interventions. It remains uncertain how these technologies might impact complex marine ecosystems or exacerbate social inequalities. Consequently, there is an urgent need for new governance frameworks to ensure that any potential deployment of sea ice geoengineering addresses biodiversity loss without creating new environmental or social injustices.

Main objectives

Focusing on three key regions (the Beaufort Sea, Barents Sea, and Central Arctic Ocean), ICE BRIDGE will contribute to transformative governance change, providing policy recommendations that align Arctic climate interventions with the Convention on Biological Diversity and EU strategies. ICE BRIDGE aims to develop governance frameworks that ensure the responsible use of geoengineering technologies to mitigate and reverse biodiversity loss while promoting environmental justice. Specifically, it will produce regionally specific biodiversity and climate modelling data across three Arctic Large Marine Ecosystems to assess the risks and benefits of sea ice geoengineering. The project aims to create governance models that are equitable, transparent, and grounded in the precautionary principle.

Main activities

The main activities of ICE BRIDGE will be:

- conduct a systematic legal analysis of international and regional frameworks to identify regulatory gaps regarding sea ice geoengineering;
- evaluate climate and environmental justice implications to ensure risks and benefits are equitably distributed among global and regional stakeholders;
- use advanced climate modelling to simulate how different interventions affect ocean circulation, sea ice stability, and biodiversity;
- assess biodiversity impacts on marine food webs and species distributions using long-term ecological data and Indigenous Knowledge; and
- facilitate climate science diplomacy and participatory engagement with policymakers and Indigenous communities to collaboratively design governance scenarios.

Melting sea ice at Pond Inlet, Nunavut, Canada

Partners of the project

Stefansson Arctic Institute, University of Akureyri, Akureyri, Iceland

Faculty of Social Sciences, Nord University, Bodø, Norway

Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland

Húsavík Research Center, University of Iceland, Húsavík, Iceland

Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research, Bremerhaven, Germany

Department of Geography, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Cerdanyola del Vallès, Spain

Duration

01/01/2026 - 31/12/2028

Total grant

Approx. 1.3 mil. €

More information

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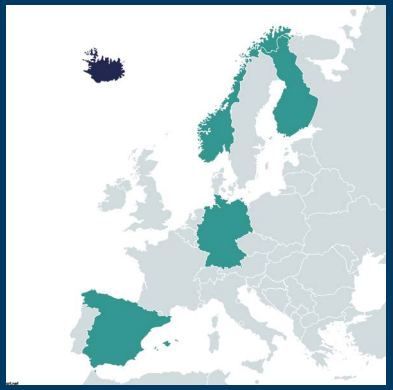

Invasion of Austrocylindropuntia subulata in the Natural Park of Cabo de Gata, Spain

Partners of the project

Functional Ecology Group, Experimental Station in Arid Zones of the Spanish National Research Council, Almería, Spain

Department of Invasion Ecology, Institute of Botany of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Pruhonice, Czech Republic

Centre for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Ecology Lab, University of Konstanz, Konstanz, Germany

Institute of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, National Taiwan University, Taipei City, Taiwan

Ecology and Zoology Department, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil

Centre for Statistics in Ecology, Environment and Conservation, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden

Department of Geosciences, Environment and Society, Bruxelles University, Bruxelles, Belgium

Department of Biological Sciences, University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa

Centre for Science and Knowledge, Biodiversity Assessment and Knowledge Team, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Gland, Switzerland

Department of Biology, Fribourg University, Fribourg, Switzerland

Duration

02/02/2026 - 01/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.5 mil. €

More information

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InvaSyn – Invasion Syndromes: transforming the understanding and management of biological invasions

Context

Human activities are moving species around the world at an unprecedented rate. Most introduced species cause no harm, but a small proportion become invasive, spreading rapidly and damaging biodiversity, ecosystems, economies and human well-being. As a result, invasive species are now recognised as one of the main global drivers of biodiversity loss. Managing biological invasions is a major societal challenge, yet predicting which species will become invasive, and where, remains extremely difficult. Invasions are highly context-dependent, influenced by species traits, environmental conditions and humans. The InvaSyn project proposes a new approach to managing biological invasions based on identifying recurring 'invasion syndromes'. By integrating ecological, social and economic information at a global scale, the project aims to develop practical, evidence-based strategies to support more effective responses to biological invasions.

Main objectives

- Group invasion events into shared 'invasion syndromes' based on similar causes, impacts and management needs.
- Collaborate with policymakers, managers, NGOs and local communities to improve invasive species policies and management.

Main activities

- Build a comprehensive global database on plant invasions, integrating ecological, social and economic information.
- Use machine learning to identify patterns and classify invasion events into distinct invasion syndromes.
- Hold workshops with policymakers, practitioners and communities to validate results and incorporate practical knowledge.
- Evaluate how the invasion syndromes approach can be incorporated into existing policies.
- Design tailored management options for each identified invasion syndrome.
- Share data and tools openly and communicate results through scientific and outreach activities.

By shifting the focus from individual invasions to broader invasion contexts, InvaSyn will help:

- make invasive species management more efficient and cost-effective;
- improve cooperation between scientists, policymakers and practitioners;
- enable proactive and effective responses to biological invasions.

JustBioSolar – Green Energy Transitions in Europe: Impacts on Biodiversity, Landscapes and Justice

Context

Solar energy is a key pillar of Europe's climate mitigation strategy, but its rapid expansion is transforming rural landscapes where biodiversity, agriculture, and cultural heritage intersect. Large-scale ground-mounted solar installations require substantial land, which can lead to habitat loss, landscape fragmentation, and social conflict, especially when projects are planned without meaningful involvement of local communities.

Current planning and assessment processes often do not sufficiently take into account biocultural diversity (the interdependence of biodiversity, local knowledge, and cultural values) as well as questions of environmental justice, such as who decides, who benefits, and who bears the costs of solar energy projects. If these dimensions are ignored, the green energy transition risks reproducing extractive and unjust patterns known from fossil fuel systems, undermining both biodiversity protection and public acceptance.

JustBioSolar addresses this challenge by examining ground-mounted solar energy deployment as a biodiversity-climate-society nexus, aiming to support a renewable energy transition that is not only low-carbon, but also nature-positive and socially just.

Main objectives

JustBioSolar aims to:

- Assess how large-scale solar projects affect biodiversity, including biocultural diversity, and perceptions of justice in different European rural contexts;
- Identify planning, governance, and communication practices that enable socially just and biodiversity-friendly solar development;
- Understand how power relations and policy discourses shape solar energy decisions from local to European levels;
- Co-develop practical principles and pathways for sustainable solar energy landscapes together with stakeholders.

Main activities

The project conducts in-depth case studies in Germany, Spain, Italy, and the Czech Republic, where solar deployment is rapidly expanding, complemented by cases in Sweden and Colombia that illuminate biodiversity and justice impacts associated with raw material extraction for solar technologies. JustBioSolar engages farmers, local residents, conservation groups, energy developers, and policymakers through a participatory approach that integrates scientific evidence with local knowledge and values. Comparative analysis across European cases identifies recurring trade-offs and conflict hotspots, generating practical guidance for policymakers and planners on anticipating risks, improving participation, and better aligning solar development with biodiversity and justice objectives. Engagement with decision-makers aims to improve planning practices, strengthen community involvement, and support policies that balance climate mitigation with biodiversity conservation and social equity.

A solar park transforming the landscape and raising questions about nature, energy, and land use

Partners of the project

Working Group Environmental Justice in Agricultural Landscapes, Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research, Müncheberg, Germany

BC3, Basque Centre for Climate Change, Leioa, Spain

Department of Social-Ecological Analysis, Global Change Research Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno, Czech Republic

Institute for Environmental Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Research Unit Land Change Science, Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, Birmensdorf, Switzerland

Centre for Sustainability Studies, Lund University, Lund, Sweden

Department of Civil, Environmental and Architectural Engineering, University of Padua, Padova, Italy

Duration

01/03/2026 - 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.8 mil. €

More information

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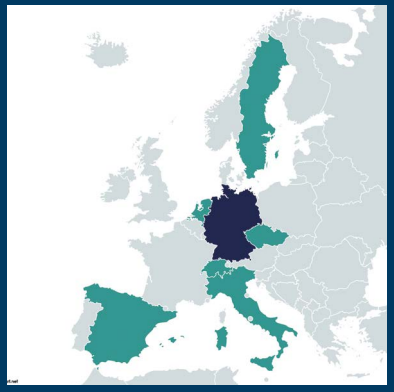

Debris washed up by the sea on a beach in Indonesia

Partners of the project

Faculty of Natural Sciences, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Department of Forestry, Biodiversity and Tourism, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda

Centre of Transdisciplinary and Sustainable Science, IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia

School of Arts, Science and Humanities, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

Institute of Environmental Science and Technology & Department of Political Science and Public Law, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

Institute for Comparative Federalism, Eurac Research, Bolzano, Italy

Educational Sciences, Free University of Brussels, Brussels, Belgium

Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

SwedBio, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Sweden

Soka Gakkai International, Office for UN Affairs, Grand Saconnex, Switzerland

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.7 mil. €

More information

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LEVER – Enhancing PLurivErsality for a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA): GoVERning the Climate-Biodiversity-Pollution Nexus

Context

The climate-biodiversity-pollution nexus represents a critical convergence of environmental challenges. Addressing it is essential to halt or reverse biodiversity loss, yet major obstacles persist. Effective management requires holistic strategies that address the intertwined issues of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. To realise these goals, many management instruments have been put forward. However, poorly designed instruments can inadvertently exacerbate trade-offs related to climate mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. There is a need to better understand how to manage the nexus in an effective and equitable way to ensure transformations toward more sustainable and just futures. In this context, Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA) are gaining increased attention. HRBA act as cross-cutting approaches to key frameworks, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and are not merely another instrument but represent a new paradigm that provides a transformative meaning to current management instruments. However, applying an HRBA remains challenging, as anthropocentric interpretations of HRBA often struggle to recognise the validity of different ways of life, which are not necessarily comparable, as well as the crucial role of non-human beings.

Main objectives

The objective of LEVER is to enhance pluriversality (the recognition of radically different ways of life) for HRBA which will serve as a transformative lever for the equitable and effective governance of the climate-biodiversity-pollution nexus.

Main activities

This will be achieved by integrating perspectives from law, the humanities, social sciences, and ecology through an in-depth empirical analysis of case studies from five countries: Brazil, Indonesia, Spain, Sweden, and Uganda. In these five countries, LEVER will work towards understanding local perspectives on the climate-biodiversity-pollution nexus, develop a pluriversal legal glossary and framework, explore HRBA effectiveness through participatory scenarios, identify cross-case enabling conditions for transformation, and, finally, operationalise policy guidance at national and international levels. This includes dialogue workshops with relevant CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) caucuses and guidelines for practitioners and decision-makers on how to operationalise HRBA for pluriversal perspectives.

MARE-WIND – Biodiversity and Offshore Wind: Understanding Transformative Impacts on Marine Ecosystems

Context

Offshore wind energy is a key component of Europe's climate transition. While offshore wind farms help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, they also alter marine environments by modifying habitats, influencing food webs, generating electromagnetic fields, and potentially affecting the distribution of chemical pollutants. These impacts occur in seas already under pressure from climate change and human activities, such as the North Sea. However, offshore wind planning still mainly focuses on technical and economic aspects, with limited consideration of biodiversity. MARE-WIND addresses this gap by providing accessible scientific knowledge to support offshore wind development that respects marine ecosystems.

Main objectives

MARE-WIND aims to support offshore wind development that is compatible with marine biodiversity protection. The project seeks to:

- understand how offshore wind farms affect marine biodiversity, food webs, and pollutant transfer;
- assess how electromagnetic fields from subsea power cables influence fish and marine mammals;
- provide science-based knowledge and tools to help policymakers and stakeholders integrate biodiversity into offshore wind planning.

Main activities

- Scientific activities: MARE-WIND investigates offshore wind farm areas in the North Sea through field observations, laboratory analyses, and ecological modelling. Marine organisms, from mussels and fish to seals and porpoises, are studied to understand changes in food webs, contaminant transfer, and species behaviour in relation to wind farm infrastructures and subsea power cables.
- Dissemination, knowledge transfer and stakeholder engagement: Stakeholder engagement is a core component of the project. Policymakers, offshore wind developers, environmental agencies, NGOs, and fisheries representatives are involved through interviews, workshops, and dialogue events. Project results are shared via policy briefs, visual communication tools, and accessible outreach activities to ensure usability beyond the scientific community.
- Expected societal and policy impact: MARE-WIND delivers science-based evidence to support biodiversity-friendly offshore wind planning. The project contributes to European and national policies on biodiversity conservation, marine spatial planning, and renewable energy, helping decision-makers balance climate objectives with the protection of marine ecosystems.

Offshore wind farm infrastructure in the North Sea, illustrating the rapid expansion of marine renewable energy

Partners of the project

Freshwater and Oceanic sciences Unit of reSearch (FOCUS), Veterinary Public Health (FRARAH), University of Liège, Liège, Belgium

Faculty of Humanities, department of interdisciplinary studies of culture, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Foundation, Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research, Büsum, Germany

Department of Biology, Ghent University, Gent, Belgium

Flanders Marine Institute, Research Department - Marine Observation Centre, Oostende, Belgium

Duration

01/03/2026 - 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.1 mil. €

More information

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Fishing lure collection from a marine protected area

Partners of the project

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Department of Biology, University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy

MARBEC, University of Montpellier, Montpellier, France

Biodiversity and Conservation in the Anthropocene Lab, Spanish National Research Council, Barcelona, Spain

BlueSeeds, Bordeaux, France

Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland

High Institute of Computer Science and Multimedia of Sfax, University of Sfax, Sfax, Tunisia

Institution of Historical Studies, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

Institute for Coastal and Marine Research, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa

Faculty of Aquatic Sciences, Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey

Zoology Department, University of Zululand, Kwadlangezwa, South Africa

Duration

01/03/2026 - 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.9 mil. €

More information

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MPA4Fish – Socio-ecological planning of no-fishing MPAs to benefit fisheries

Context

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a proven Nature-based Solution that can simultaneously support biodiversity recovery, ecosystem functioning, and human well-being through sustainable fisheries. However, MPAs are often perceived as conflicting with fisheries, creating political inertia and limiting effective protection despite strong ecological, economic, and social evidence of their benefits. This conflict represents a major obstacle to addressing biodiversity loss and declining coastal fisheries, particularly for small-scale and artisanal communities. By reframing MPAs as a tool that can directly support food security, socio-economic stability, and ecosystem resilience, this project addresses a pressing biodiversity and societal challenge while contributing to international policy targets, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Main objectives

MPA4Fish aims to show how MPAs can become a solution to the problem of declining fisheries experienced by coastal communities. Specifically, the project seeks to demonstrate how well-designed and effectively managed no-take MPAs can enhance fishery productivity through spillover, safeguard genetically diverse broodstock, and stabilise fisheries over time, while simultaneously restoring marine biodiversity. By transforming the perceived conflict between fisheries and conservation into a synergistic relationship, the project aims to support socially equitable, low-cost, and climate-resilient fisheries management that benefits both people and nature.

Main activities

The project will combine global, regional, and local-scale scientific analyses with strong stakeholder engagement. Core activities include global and regional modelling of fisheries and biodiversity data to identify areas where no-take MPAs could maximise fishery and biodiversity benefits, alongside ecosystem modelling to assess spillover and fishing effort redistribution. Local and regional case studies will engage fishing communities and authorities through participatory processes to discuss the idea of no-take zone proposals, supported by ecological, historical, and socio-economic evidence. Socio-economic analyses and the development and testing of innovative financial mechanisms will strengthen fishers' capacity to transition toward biodiversity-positive fisheries. Dissemination and knowledge transfer will occur through policy-relevant syntheses, stakeholder workshops, case study reporting, decision-support tools, and a final blueprint for fishery-led MPAs planning. Together, these activities are expected to influence marine spatial planning, reduce conflict between fisheries and conservation, support policy implementation toward 30% ocean protection by 2030, and deliver tangible benefits for food security, biodiversity recovery, and coastal livelihoods.

MultiDiv – Diversity in process: Towards multispecies assemblages for biodiversity governance

Context

Transformative changes in societies' relationships with nature are urgently needed to halt and reverse biodiversity decline, yet such change remains elusive. Biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change are interlinked challenges that are cross-scale, dynamic, and intertwined with societies that themselves are characterised by multiple understandings, values, interests, and needs. Existing governance approaches are failing to address the complexity of these interlinked problems and to engage with the deeply rooted social and social-ecological relations that produce and reproduce them. The aim of the MultiDiv project is to propose a novel way of conceptualising these interlinked problems that is grounded in process-relational philosophy, and a relational and 'naturecultural' understanding of society that includes non-human actors. Building on the concept of multispecies assemblages it will develop modes of understanding entanglements between different processes across scales (such as biophysical, social, social-ecological, environmental policy making, value changes, etc.) and temporalities. The gained understanding will provide a new basis for transforming biodiversity governance to better fit these interlinked problems and their multiple interdependencies within societies and nature.

Main objectives

- Apply a multispecies assemblage perspective and process-relational understandings of diversity to cases of biodiversity decline in the Camargue (France) and the Gulf of Gabès (Tunisia).
- Develop novel methodologies for tracing assemblages and their capacities to affect biodiversity.
- Co-develop with stakeholders new forms of relational governance that increase its potential to address biodiversity decline.

Main activities

The project will configure multispecies assemblages involving the blue crab in the Gulf of Gabès and salinisation processes in the Camargue through participatory mapping workshops, interviews, ecological fieldwork, multispecies ethnographies and simulation modelling. These methods will be used to examine the biodiversity-related knowledge among relevant actors and their multispecies and affective relations within specific biotopes. This will open opportunities to co-develop multispecies governance approaches with representatives of governance bodies and to identify ways to transform towards them. Finally, we will synthesise our learning across cases to enhance causal multispecies understandings of biodiversity. The project contributes to transformative change of biodiversity governance through reframing complex biodiversity challenges in ways that attend to the entangled nature of multiple crises and the relational and emotional nature of people's capacities to act. MultiDiv's relevance lies in the novel ways it targets diverse values, paradigms and knowledge systems of different actors and brings them into relations with each other to foster transformation.

Zarzis Fisherman with Blue Crab baskets. The Blue Crab is an invasive species which has become a commercial product while at the same time having massive biodiversity implications

Partners of the project

Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Joint Research Unit - Knowledge, Environment and Societies, The French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), Montpellier, France

Department Dynamics and conservation of biodiversity, Centre of Functional and Evolutionary Ecology, Montpellier, France

Department of Anthropology, Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Institute of Art History and College for Social Sciences and Humanities, The Ruhr University Bochum, Bochum, Germany

The Higher Institute of Applied Biology of Medenine (ISBAM), Medenine, Tunisia

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.3 mil. €

More information

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www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-projects/multidiv.html

Canopy of a mixed species experimental plantation with native trees in Rwanda

Partners of the project

Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Gothenburg (UGOT), University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Aas, Norway

Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

Center of Excellence in Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management, University of Rwanda, Huye, Rwanda

School of Forestry, Biodiversity and Conservation, University of Rwanda, Musanze, Rwanda

International Centre for Research in Agroforestry, Kigali, Rwanda

Rwanda Forestry Authority, Huye, Rwanda

Department of Biology, Official University of Bukavu, Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo

Department of Biology, University of Burundi, Bujumbura, Burundi

Duration

01/01/2026 - 31/12/2028

Total grant

Approx. 1.0 mil. €

More information

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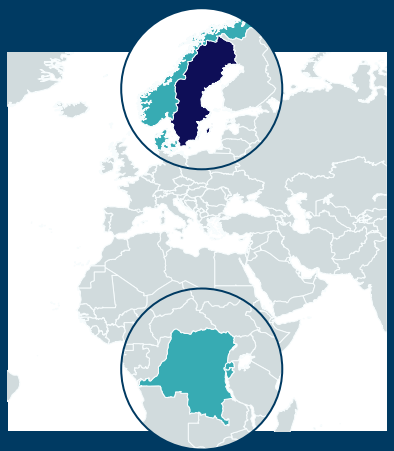

OpTIBES – Optimisation of Tree Species selection for Improved Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Context

Forest restoration and agroforestry are key nature-based solutions to biodiversity loss, climate change, and declining rural livelihoods. In the Albertine Rift of Central and East Africa – a global biodiversity hotspot – forest plantations have largely relied on a few exotic tree species, leading to landscape homogenisation, reduced ecosystem resilience, and limited benefits for biodiversity and local communities. Climate change further increases the risk of restoration failure when tree species are poorly matched to local environmental conditions. Native multipurpose tree species offer major opportunities to enhance biodiversity, ecosystem services, and human well-being, but their wider use is constrained by limited knowledge of their climate sensitivity, performance, and socio-economic suitability. OpTIBES addresses these gaps by developing climate-adapted, socially grounded strategies for tree species selection in forest restoration and agroforestry, with a primary focus on Rwanda and complementary work in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Main objectives

The overall objective of OpTIBES is to provide evidence-based, climate-resilient, and purpose-driven recommendations for native tree species selection that maximise biodiversity, ecosystem services, and livelihoods in the Albertine Rift. Specifically, the project aims to:

- assess livelihood needs, ecosystem services, and environmental suitability of native tree species;
- evaluate tree species performance under diverse climatic, soil, and management conditions using field trials and monitoring;
- develop practical, spatially explicit tools and frameworks to guide restoration and agroforestry planning under current and future climates.

Main activities

OpTIBES integrates socio-economic research, ecology, and advanced monitoring. Participatory surveys, focus groups, market studies, and stakeholder workshops are used to identify livelihood priorities, cultural values, ecosystem service demands, and barriers to adopting native tree species. Ecosystem services are assessed through literature synthesis, expert judgement, and stakeholder-driven prioritisation. The field trials will evaluate the growth, survival, climate sensitivity, and management performance of selected native species across environmental gradients. Ground-based measurements are integrated with satellite and drone imagery, using machine-learning approaches to monitor tree vitality, biomass, species composition, and functional diversity at various scales.

Findings will be synthesised into a multi-criteria species recommendation framework combining socio-economic relevance, ecosystem services, and ecological performance for practitioners, extension services, NGOs, and policymakers.

Dissemination follows a science-with-society approach through participatory workshops, policy briefs, training materials, community outreach, and open-access publications. By engaging forestry and agricultural authorities, OpTIBES supports the uptake of scientific knowledge into policy-relevant guidance for biodiversity-positive, climate-resilient restoration and agroforestry in the Albertine Rift and beyond.

PaCE – Peace and Conservation of Ecology at Disputed Seas

Context

The South China Sea or West Philippine Sea (SCS/WPS) forms part of the Coral Triangle with high marine biodiversity. It is also a highly contested maritime area with overlapping claims by Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. This maritime route between the Indo-Pacific and Europe is of major importance for external trade of European countries, such as Germany, with 40 percent of its external trade passing through this route. As claimant states intensify efforts to assert territorial control through infrastructure development and military patrols, marine biodiversity and resource-dependent local communities are seemingly negatively affected.

Main objectives

PaCE will bring together a transnational and interdisciplinary group of researchers with Southeast Asia geographical expertise, to assess the ecological and socio-economic impacts of geopolitical conflict in the SCS/WPS on biodiversity, regional trade systems, and the livelihoods of coastal and neighbouring communities. The overarching goal of PaCE is to demonstrate the high transformative potential of peacebuilding to safeguard biodiversity and improve local livelihoods especially in highly disputed areas such as the SCS/WPS. The project will:

- identify direct and indirect interdependencies between marine biodiversity and different sectors in claimant countries of the SCS/WPS;
- assess the degree of interconnection between biodiversity loss and geopolitical conflict in the SCS/WPS (notwithstanding lack of baseline data and confounding factors such as climate change); and
- examine the role of science diplomacy in leveraging peace for transformative change towards biodiversity conservation, human well-being, and justice within the SCS/WPS region.

Main activities

PaCE will holistically address the biodiversity and geopolitical issue of the SCS/WPS from an interdisciplinary multi-scalar and multi-stakeholder research perspective through the following work packages:

- interdependence between biodiversity and socio-economic and human well-being,
- interconnections of biodiversity loss and geopolitical conflict in the SCS/WPS,
- science diplomacy and peacebuilding for the biodiversity conservation in the SCS/WPS.

We foresee PaCE as democratising peacebuilding and science diplomacy by extending participation to researchers, policymakers and so-called 'common folk' also known as 常民 (in Mandarin) or karaniwang tao (in Filipino), using different media (e.g., comic books, technical manuals, peer-reviewed journal articles) to reach out to these diverse stakeholders.

View of the South China Sea / West Philippine Sea from Rizal, Palawan, Philippines

Partners of the project

Department of Wood, Forest, and Environment, Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, Eberswalde, Germany

Institute of Marine Affairs and Resources Management, National Taiwan Ocean University, Keelung, Taiwan

Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 938 thsd. €

More information

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PathChange will investigate conditions and leverage points for constructive conflict transformation in European wetland restoration

Partners of the project

Research Hub Social-Ecological Systems / Research Unit Water and Land Use, Institute for Social-Ecological Research, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Team Nature & Society, The Research Institute for Nature and Forest, Brussels, Belgium

Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

Research Centre in Systems Ecology and Sustainability, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania

Department of Biology and Geology, University of Almeria, La Canada des San Urbano, Almeria, Spain

Duration

01/03/2026 - 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 934 thsd. €

More information

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PathChange – Pathways of constructive conflict transformation to foster transformative change in wetland restoration

Context

European wetlands are of high ecological value for societies. At the same time, they are increasingly under threat. Their sustainable preservation requires not only sound scientific foundations, but also collaboratively developed visions and strategies. The European Nature Restoration Law provides a new window of opportunity to halt and reverse wetland and biodiversity loss. Its transformative impact and success depend on its effective implementation by the EU Member States. However, implementing restoration measures to bend the curve of biodiversity loss poses major social and political challenges arising from conflicts and trade-offs over land use, which arise from heterogeneous interests, values, and knowledge among relevant actors, as well as inconsistent policies and governance structures.

Main objectives

PathChange aims to produce actionable knowledge for constructive conflict transformation in wetland restoration to overcome barriers caused by incoherent policies, as well as conflicts and trade-offs over land use.
Our objectives are to:

- identify success factors for constructive conflict transformation;
- increase governance coherence for biodiversity-positive wetland restoration;
- co-create visions and pathways for constructive conflict transformation;
- integrate transdisciplinary and transnational knowledge.

Main activities

The project pursues a social-ecological systems (SES) approach, enabling a comprehensive analysis that integrates the multifaceted roles of wetlands, highlighting their ecological and societal benefits. To generate an in-depth understanding of challenges for transformative change in wetland restoration projects, empirical case studies of wetlands in Germany, Belgium, Romania and Spain will be conducted to develop visions and pathways that strengthen synergies and facilitate nature positive transformative change. Our empirical research follows a multi-actor approach and is designed as an integrative, participatory and learning-oriented effort among scientific partners and societal stakeholders from multiple sectors (policy, administration, conservation, NGOs, agriculture, fishery, tourism and local populations).
Key activities include:

- developing an integrative framework for conflict transformation that maps the multitude of actors, governance, ecological entities, and their interrelations;
- analysing (in)coherence of governance structures and policies as well as developing integrated approaches for governance coherence;
- co-creating shared visions and transformative pathways for wetland restoration by means of stakeholder-workshops in the study areas;
- fostering transnational synthesis and knowledge exchange.

PEACE – Participatory Engagement for Adaptation and Conservation Efforts

Context

Biodiversity loss and increasing human-wildlife interactions are among the most pressing challenges in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. In regions where protected areas border agricultural and pastoral communities, conservation success depends not only on ecological knowledge, but also on how decisions are made, who is involved, and whether policies are perceived as fair and legitimate. Top-down conservation approaches often fail to address local realities, leading to conflicts, low compliance, and limited long-term impact. PEACE addresses these challenges in the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area by developing and testing participatory, data-informed governance approaches that connect biodiversity protection with local livelihoods and adaptation needs.

Main objectives

PEACE aims to support transformative biodiversity governance by:

- strengthening inclusive, participatory decision-making on conservation and human-wildlife interaction;
- linking automatic biodiversity monitoring with local and policy-relevant decision processes;
- fostering long-term cooperation, trust, and shared responsibility for biodiversity conservation.

Main activities

PEACE combines ecological monitoring, social science, and stakeholder engagement in an integrated, adaptive framework.

First, the project deploys automatic biodiversity monitoring (e.g., acoustic sensors, camera traps, biologging) complemented by remote-sensing and ranger/field observations, to generate near-real-time information on species movements, and human-wildlife interaction hotspots. These data are translated into accessible indicators that can directly inform local and regional conservation decisions.

Second, PEACE establishes Citizens' Juries as inclusive deliberative forums where community members jointly discuss conservation challenges, trade-offs, and response options. These processes are supported by a Transdisciplinary Panel of scientists, policymakers, and practitioners, ensuring that local perspectives are combined with scientific evidence and institutional feasibility.

Third, the project uses experimental learning games and future-oriented workshops to make complex conservation dilemmas tangible, support collective learning, and enable communities to explore long-term consequences of different management and compensation options.

Together, these activities allow PEACE to co-develop context-specific strategies for biodiversity protection, conflict mitigation, and compensation schemes that are perceived as fair, evidence-based, and actionable.

By embedding monitoring data into participatory governance processes, PEACE creates feedback loops that support adaptive management over time and generates actionable lessons for policy learning across scales. It supports learning at local, national, and transboundary levels and contributes to implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly regarding inclusive governance, benefit-sharing, and human-wildlife coexistence. By developing scalable participatory tools and governance models, PEACE provides transferable insights for other regions facing similar biodiversity-livelihood trade-offs.

Community meeting in the Banhine–Gonarezhou corridor region (Mozambique), discussing local conservation priorities

Partners of the project

School of Business and Economics, Marburg University, Marburg, Germany

Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Stockholm, Sweden

Department of Biology, Marburg University, Marburg, Germany

Computational Evolution, ETH Zurich, Basel, Switzerland

Faculty of Economics and Statistics, University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria

Ecosystems Department, Institute of Natural Resources, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

Department of Biotechnology and Biological Sciences, University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa

Department of Biology, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Centre for Geography and Environmental Science, University of Exeter, Penryn, United Kingdom

Executive Office, Peace Parks Foundation, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Biodiversity Department, Sylva, Weßling, Germany

Faculty of Sciences, Department of Biological Sciences, Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique

Duration

01/03/2026 – 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.8 mil. €

More information

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Community engagement

Partners of the project

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Institute of Applied Ecology, Rome, Italy

Geography Department, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany

Faculty of Life Sciences, Department of Botany and Biodiversity Research, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.1 mil. €

More information

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POWERSHIFT – Understanding and Shifting Power in Biodiversity Conservation by Integrating Insights from Social Change Movements

Context

Despite ambitious global commitments to halt biodiversity loss, conservation efforts often struggle to deliver equitable and lasting outcomes. Many initiatives focus on ecological solutions while overlooking the power dynamics that shape decision-making, resource access, and whose knowledge is valued. As a result, conservation actions can reinforce inequalities, marginalise local and Indigenous actors, and remain fragmented across scales.

POWERSHIFT addresses this challenge by placing power and collective action at the centre of biodiversity conservation. The project examines how power operates within and across conservation initiatives, and how greater power awareness can help conservation actors move from isolated efforts towards a more cohesive, inclusive, and transformative movement.

Main objectives

POWERSHIFT aims to improve biodiversity governance by understanding and shifting power relations in conservation. Its main objectives are to:

- analyse how power dynamics shape conservation practices and outcomes across contexts and scales;
- strengthen strategic alignment among conservation actors through participatory futures and scenario-building;
- support reflexive and learning-oriented conservation practices by addressing positionality and assumptions;
- translate power-sensitive insights into policy and practice through engagement with policymakers, conservation networks, and social movements.

Main activities

POWERSHIFT works across local, national, and international levels and combines social science, ecology, and participatory approaches to generate actionable, power-sensitive knowledge. Key activities include:

- comparative case studies of conservation initiatives dealing with human-wildlife conflicts in Europe, Africa, and Central Asia, involving local communities, NGOs, practitioners, and authorities;
- interviews and surveys with conservation practitioners, initiative leaders, and network coordinators to examine how power dynamics influence collaboration and effectiveness;
- participatory workshops where conservation actors map power relations, explore future scenarios, and align strategies for transformative change, supporting knowledge co-production and collective learning;
- action-learning and reflective processes that help conservation actors adapt practices and build capacity to address power imbalances;
- structured dialogues with policymakers and cross-sectoral actors to co-develop power-sensitive policy recommendations;
- exchanges with broader social and environmental movements to strengthen alliances beyond the conservation sector.

Project results are shared through policy briefs, practitioner-oriented tools, stakeholder meetings, and open-access publications, supporting more inclusive and effective biodiversity conservation.

ProEcoRice – A transformative production system for making rice paddies biodiverse and climate neutral

Context

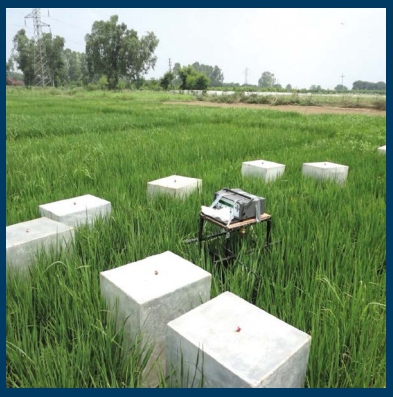
This project pursues the development and testing of a novel production system that transforms predominantly monocultured rice (*Oryza sativa*) paddies into multifunctional sustainable ecosystems. With a multi- and transdisciplinary approach, the project ensures an ideal combination of technical and socio-economic expertise and engagement of a broad range of actors for maximised impact. The project has an equally balanced focus on addressing and mitigating the anthropogenic drivers of biodiversity loss as well as the socio-economic and policy drivers (hindering and enabling factors) for successful adoption of the proposed novel production system at scale. Rice (*Oryza sativa*) is a major global staple cultivated on over 165 million hectares worldwide. Approximately 76 % of production comes from irrigated lowland systems, often managed as intensive monocultures with multiple cropping cycles per year, resulting in biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and environmental contamination. Intercropping as a diversification strategy is applied to enhance on-farm diversity, climate resilience and sustainability in various agricultural production systems, though to a limited extent in rice. Hence there is a strong need to develop new cultivation methods for rice, embedded in innovative strategies for greenhouse gas emission mitigation and enhancement of on-farm biodiversity.

Main objectives

The overall goal of this project is 'to develop a Transformative Production System (TPS), utilising the functional diversity of plant species available in different rice-growing environments to intercrop rice and enhance the multifunctionality of the landscape'. We hypothesise that 'intercropping (co-cultivation) of rice with other plant species possessing high rhizosphere oxidation capability will significantly reduce CH4 emissions from paddy fields while enhancing biodiversity'. The novelty of our proposed research lies in the unique integration of localised utilisation of the natural biodiversity informed by historic and native know-how in local rice farming cultures together with the cutting-edge scientific tools to develop a TPS. This holistic and inclusive framework will help tackle the global challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss by aligning them with tangible local benefits. Intercropping as a strategy to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from paddy fields has not yet been studied, except in our preliminary studies.

Main activities

- Identification of plant material for intercropping with rice, suited to local conditions.
- Empirical assessment of selected plant potential for CH4 mitigation, productivity and profitability upon intercropping with rice in Mediterranean, tropical and sub-tropical environments.
- Evaluation of the effect of the proposed TPS on both CH4 emission rates and biodiversity in the replicated experimental fields in Italy, India and Taiwan.
- Analysis of the socio-political-economical acceptability, adoptability, profitability and scaling of the developed and tested TPS.



Measurement of GHG fluxes in the paddy fields using a Photoacoustic Multi-gas Monitor

Partners of the project

School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences, Bern University of Applied Sciences, Bern, Switzerland

Faculty of Sciences and Bioengineering Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Department of Economics, Management and Statistics, University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy

National Chung Hsing University, Taichung, Taiwan

Crop science division/ Agronomy Lab, Taiwan Agricultural Research Institute (TARI), Taichung, Taiwan

Rete Semi Rurali ETS, Scandicci, Italy

Department of Environmental Science and Policy, Università degli Studi di Milano, Milan, Italy

Institute of Geography and Sustainability, Lausanne University, Lausanne, Switzerland

Department of Ecology & Environmental Sciences, Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Puducherry, India

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.3 mil. €

More information

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Hiking trail in Vienna's Greenbelt

Partners of the project

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Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland

Department of Geomatics, Forest Research Institute, Sękocin Stary, Poland

Department of Landscape, Spatial and Infrastructure Sciences, Institute of Landscape Development, Recreation and Conservation Planning, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Faculty Environment Design Therapy, Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Umwelt, Nürtingen, Germany

Wegener Center for Climate and Global Change, University of Graz, Graz, Austria

Stichting LE:NOTRE Institute, Wageningen, The Netherlands

Duration

02/02/2026 - 01/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 804 thsd. €

More information

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https://www.gik.pw.edu.pl/zgpinsp/RECON

RECON – Fostering Systemic Societal Transformation for Biodiversity Conservation through Nature Reconnection

Context

Biodiversity loss in urban and peri-urban regions is accelerating due to urbanisation, intensive recreation, climate change and fragmented governance. At the same time, cities concentrate populations whose everyday relationships with nature strongly influence environmental awareness, behaviour, and political support for conservation. Strengthening human-nature relationships, therefore, represents a key leverage point for transformative change.

RECON addresses this challenge by positioning nature reconnection (through exposure, experience, learning, and advocacy) as a driver of systemic societal transformation for biodiversity conservation. The project aligns with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Targets 12 and 19), the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Nature Restoration Law, and the European Green Deal. It focuses on three urban functional areas in Central Europe (Warsaw, Vienna, Stuttgart), which face high development pressure and recreational demand, but also offer strong potential for policy-relevant learning and transfer.

Main objectives

The overall objective of RECON is to foster biodiversity conservation through systemic societal transformation driven by nature reconnection. This objective is pursued through three specific goals:

- to conceptualise and operationalise nature reconnection advocacy and improve understanding of socio-ecological systems in urban functional areas;
- to develop the Societal Transformation Laboratory for Nature Reconnection Advocacy (STLNRA) as a participatory and place-based methodological framework;
- to test and evaluate the STLNRA in real-life case studies, producing transferable knowledge, tools, and policy-relevant outputs.

Main activities

Scientific and analytical activities: RECON applies a mixed-methods, multi-case study approach combining social surveys, Public Participation GIS, spatial analysis of green infrastructure and ecosystem services, and qualitative methods like stakeholder mapping, ethnography and policy discourse analysis. These activities provide an integrated understanding of drivers, barriers and opportunities for biodiversity-positive transformation in metropolitan regions.

Development of transformative methods and tools: Based on this evidence, RECON develops and implements the STLNRA, grounded in Theory of Change, systemic design, and participatory action research. Core outputs include a strategy toolkit with co-creation methods, a portfolio of capacity-building activities and micro-credentials (e.g., Nature Reconnection Advocate or Steward), and monitoring tools supporting adaptability and scalability.

Stakeholder engagement, dissemination, and impact: Stakeholders (local and regional authorities, natural resource managers, NGOs, businesses, and citizens) are engaged throughout all project phases. Local Societal Transformation Laboratories enable co-creation of concrete outputs such as sustainable tourism and recreation strategies, integrated landscape management plans, and solutions to conservation-recreation conflicts.

Dissemination and knowledge transfer are ensured through an open-access learning portfolio, scientific publications, policy briefs, webinars and multiplier events. RECON is expected to strengthen multilevel governance, enhance citizen participation, improve land-use conflict management, and build lasting capacities for nature-positive planning and biodiversity conservation in Europe.

REDESIGN – Restoration and Depopulation Synergies for Nature

Context

The ongoing climate and biodiversity crises suggest that simply protecting species or ecosystems is insufficient and broader ecosystem restoration is needed. We hypothesise that depopulation, which is reshaping socio-ecological systems in rural Europe and driving fundamental changes to ecosystems, has the potential to be a key element in the transformative change needed to safeguard biodiversity and support climate change mitigation. At the same time, it reduces the demand for ecosystem services, offering new opportunities for nature restoration.

Main objectives

This project aims to deliver interdisciplinary insights into how past, present, and future depopulation processes across Europe affect biodiversity. Despite policies addressing climate and biodiversity decline, the human demographic dimension - especially depopulation - remains underexplored. We seek to understand how depopulation and land-use dynamics influence EU conservation targets and how these forces could support biodiversity restoration. Our research will identify recent depopulation trends in relation to land use, creating spatial insights for future restoration strategies. We will examine how past depopulation influenced biodiversity across Europe, analyse the link between current depopulation and land use, and identify effective restoration approaches. Future scenarios will assess potential demographic shifts and ecosystem changes to guide biodiversity restoration efforts.

Main activities

Key questions include:

- How can depopulation facilitate the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030?
- Which areas stand to benefit from these demographic trends?
- What insights from past depopulation can aid in biodiversity recovery?
- What social challenges are associated with restoration in depopulating areas?
- How will future depopulation shape restoration efforts amid evolving ecosystems and climate challenges?

We hypothesise that a regional, archetypal approach to restoration, accounting for unique demographic and land-use characteristics, could enhance biodiversity outcomes while mitigating climate-related risks like water scarcity and wildfires. We plan to disseminate our project results in formats tailored to different target groups including stakeholders at the European, national and regional levels. Apart from scientific publications and research data, the project results will also be presented in accessible formats such as lay summaries and policy briefs, which will be published on the project website and distributed electronically to relevant practitioners.

Depopulated village in the Polish Carpathians, with the artistic installation indicating how some of the buildings could look like

Partners of the project

Institute of Geography and Spatial Management, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Krakow, Poland

Department Earth and Environmental Sciences, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Department of Biology, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

Department of Conservation Biology and Global Change, Doñana Biological Station, Spanish National Research Council, Sevilla, Spain

Department of Geoinformatics, Institute of Geography, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia

Research and Development Institute for Wildlife and Mountain Resources, Miercurea Ciuc, Romania

Department of Landscape Water Conservation, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Czech Technical University in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic

Duration

02/03/2026 - 01/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.4 mil. €

More information

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The Metaprobe (passive eDNA collector) will be used by fishers to easily collect eDNA during fishing operations and map the marine biodiversity

Partners of the project

Department of Biology, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Rome, Italy

Institute of Marine Sciences, Federal University of Ceará, Fortaleza, Brazil

Department of Aquatic Resources, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Lysekil, Sweden

WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative, WWF, Rome, Italy

Duration

01/03/2026 - 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 465 thsd. €

More information

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https://recolab.org/seawatch/

SEAWATCH – Transforming fishing vessels into stewards to protect biodiversity through the integration of eDNA metabarcoding, satellite data and AI

Context

The global decline of marine biodiversity due to human-related pressures, especially pollution, climate change, and overfishing, is our time's critical emergency. To identify interventions that can reduce human impacts and successfully slow or reverse this decline, we need to map and monitor the spatial distribution of biodiversity at sea. Hence effective management requires large-scale monitoring, easily accessible and integrated data, and decision-support tools. Currently, our approaches to monitoring and assessing marine biodiversity remain inefficient, complex, and expensive. SEAWATCH aims to explore a promising but potentially transformative direction: using fishing vessels as sentinels of marine biodiversity and the impacts it is facing. The idea is to combine the collection of environmental DNA (eDNA), carried out through new-generation passive probes, with satellite data and models based on artificial intelligence (AI).

Main objectives

The main aims that SEAWATCH will address are:

- to apply low-cost technologies for eDNA collection on board fishing vessels in order to generate reliable, high spatial and temporal resolution data on marine biodiversity;
- to harness AI, alongside traditional ecological analysis techniques, to explore metadata generated by the integration of eDNA, satellite data from vessel tracking devices, and Copernicus data, and to identify potential biodiversity hotspots such as Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems;
- to systematise the data collected through this approach to inform a shared platform for researchers, stakeholders and managers on the spatio-temporal structure of marine biodiversity, supporting the planning and harmonisation of different uses of maritime space;
- to standardise this approach and develop a roadmap for the progressive establishment of an integrated network for fishery-based monitoring of coastal and open seas.

Main activities

SEAWATCH will involve a large community of researchers and especially fishermen in three countries (Italy, Sweden and Brazil), who will collect eDNA samples and lead the mapping of marine biodiversity. Stakeholders will play an active role in both planning and sample collection through the identification of fishing areas, as well as in the analysis of the results, which will be shared with the main management bodies of the respective areas (ICES, MEDAC, Ministries). Through this shared path we will be able to standardise the methodology and generate scientific products (biodiversity maps, spatial models of human impact) that can be used for participatory spatial planning and biodiversity protection.

SKETCH – Social-ecological KEystone places for Transformative Change in safeguarding coastal biodiversity

Context

The SKETCH project focuses on empowering Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) to protect coastal ecosystems through equitable, interdisciplinary conservation strategies. The project introduces the concept of Social-Ecological Keystone Places (SEKPs) – critical areas where nature and society are deeply interconnected – as transformative hubs for biodiversity safeguarding and sustainable governance.

Main objectives

- Evaluate the ecological, cultural, and social significance of SEKPs across five diverse case studies in Brazil, Madagascar, Indonesia, Taiwan, and the Cook Islands.
- Enhance community-led management systems aligned with global conservation frameworks like Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).
- Combine local knowledge with innovative methods like participatory eDNA metabarcoding, participatory mapping, and digital storytelling.
- Co-develop actionable recommendations for policy processes to integrate SEKPs into national and international biodiversity strategies.

Main activities

Using a participatory action research framework, SKETCH unites IPLCs, scientists, and policymakers to co-produce knowledge. Six interconnected work packages guide the project: WP1-WP3 focus on characterising SEKPs, analysing governance structures, and developing inclusive biodiversity monitoring tools; WP4-WP5 explore pathways for OECM recognition through scenario planning and interdisciplinary collaboration; and WP6 synthesises findings to inform global biodiversity policies. SKETCH introduces the 'Ripples of Knowledge and Transformation' framework to connect local insights with global conservation goals. By integrating cultural and scientific narratives with ecological data, the project seeks to redefine conservation as socially just and culturally informed. Expected outcomes are:

- improved understanding of SEKPs' role in biodiversity conservation;
- scalable tools for IPLC-driven monitoring and policy integration;
- policy briefs and transformative strategies for OECM recognition;
- strengthened international networks for equitable coastal and marine biodiversity safeguarding.

By bridging Indigenous knowledge with scientific innovation, SKETCH ultimately aims to promote equity, sustainability, and community empowerment in marine stewardship.

The Ocean is a critical lifeline to tropical coastal communities, here in Southwestern Madagascar, by sustaining food, culture, and income

Partners of the project

Programme Area 'Societal Impact', Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (ZMT) GmbH, Bremen, Germany

Department of Oceanography, Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil

UMR ESPACE, University of the Côte d'Azur, Nice, France

Department of Geography, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Department of Biosciences, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

International Research Institute for Maritime, Ocean and Fisheries, IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia

Kōrero o te 'Ōrau, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

Institute of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, University of Toliara, Toliara, Madagascar

Duration

01/03/2026 - 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.2 mil. €

More information

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Fishing boat getting ready to launch off the Komenda coast of Ghana

Partners of the project

Research Support Unit CRIOBE, French National Centre for Scientific Research, Paris, France

Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Earth Resilience Science Unit, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Potsdam, Germany

Financial Economics and Accounting, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

School of Animal Plant and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Department of Entrepreneurship development and ecosystem building, African Hub for Ocean Impact, Cape Town, South Africa

Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

Marine and Coastal Resilience Department, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Nairobi, Kenya

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.1 mil. €

More information

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SURPRISES – Building anticipatory governance of social-ecological tipping points in transformative change planning for ocean sustainability

Context

With the world facing a looming polycrisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and growing inequalities, there is an urgent need to enable societal transformation for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and nature's contributions to people (NCPs). However, what this transformative change looks like and how to achieve it will look different in different contexts and requires taking diverse peoples, their knowledge systems and aspirations into account. In this context, there is growing interest in the idea of positive tipping points, whereby it is possible to leverage the non-linear dynamics of complex systems to achieve aspirational transformative change. However, it is important to consider the feedback loops driving systems into negative change and what the potential risks are associated with 'positive' tipping, asking critical questions like positive to whom and positive where.

Main objectives

Innovative, multi-scale, and interdisciplinary approaches to research-based policy and action are essential to enable the transformative change needed to alleviate ongoing biodiversity loss and the erosion of NCPs. Drawing on this challenge, our overarching goal is to understand what transformative change is needed to achieve sustainable and equitable coastal and marine futures that are resilient to surprises in African ocean basins. This entails identifying what visions and pathways of transformative change should be fostered with more equitable outcomes, understanding co-benefits and synergies across scales, and mismatch in aspirations, leading to potential downsides and trade-offs between local, regional and global visions and pathways. The two main sub-objectives of the research are:

- anticipating and understanding coastal and marine social-ecological tipping points across scales in African ocean basins.
- building anticipatory governance to ensure that actions to achieve transformative visions at one scale do not lead to negative impacts at another.

Main activities

Our theory of change is that our scenario process and its outcomes would create more anticipatory capacity for improved governance of marine social-ecological systems in Africa, but also with important learnings for other places, both marine and terrestrial. It would do so both by building aspirational futures through which to orient actions, as well as by unpacking disruptive surprise events that could have irreversible impacts on the well-being of people and nature. To operationalise our overarching goal and two sub-objectives, we will use the following methods:

- co-designing visions and pathways to aspirational ocean futures drawing on diverse and potentially conflicting knowledge systems;
- analysing governance and other interventions that avoid negative tipping points and therefore build resilience to surprises in these marine social-ecological systems;
- co-producing bottom-up indicators across plural values for nature and include these in global visions.

TIDELINES – Transformative change and Innovations for Diverse beach Ecosystems and sustainable Livelihoods through Enhanced wrack maNagEment Strategies

Context

Sandy beaches, from the surf zone to the dunes, connect land and sea. They support unique biodiversity and provide benefits people rely on, including recreation and tourism, coastal protection, and fisheries. Yet management often prioritises appearance and short-term convenience, which can degrade habitats and accelerate biodiversity loss.

A key component of beaches is 'wrack': seaweed and seagrass that wash ashore. Wrack fuels beach food webs, offers feeding and shelter for wildlife, and contributes to nutrient and carbon cycling. It also influences sand dynamics and post-storm recovery. Despite this, wrack is commonly removed through mechanical grooming, while in some situations (e.g., invasive species) removal may be appropriate. Municipalities therefore face a practical question: when should wrack be retained, relocated, buried or removed to balance biodiversity, coastal resilience, recreation, public health and livelihoods?

TIDELINES will generate comparable ecological and social evidence across regions and translate it into feasible, locally adapted wrack management options co-produced with stakeholders and decision-makers.

Main objectives

- Identify which components of beach biodiversity depend on wrack, and how different wrack management regimes affect them.
- Understand how perceptions, cultural norms and governance frameworks shape wrack-related decisions.
- Assess key ecosystem services linked to wrack (e.g., habitat support, coastal protection, nutrient and carbon cycling) and quantify trade-offs under alternative management options.
- Co-develop and test practical interventions that can reconcile biodiversity outcomes with tourism and community needs, and deliver a Best Practice Guide and policy briefs for implementation.

Main activities

Across five model regions (Italy, Spain, The Netherlands, South Africa and Brazil), TIDELINES will use harmonised protocols to ensure results are comparable and transferable.

- Biodiversity and functioning: surveys of wrack-associated communities plus DNA-based metabarcoding; measurements of nutrient and carbon processes linked to wrack.
- Social and governance analysis: surveys, interviews and focus groups; review of rules, responsibilities and communication practices.
- Ecosystem-service scenarios: modelling and decision-support comparing strategies (retain, relocate, bury, remove) for biodiversity, coastal resilience and user experience.
- Management trials: field tests with managers to assess ecological outcomes and operational feasibility.
- Dissemination and knowledge transfer: at least two co-production workshops per region, targeted policy dialogues, public-facing materials, and a co-produced Best Practice Guide.

By clarifying when wrack retention supports biodiversity and resilience, and when removal is justified, TIDELINES will reduce conflict, improve transparency in beach management, and help municipalities align practices with biodiversity and climate goals while sustaining coastal tourism and community benefits.

A dense wrack band along the strandline. Beach-cast wrack supports beach food webs but can also require removal for recreation

Partners of the project

Marine Biodiversity, Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, Netherlands

Institute for Coastal and Marine Research, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa

Research Centre Global Dynamics, Leipzig University, Leipzig, Germany

Department of Biology, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

Department of Biology - INMAR, University of Cádiz, Puerto Real, Spain

Department of Ecological and Environmental Sciences and Technologies, University of Salento, Lecce, Italy

Integrated Ecology Department - Genoa Marine Center, Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn, Genoa, Italy

Center for Biosciences and Biotechnology – Environmental Science Laboratory, Darcy Ribeiro North Fluminense State University, Campos dos Goytacazes, Brazil

Center for Exact, Natural and Health Sciences - Department of Biology, Federal University of Espírito Santo, Alegre, Brazil

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.3 mil. €

More information

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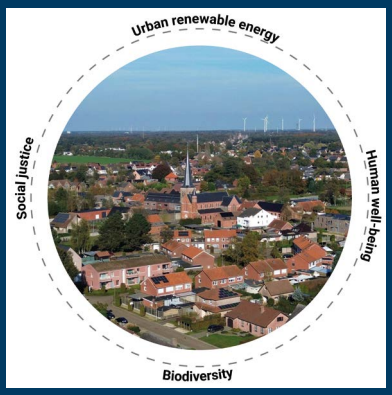

Urban Energy Transition, local biodiversity and citizen wellbeing in EU and South Africa

Partners of the project

International Climate Risk and Adaptation, The Stockholm Environment Institute Foundation, Stockholm, Sweden

Environmental governance; Spatial planning and urban development; Anthropology and ethnology, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), Bonn, Germany

Sustainable Cities and Resilient Communities, The Stockholm Environment Institute Tallinn Center Foundation (SEI Tallinn), Tallinn, Estonia

Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 930 thsd. €

More information

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TRANS4BIO – Integrated Energy Transition Across Scales for Climate-Resilient, Nature-and-People Positive Biodiversity Pathways

Context

As the world accelerates the shift to renewable energy to combat climate change, biodiversity loss remains an often-overlooked risk. Tripling renewable energy by 2030 creates unprecedented demands on natural resources, potentially harming ecosystems if mismanaged. This highlights a paradox of the energy transition: while essential for climate mitigation, it can inadvertently accelerate biodiversity loss and harm human health and well-being.

Governance efforts towards transformative change must consider the complex interdependencies between climate mitigation, the energy transition, and biodiversity conservation. Three key interactions warrant attention: misalignment between climate and biodiversity agendas; spatial competition between renewable energy infrastructure and conservation priorities; and increased pressure on environmental systems from resource extraction across global supply chains.

Main objectives

TRANS4BIO aims to provide evidence and analysis that support coordinated and enabling governance pathways needed for a transformative change to ensure nature and people-positive outcomes while reducing risks from narrowly-focused climate mitigation policies. To this end, the following sub-objectives are addressed:

- highlighting how the lack of integration between global climate and biodiversity agendas creates national energy transition implementation gaps;
- tracing how global supply chains and resource extraction for renewable energy connect to local biodiversity impacts across distant regions;
- examining how large-scale renewable energy infrastructure development in transboundary marine ecosystems can be aligned with biodiversity conservation priorities while balancing national energy security interests;
- understanding how urban energy transition impacts local biodiversity and citizen well-being across diverse socio-economic contexts.

Main activities

Stretching across Europe and South Africa, TRANS4BIO employs theory-driven empirical research to analyse the interplay between climate mitigation, energy transition, biodiversity protection and well-being. The project consists of several interwoven elements:

- applying a systems thinking approach to establish the project's conceptual foundations, ensuring effective integration and transnational added value;
- combining AI-powered document analysis, stakeholder interviews and participant observations to examine interactions between international climate and biodiversity agendas, especially regarding climate mitigation;
- conducting case studies in South Africa and the North Sea to assess the interplay between global mineral demand for energy transition, social impacts, and (marine) biodiversity conservation in transboundary settings;
- using an interdisciplinary and justice-oriented approach to address urban energy transition impacts on local biodiversity and citizen well-being;
- organising science-policy workshops and synthesising project insights to help decision-makers implement integrated approaches that protect both biodiversity and human well-being while advancing climate goals.

UrbanOcean – Urbanisation of the sea - assessing and managing the impact of Offshore Wind developments on open ocean biodiversity

Context

Europe's rapid offshore wind expansion is central to the renewable energy transition, but it also constitutes an unprecedented, large-scale transformation of open-ocean habitats. The biodiversity consequences of this 'industrialisation at sea' remain poorly understood, especially cumulative and long-term effects that emerge across whole seascapes, which are not captured by today's largely site-based environmental assessments. UrbanOcean addresses this knowledge gap by reframing offshore wind farms as 'ocean urbanisation': a build-out of dense infrastructure networks that can fragment habitats, modify sensory environments (noise, light and electromagnetic fields), and disrupt ecological connectivity, particularly for migratory and pelagic fish adapted to the featureless open ocean. This urbanisation also reshapes access to, and governance of, the sea by changing ownership patterns and constraining traditional resource use, with potential winners and losers among stakeholders, and impacts that can propagate across borders and into coastal communities.

Main objectives

UrbanOcean's overarching aim is to deliver seascape-scale, policy-relevant evidence and tools to reconcile offshore wind deployment with the protection of open-ocean biodiversity and the resilience of fisheries and coastal communities. The project has three main objectives:

- evaluate how stressors interact and scale from local to seascape levels across offshore wind development phases;
- quantify how offshore wind affects fish migration and migratory corridors in the North Sea and Baltic Sea, including potential route changes, delays, attraction/avoidance and displacement;
- develop integrated socio-ecological modelling frameworks to assess cumulative impacts and trade-offs (biodiversity, fisheries, energy yield) that support sustainable, participatory marine spatial planning in the western Baltic Sea region.

Main activities

UrbanOcean will assess the impact of offshore wind on fish at two complementary scales. At the seascape scale, we will synthesise evidence across infrastructure development phases and use large-scale fish telemetry to map migration corridors and connectivity in relation to existing, planned and emerging windfarm clusters. At the local site-scale, we will deploy targeted telemetry around windfarms to quantify behavioural and movement responses, such as attraction/avoidance, changes in routes and delays, thereby linking fine-scale mechanisms to broader cumulative effects. The project will also assess cumulative impacts and trade-offs using ecosystem and simulation models to test different offshore wind and climate scenarios, and turn the results into practical guidance for marine spatial planning. Throughout, the project will work with stakeholders through mapping and recurring workshops and webinars, and deliver policy-ready outputs. UrbanOcean expects to provide seascape-scale evidence and tools that support faster, more transparent and biodiversity-friendly offshore wind planning and governance.

Offshore wind farms are rapidly expanding across Europe's seas, transforming open-ocean habitats

Partners of the project

Department of Wildlife, Fish and Environmental Studies, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Umeå, Sweden

Climate and Environment, Norwegian Research Centre NORCE, Bergen, Norway

National Institute for Aquatic Resource, Technical University of Denmark, Silkeborg, Denmark

Research Department, Flanders Marine Institute, Ostend, Belgium

Scientific research and development, GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, Kiel, Germany

Institute of Biosciences and Bioresources, National Research Council, Sesto Fiorentino, Italy

Department of Animal Sciences and Aquatic Ecology, Ghent University, Gent, Belgium

Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Institute of Marine Research Flødevigen, Institute of Marine Research, Arendal, Norway

Duration

01/01/2026 - 31/12/2028

Total grant

Approx. 1.6 mil. €

More information

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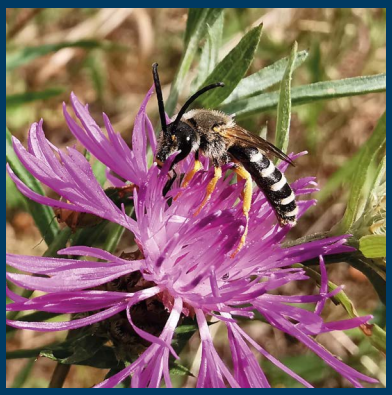

Wild bee foraging on a Centaurea jacea inflorescence

Partners of the project

Laboratory Agronomy and Environnement, University of Lorraine, Nancy, France

Evolution-Ecology-Palaeontology Lab, University of Lille-CNRS, Lille, France

Institute of Ecology and Environmental Sciences of Paris, Paris, France

Research Centre in Biodiversity and Environment, University of Toulouse-CNRS, Toulouse, France

Population Environment Development Laboratory, Aix Marseille University, Marseille, France

Urban Productive Ecosystems, Technical University of Munich, Munich, Germany

Basque Centre for Climate Change, Leioa, Spain

School of Engineering, Architecture and Landscape of Geneva, HES-SO - University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western, Geneva, Switzerland

Natural History Museum - Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Berlin, Germany

Centre for Ecology and Conservation Sciences, Natural History Museum, Paris, France

The Mediterranean Institute of Biodiversity and Marine and Continental Ecology, Aix Marseille University, Marseille, France

Duration

01/03/2026 - 28/02/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.2 mil. €

More information

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Urbloom – Transform urban flowerbeds for the future: sustainable use and pollinator conservation

Context

Given the global decline in pollinators over the past two decades, recent studies indicate that urban green spaces could serve as refuges for pollinators. These green spaces are subject to increasingly frequent and intense droughts, which reduce water availability and limit the provision of floral resources for pollinators. In European cities, the ornamental varieties offered in catalogues are often similar across cities, even though climatic conditions differ, and tend to prioritise aesthetics over biodiversity benefits. There is therefore an urgent need to rethink urban flowerbeds, involving stakeholders ranging from horticulturists to managers. By exploring creative flowerbeds developed jointly by scientists and local stakeholders that balance drought resistance, pollinator attraction, and social acceptance, this project aims to redefine flowerbed management to support sustainable biodiversity conservation.

Main objectives

Our project aims to develop sustainable future flowerbed species assemblages and compare them to traditional assemblages in nine European cities. Specifically, we will explore:

- What quantitative floral traits do future flowerbeds exhibit compared to traditional ones?
- How attractive are future flowerbeds to pollinators?
- What impact does drought have on these flowerbeds?
- What changes in practices can be collectively agreed upon by all stakeholders?
- How can we evaluate future flowerbeds using a multi-criteria assessment approach?

Main activities

- We adopt an interdisciplinary approach that combines natural and social sciences to produce actionable knowledge aimed at informing public policies and fostering transformative change.
- Flowerbed compositions are selected according to bioclimatic regions, local stakeholder input, and plant attractiveness to pollinators.
- Floral traits and their responses to drought are measured using standardised protocols to ensure comparability across cities.
- We develop a novel, non-lethal tool to recognise and classify different groups of pollinators, while actively engaging a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., urban green space managers and users, volunteer citizens, and school groups) in pollinator identification.
- We assess the perceptions of urban green space managers, planners, and users regarding future flowerbeds, including their design, implementation, and maintenance, using social science methods.
- We conduct data analysis and multi-criteria evaluation to assess the ecological, social, and functional performance of future flowerbeds.

WildHarvest – Understanding and recognising wild products harvesting by Indigenous and Local communities to promote environmental justice and halt biodiversity erosion

Context

WildHarvest, through transdisciplinary action research and strong science-practitioner partnerships, will empower indigenous knowledge holders in two highly diverse biomes, the Cape Floristic Region and Dry savanna woodlands. It will produce transformative research on sustainable use of a wide range of wild-harvested taxa while contributing to policy and practice.

Main objectives

WildHarvest seeks to foster 'environmental justice from science to policy' through four components: 1) recognition justice, by valuing and respecting local, indigenous, and traditional ecological knowledge systems previously marginalised; 2) procedural justice, by giving marginalised communities opportunities to participate in natural resource decisions; 3) redistributive justice, by ensuring sustained direct benefits; 4) ecological justice, through traditional stewardship, emphasising sustainability, adaptation, and respect for ecological cycles. Building on these principles, WildHarvest will:

- understand critical socio-ecological couplings and develop frameworks relevant to wild-harvesting practices;
- document practices of wild harvesters from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, understand associated values and knowledge, and co-identify possible drivers of change;
- co-identify feedback loops between harvesting practices and resource ecology, and co-design monitoring methods to track resource state, dynamics, and pressures;
- trigger transformative change in natural resource governance locally and regionally, giving visibility and credibility to wild harvesters as key stewards.

Main activities

- Co-elaborate a research methodology relevant to local stakeholders and wild harvesters.
- Use mind-mapping to develop a conceptual framework from harvester narratives, elucidating social-ecological couplings supporting socially and ecologically just practices.
- Operationalise participatory ranking, sorting, and mapping tools in focus groups with key local knowledge holders.
- Analyse historical, legal, and policy documents to identify past and external drivers, and use focus groups to identify current local drivers.
- Co-elaborate visions for desirable futures in wild resource harvesting.
- Mobilise a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to bridge Indigenous and scientific knowledge and co-develop sustainable harvesting and community-based monitoring systems.
- Carry out an anticipatory governance exercise using the Futures triangle to identify challenges, opportunities, and leverage points for transformative change across scales.
- Create storytelling platforms at local, national, and transnational levels with local partners, ensuring knowledge dissemination respects cultural, linguistic, and connectivity diversity.

Full day harvest of Mponae worm in Limpopo

Partners of the project

International research Lab REHABS, CNRS-NMU, Lyon, France

School of Natural Resource Science & Management, Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden

Centre For Global Change, University of Limpopo, Ga-Rankuwa, South Africa

Lupane State University, Lupane, Zimbabwe

South African National Parks, South Africa

Duration

01/02/2026 - 31/01/2029

Total grant

Approx. 704 thsd. €

More information

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H. carunculata *specimen*

Partners of the project

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Department of Life Sciences/ laboratory of Ecology and ecotoxicology of aquatic ecosystems, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Modena, Italy

Environmental Sciences, Jožef Stefan Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Laboratory of Marine Biodiversity, National Institute of Marine Science and Technology, Salammbô, Tunisia

Mediterranean Institute of Oceanography, Aix- Marseille Université, Marseille, France

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Mentese, Turkey

Main Office, QTIBIA Engineering, Ramnicu Valcea, Romania

Antonio González University Institute of Bio-Organic Science, University of La Laguna, Spain

BMR Genomics srl, Padova, Italy

Department of Chemistry of Bioactive Natural and Synthetic Products / Group of Marine Products Chemistry, Institute of Natural Products and Agrobiology - Spanish National Research Council, San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Spain

Duration

01/04/2026 - 31/03/2029

Total grant

Approx. 1.2 mil. €

More information

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WORMSOUT PLUS – Bearded fireWORM invaSiOn: UnderwaTer monitoring, biodiversity and social impacts, PotentiaL indUstrial application and mitigation Strategies

Context

Marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean Sea is increasingly threatened by climate change, biological invasions and cumulative human pressures. One emblematic example is the rapid spread of the invasive fireworm (*Hermodice carunculata*), a thermophilic polychaete whose expansion is closely linked to sea warming. The species negatively affects benthic ecosystems, preys on key habitat-forming organisms, alters food webs, and represents a direct risk for human health due to its venomous bristles, with increasing reports of painful injuries to swimmers, fishers and divers. Reports of conflicts with small-scale fisheries have become increasingly frequent, as *H. carunculata* feeds on fish caught in nets, rendering them unsellable and causing a substantial loss of income for artisanal fishers. Despite its growing ecological, economic, and social impacts, information on the fireworm's distribution, abundance, ecological effects, and socio-economic consequences remains fragmented across countries. Moreover, the lack of harmonised monitoring approaches and limited integration between science, citizens and decision-makers hampers the development of effective management and policy responses.

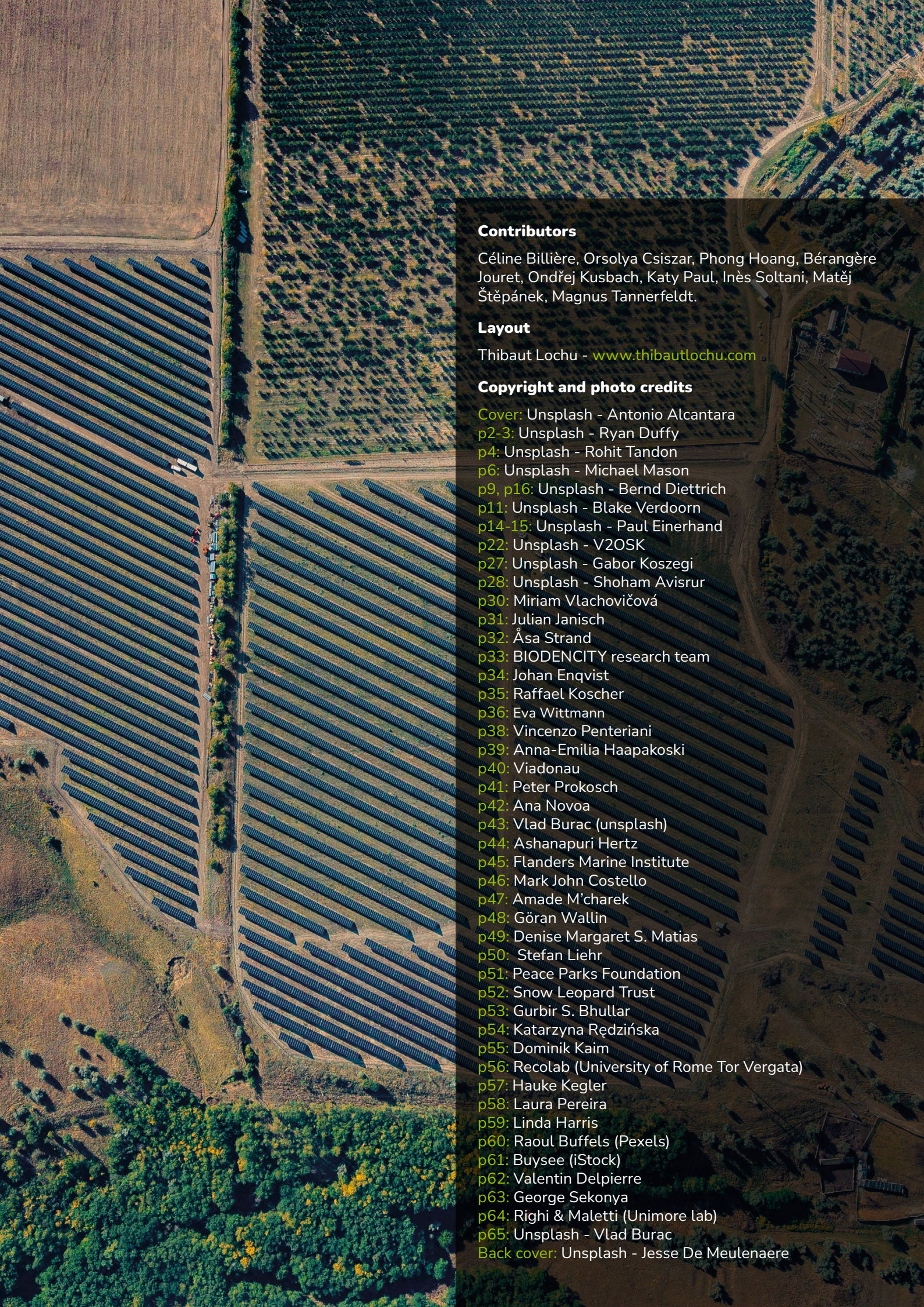
WORMSOUT PLUS addresses these gaps by adopting a transnational and transdisciplinary approach, aligned with the BiodivTransform objectives of fostering transformative change for biodiversity through co-produced knowledge, and stakeholder and policymakers engagement.

Main objectives

- Assess the level of fireworm invasion and identify the ecological and human-related drivers influencing its spread across the target countries (Italy, Tunisia, Turkey, Slovenia, Spain and France).
- Evaluate the ecological and socio-economic impacts of the species under current and future scenarios.
- Develop and test effective mitigation strategies, tailored to different stages of invasion and local contexts.
- Support evidence-based decision-making and promote coordinated management and policy responses at national and EU/Mediterranean levels

Main activities

- Monitor fireworm abundance and distribution in target areas by combining stakeholder-based observations (e.g., dive centres and fishermen) with scientific surveys, including visual censuses and physicochemical characterisation of seawater and surface sediments.
- Adopt a multidisciplinary approach combining molecular and biochemical analyses, stakeholder surveys and predictive modelling to assess the species' effects on ecosystems and human activities.
- Develop containment plans and best practices, while exploring sustainable uses of fireworm biomass, including biomolecule extraction and applications in food, cosmetics and biotechnology.
- Disseminate project results, enhance public engagement, and support the integration of scientific evidence into environmental policy and management frameworks.



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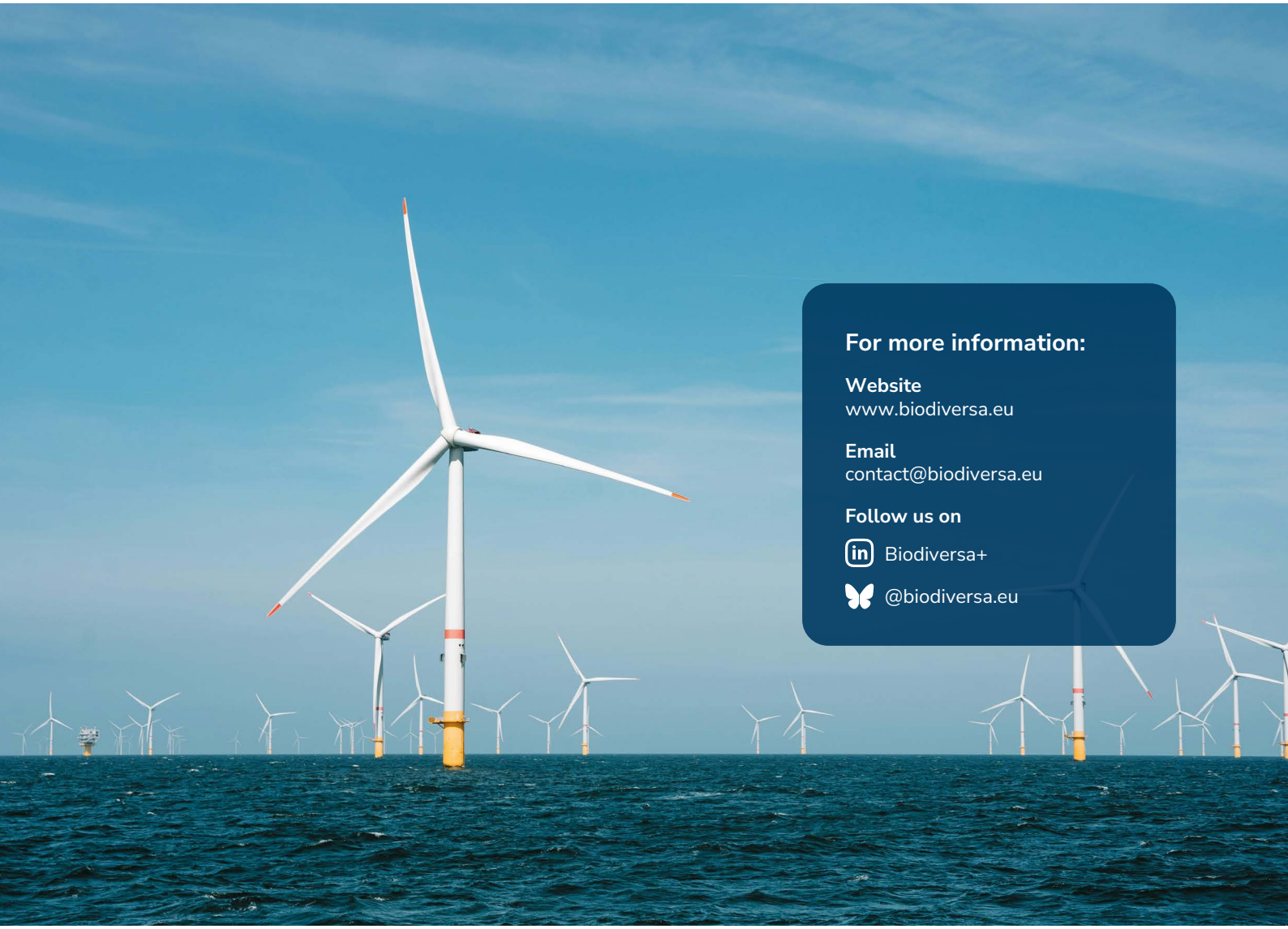

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