



**UNALAB PROJECT SUMMARIES OF
KEY RESOURCES FOR THE ADOPTION
OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS**

IMPLEMENTING A NATURE- BASED SOLUTIONS PROJECT



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WHAT ARE NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS?

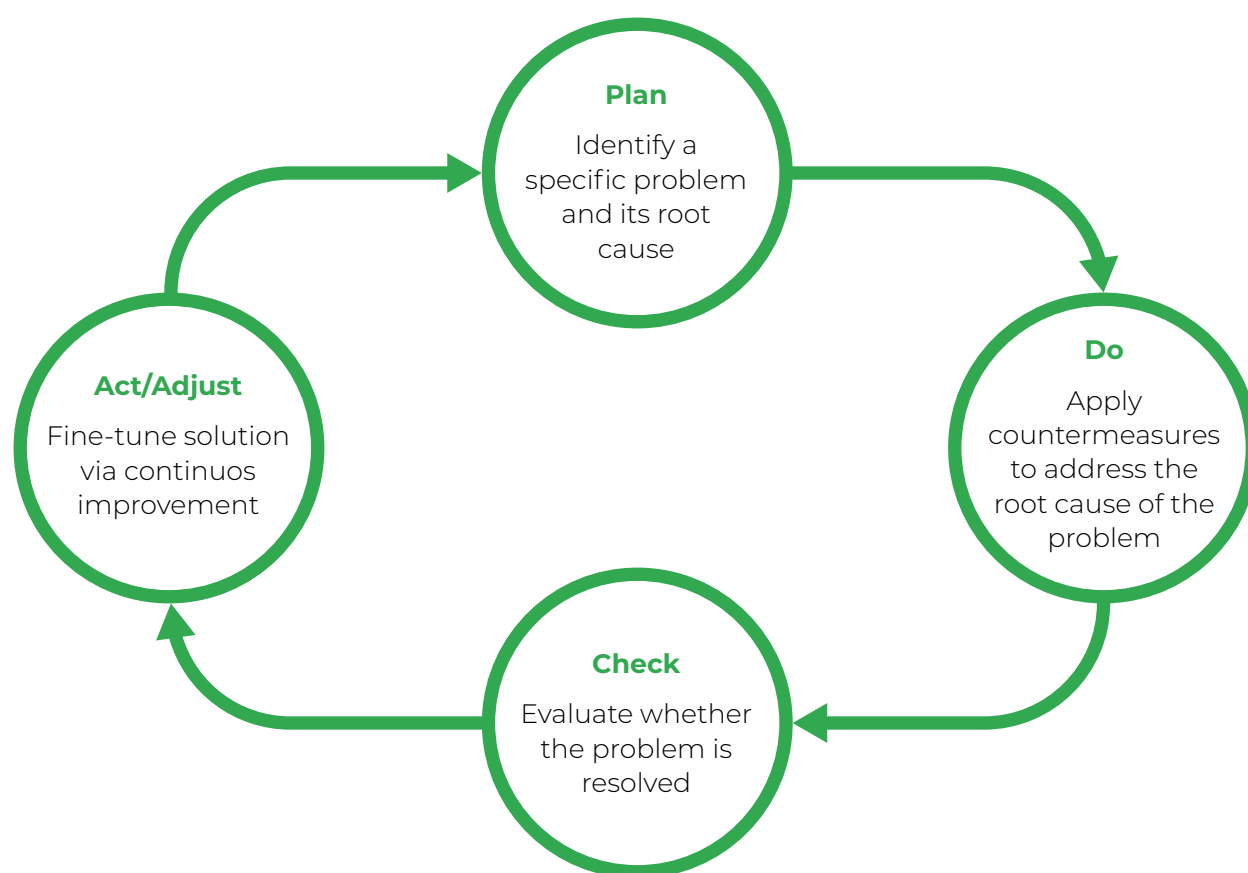
Nature-based solutions (NBS) are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified ecosystems¹. NBS are co-created systems that utilise natural features and ecosystem-based processes to effectively and adaptively address social, economic and environmental challenges. In other words, NBS are able to protect, manage or restore ecosystems and

their services, thereby addressing a multitude of urban challenges posed by the world's changing climate and rapid urbanisation. These innovative solutions bring more diverse nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, thereby creating more sustainable and resilient societies.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTION PROJECTS

Adaptive management is an iterative process for managing the whole lifecycle of a nature-based solutions project. The process of co-creating, implementing, monitoring and co-managing NBS is cyclical, thus requiring continuous evaluation and feedback at every stage in the process and identifying

needed adjustments for reaching the targets and objectives. The adaptive management cycle, or the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT cycle, aims to learn from the past actions to improve or adjust next steps and future planning of similar projects.



1. <https://www.naturebasedsolutionsinitiative.org/news/united-nations-environment-assembly-nature-based-solutions-definition/>

In its five summary documents of key resources for the adoption of NBS, the UNaLab project is presenting its main tools, handbooks, reports, lessons learnt and experiences that can be used by various stakeholders in the different phases of the adaptive management cycle. The aim of these summary

documents is to introduce urban stakeholders to resources that can provide them with inspiration, ideas, knowledge and practical tools in the different phases of the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT cycle, ultimately advancing the adoption of NBS in their cities.

RESOURCES PRESENTED IN THIS SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The resources presented in this summary document are relevant to the DO phase. This phase is about applying countermeasures. Based on the challenges identified during the PLAN phase, a set of representative key performance indicators are adopted in the

DO phase to track the progress towards the goals. During this phase, nature-based solutions are implemented and the monitoring strategy is defined.



THE UNALAB PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

The EU-funded UNaLab project is contributing to the development of smarter, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable urban communities through the implementation of nature-based solutions, which are co-created with and for local stakeholders and citizens.

Our three front-runner cities - Eindhoven, Tampere and Genova - are through the establishment of Urban Living Labs demonstration areas experimenting, demonstrating and evaluating a range of different nature-based solutions addressing climate- and water-related urban challenges. The front-runner cities actively collaborate and share their experiences with our seven follower cities - Stavanger, Prague, Castellón, Cannes, Başakşehir, Hong Kong and Buenos Aires – as well as our two observers - Guangzhou and the Brazilian Network of Smart Cities.

The project results will contribute to the growing evidence base on benefits, cost-effectiveness, economic viability and replicability of nature-based solutions, which will guide cities across Europe and beyond in developing and implementing their own co-creative nature-based solutions.

ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE AND IMPACTS OF DIFFERENT NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Monitoring-based baseline indicator definition, data sources and set-up



TYPE OF RESOURCE:

Handbook



TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS:

Practitioners, scientific/research/academic community



LINK TO THIS RESOURCE:

<https://unalab.eu/system/files/2020-02/d31-nbs-performance-and-impact-monitoring-report2020-02-17.pdf>

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

The *Performance and Impact Monitoring of Nature-based Solutions* is a living handbook that provides guidance to cities for the monitoring of nature-based solutions. It introduces good monitoring practices, guides the process of indicator selection, and outlines the steps needed to acquire and process the data. The handbook presents key performance and key impact indicators and metrics grouped by societal challenges for transparent monitoring and impact assessment of nature-based solutions. The contents of this handbook contributed to the development of *Evaluating the Impact of Nature-based Solutions: A Handbook for Practitioners* publication, and its final version to be found in the *UNaLab NBS Implementation Handbook* (to be published in November 2022).

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE

The handbook aims to provide clear information on NBS monitoring with respect to what is measured, how is it measured, and what is the 'big picture' significance of the measurement. It discusses the NBS baseline establishment and design of NBS monitoring plans, and provides a suite of relevant key performance and key impact indicators and metrics. Careful design and implementation of NBS monitoring facilitates comparison across different locations and generates evidence on NBS performance and impact.

The handbook primarily targets NBS practitioners, and scientific, research and academic communities involved in developing and implementing the monitoring strategies and impact assessment (such as qualitative, quantitative, or statistical analyses). The handbook is important in the DO phase when NBS monitoring plans are being designed and implemented, and NBS baselines are being established.

EXPECTED IMPACT

Nature-based solutions have emerged as innovative and transforming solutions that can contribute to regenerating urban areas. To facilitate their financing and uptake, replication in other locations and environments, and upscaling, it is necessary to establish evidence on their long-term performance and impact. Monitoring helps understanding whether the implemented NBS achieve the intended outcomes, and what needs to be adjusted to maximise its impact. Adopting common indicators and methods for their assessment leads to a more comprehensive comparison across locations at various scales, and in different socio-economic contexts. Documented NBS performance is a straightforward way to influence policies, decision-making and an array of other activities directly influencing local adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

Methodology for establishing modelling baselines



TYPE OF RESOURCE:

User guide



TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS:

Technical users, practitioners



LINK TO THIS RESOURCE:

<https://unalab.eu/en/documents/d32-systemic-decision-support-tool-user-guide-for-municipalities>

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

The Systemic Decision Support Tool (SDST) allows to assess, ex-ante, the direct and indirect impacts of NBS measures (individual NBS) and strategies (suites of NBS) on urban heat and air quality, flooding and water quality, and sprawl, gentrification and real-estate valuation. The *Systemic Decision Support Tool User Guide for Municipalities* contains a technical user guide that provides a technical description of the SDST approach, including its structure, disciplinary component models and data organisation, as well as a practitioners' user guide that describes those stages of the NBS co-creation process that are essential for the preparation and use of the SDST.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE

From a technical user's perspective, the SDST integrates and builds upon data and information from disciplinary component models into a spatially-explicit framework at the landscape scale. Input and output data is organised and stored in a geodatabase, containing results for the reference baseline scenario (2015) as well as for the NBS scenarios under baseline (2030) and future (2050) conditions across spatial scales (local, neighbourhood and city). This systematic data organisation and storage allows the *NBS Simulation Visualisation Tool* (NBS-SVT), i.e. the user-interface of the SDST, to efficiently locate and retrieve data from the geodatabase server, according to the selected year, scenario and scale.

From a practitioner's perspective, the preparation and use of the SDST forms an integral part of a nature-based solutions project.

In the DO phase, stakeholders identify and co-design prototypes of solutions that address the problems identified in the PLAN phase, and that are to be tested later in the process.

EXPECTED IMPACT

Sustainable urban landscape development requires decision-making that acknowledges the complex environmental, social and economic interactions that occur in landscapes. Thereby, scientific knowledge should inform stakeholders in the decision-making process regarding what to protect, sustain and/or develop. Active participation of stakeholders from the beginning of the planning process is crucial, especially in the situation where facts are uncertain, values are in dispute, stakes are high and decisions are urgent. The SDST allows to experiment with different NBS measures/strategies, assess their effectiveness and evaluate their multiple impacts as to, in turn, decide on the most desirable NBS to be implemented. Thus, the underlying principle of the SDST is that NBS are co-created in a transparent, transdisciplinary, multi-stakeholder and participatory context as well as systematically incorporated into urban landscape planning. It aims to facilitate the participatory planning process and public discussion by improving stakeholder awareness about the multiple impacts of NBS. Hence, the SDST enriches public discussion, adds transparency and increases public benefits.

USING ICT TOOLS FOR THE CO-IMPLEMENTATION OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Open Nature Innovation Arena



TYPE OF RESOURCE:

Digital tool



TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS:

Municipalities, citizens, businesses



LINK TO THIS RESOURCE:

<https://onia.unalab.eng.it/>

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

The *Open Nature Innovation Arena* (ONIA) is an online collaboration environment ensuring active stakeholder participation in bottom-up innovation processes and decision-making. It allows stakeholders to collectively discuss and identify issues or concerns affecting the quality of life in the city and collaborate to propose possible ideas of solution.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE

ONIA is the co-creation tool included in the UNaLab ICT framework that facilitates the decision-making process by exploiting the collective intelligence and spontaneous collaboration of the local communities. Citizens, businesses and public administrations can share their opinions on the conditions of urban areas and collaborate on co-defining possible solutions to be implemented in the form of nature-based solutions. During the DO phase, ONIA supports the identification of solutions by enabling stakeholders to submit their ideas, comments, votes, and multimedia files, and by indicating similarities with solutions (also NBS) already implemented in another city.

EXPECTED IMPACT

ONIA supports the merging of bottom-up and top-down processes in an online co-creation environment, by reducing the need for face-to-face interactions through sche-

duled meetings or workshops to identify local issues and brainstorm solutions. The tool contributes to building a more inclusive community by also involving individuals and communities with logistic or linguistic difficulties in the decision-making processes. Moreover, ONIA increases the sense of belonging within the local communities. Finally, ONIA allows public administrations to demonstrate their accountability in addressing civic issues and providing evidence of the work that has been done. The evaluations of the proposed ideas are transparently published on the challenge results page as well as through the chosen communication channels.

NBS Systemic Decision Support Tool



TYPE OF RESOURCE:

Digital tool



TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS:

Municipalities, citizens, businesses



LINK TO THIS RESOURCE:

http://unalab.eng.it/nbssvt_v4/

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

The *Systemic Decision Support Tool* (SDST), and associated *NBS Simulation Visualisation Tool* (NBS-SVT), allows stakeholders to compare and visualise the potential direct and indirect environmental, social and economic impacts of nature-based solutions scenarios without (2030) and with (2050) climate change and/or population growth relative to the reference baseline situation (2015). Hence, the SDST integrates and builds upon data and information from disciplinary component models into a spatially-explicit framework at the landscape scale to assess the direct and indirect impacts, benefits and co-benefits of NBS measures (individual NBS) and strategies (suites of NBS) on urban heat and air quality, flooding and water quality, as well as sprawl, gentrification and real-estate valuation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE

The *SDST practitioners' user guide* describes the stages of the NBS co-creation process that are essential for the preparation and use of the SDST. In the DO phase, the co-creation process continues with the co-designing of possible solutions that address the problems that were identified in the PLAN phase. In this phase, different types of and locations for NBS are considered.

The *SDST technical user guide* provides a technical description of the SDST approach, including its structure, disciplinary component models and data organisation. It thereby builds upon data and information from disciplinary component models into a spatially-explicit framework at the landscape scale, to assess the direct and indirect

impacts of NBS measures and strategies on urban heat and air quality, flooding and water quality, and sprawl, gentrification and real-estate valuation.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The SDST aims to facilitate the participatory planning process and public discussion by improving stakeholder awareness about the multiple direct and indirect impacts, benefits and co-benefits of NBS. The SDST maps the spatial distribution as well as quantifies the size and value of the multiple direct and indirect impacts of NBS at the local, neighbourhood and city scale. Hence, beyond obtaining insight in the multiple impacts, benefits and co-benefits of NBS, it allows to evaluate how these impacts and benefits are distributed across the landscape and corresponding stakeholders. Making this information available to stakeholders allows NBS to be co-created in a transparent, transdisciplinary, multi-stakeholder and participatory context as well as to be systematically incorporated into urban landscape planning. Thus, the SDST/NBS-SVT enriches the public discussion, adds transparency and increases public benefits.

NBS Simulation Visualisation Tool



TYPE OF RESOURCE:

Digital tool



TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS:

Municipalities, citizens, businesses



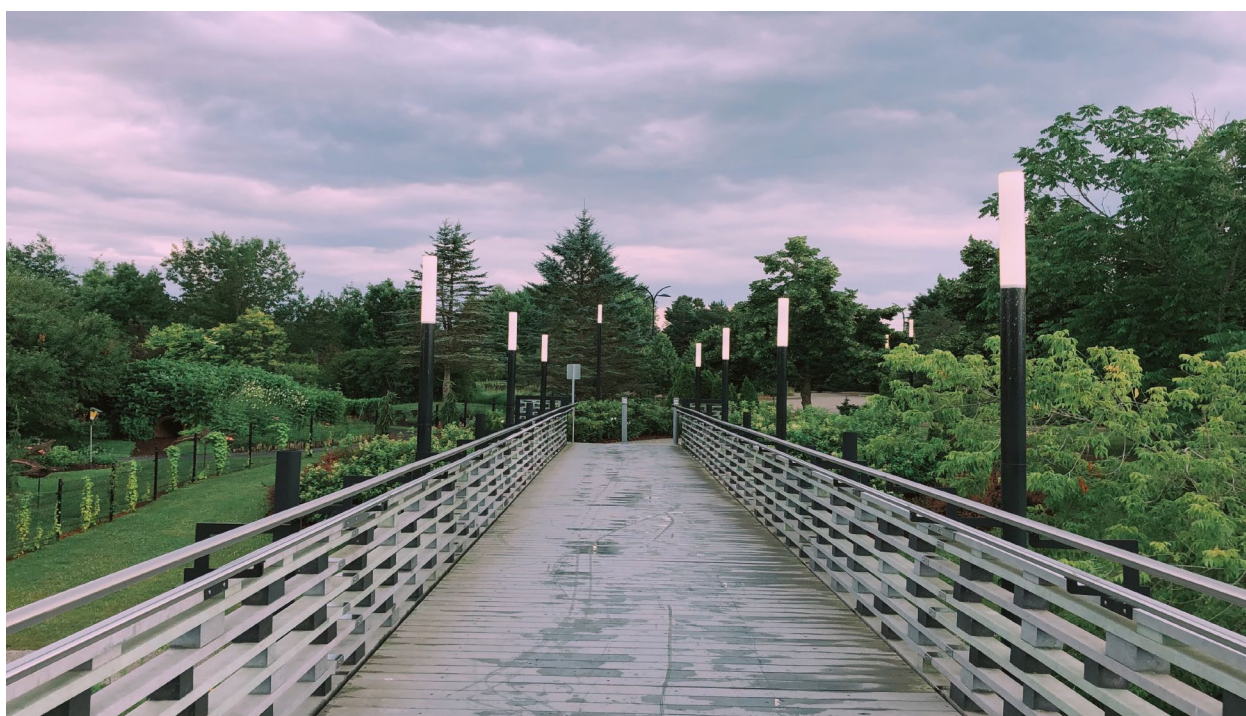
LINK TO THIS RESOURCE:

http://unalab.eng.it/nbssvt_v4/

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

The *NBS Simulation Visualisation Tool* (NBS-SVT), which constitutes the user-interface of the Systemic Decision Support Tool (SDST), is developed as an internet-based browser application for interactive touch tables/screens to provide powerful geo-visualisation

tools for participatory planning. It allows urban planners and stakeholders to visualise, compare and discuss the potential direct and indirect environmental, social and economic impacts of nature-based solutions (NBS) measures and strategies in the face of global change.



DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE

During the DO phase, the NBS-SVT can provide the forecasted impacts of different proposed NBS measures and strategies, incorporating anticipated local population and climate changes in future scenarios.

tors, allowing the involvement of experts, non-experts and the wider public in the decision-making processes. Hence, the NBS-SVT will facilitate their active role in co-creating and co-monitoring nature-based solutions to address urban problems.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The NBS-SVT provides easy-to-understand representation of simulated impact indica-

IMPLEMENTATION OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Nature-based Solutions Demonstration Site Start-Up Report



TYPE OF RESOURCE:

Report



TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS:

Municipalities, practitioners, scientific/research/academic community



LINK TO THIS RESOURCE:

<https://unalab.eu/system/files/2022-04/d54-nbs-demonstration-site-start-report2022-04-27.pdf>

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

The *Nature-based Solutions Demonstration Site Start-Up Report* illustrates and discusses the development and implementation of Urban Living Labs, as well as insights, best practices and lessons learnt based on the outcomes of NBS demonstrations in the UNaLab front-runner cities Tampere, Eindhoven and Genova. It covers and discusses NBS implementation from planning via commissioning to realisation in each city. Owing the inherent socio-economic, cultural and administrative differences in three cities, the report presents the local as well as common findings and recommendations aiming to assist the NBS replication. The report additionally provides insights on NBS technical and design parameters, preliminary monitoring and impact generated in the three cities.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE

The report targets municipalities and practitioners involved in NBS planning, implementation, and maintenance. Planning, commissioning, and realisation of NBS proved to be variable in all UNaLab front-runner cities, but common outcomes and lessons learnt were shared among the three cities. The report additionally discusses the outcomes of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Disaster Resilience Scorecard for Cities assessment in Genova and Tampere, which identifies the cities' weak points in addressing the disaster risk. The Appendix to the report presents the detailed

descriptions of NBS and supporting measures implemented in UNaLab front-runner cities, including their location, technical and design specifications, addressed societal challenges, and the adopted monitoring and maintenance strategies. It additionally discusses the potential of each NBS for replication and upscaling. This report contributes to the DO phase with concrete examples of NBS implementation.

EXPECTED IMPACT

Nature-based solutions have been widely recognised for their climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction potential. Although cities share many environmental and social challenges, NBS implementation is always specific to the local socio-economic, legal, and administrative context. These differences result in different commissioning procedures and approaches to the technical characteristics of implemented NBS. This report aims to illustrate with examples from UNaLab front-runner cities the types of challenges that may arise and the ways to address them. These findings from a cross-section of European cities bring together Southern, Central and Northern European aspects relevant for NBS implementation that will aid the practitioners to timely identify and address the potential barriers.

CASE STUDIES: NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRONT-RUNNER CITIES

Green wall in Tampere, Finland

A green wall was built on an old wastewater treatment plant in the Viinikanlahti district. The wall is located along an important ecological corridor in the city and is one of the elements supporting the biodiversity of that corridor. The wall vegetation has been selected from local species to create living habitats for pollinator insects and the city will monitor the pollinators on site. The carbon storage and water management capacity of the green wall will also be monitored. The green wall also has an aesthetic value and as a popular walking and bicycle route passes by the wall, the city hopes that the diverse wall will help improving the wellbeing of city dwellers who pass by or live in the dense area.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

The green wall is designed to be 8m x 8m. The structure is made of steel and consists of four vertical pillars with 64 plant boxes measuring 1m x 1m in between. The plant boxes are 15cm deep and the vegetation has been implemented in two different ways: 1) forest peat and plants from a new city district construction site, and 2) planted boxes. In the planted boxes, the first layer consists of rock wool, which has been topped with soil, linen fibre, water retention granules, and plants or moss. The wall plants are made up of local species that live on top of rocks and that survive in cold conditions. On top of each box is steel net. The boxes with plants were left to grow in a horizontal position during the summer, and were afterwards installed to the wall. Rainwater will be harvested from the roof of the pumping station and used for irrigating the wall. The metal plant boxes are designed to allow the irrigation water to drain from one box to the next one.

ADDRESSED SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

- Water management
- Biodiversity enhancement

- Climate resilience
- Health and well-being

MONITORING

- Carbon removal and storage
- Temperature
- Runoff in relation to precipitation quantity
- Flood peak height
- Water quality
- Biodiversity
- Distribution and accessibility to public green spaces



Green square in Eindhoven, The Netherlands



The Clausplein square, located in a dense urban area in the city centre of Eindhoven, was previously stone-covered and greatly affected by extreme weather events such as heat stress and flooding. During heat waves, the square turned into an unpleasant place that citizens avoided, whereas rain showers caused the sewerage system to overload, resulting in floods. After reconstruction, the square has become a small park with an underground water retention basin.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Rain- and stormwater draining from the square and from parts of the Witte Dame building is collected into 2 000m² and 15cm high boxes on top of the parking. Capillary action makes the water available for the trees and plants on the square. Excess stormwater is later collected by the sewer, which by that time is empty again. This results in a decreased load for the sewers. Trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses have been planted to enhance evapotranspiration, which will aid in regulating the peak temperatures and flood peaks on the square. The pavement on the square was replaced with plant sections. The existing natural stone pebbles and lighting were partially reused, and a walking route was built across the square as well as a terrace space. To ensure the success of the capillary action, extra moisture-regulating clay granulate was mixed through the soil substrate.

ADDRESSED SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

- Climate resilience
- Green space management
- Health and well-being
- Knowledge and social capacity building
- New economic opportunities and green jobs
- Participatory planning and governance
- Water management
- Biodiversity enhancement

MONITORING

- Temperature
- Water level in the retention system
- Soil moisture
- Biodiversity
- Proportion of natural areas within a defined urban zone
- Economic activity
- Citizen awareness of urban nature and ecosystem services
- Citizens' satisfaction
- Land and property value

Rain garden in Genova, Italy

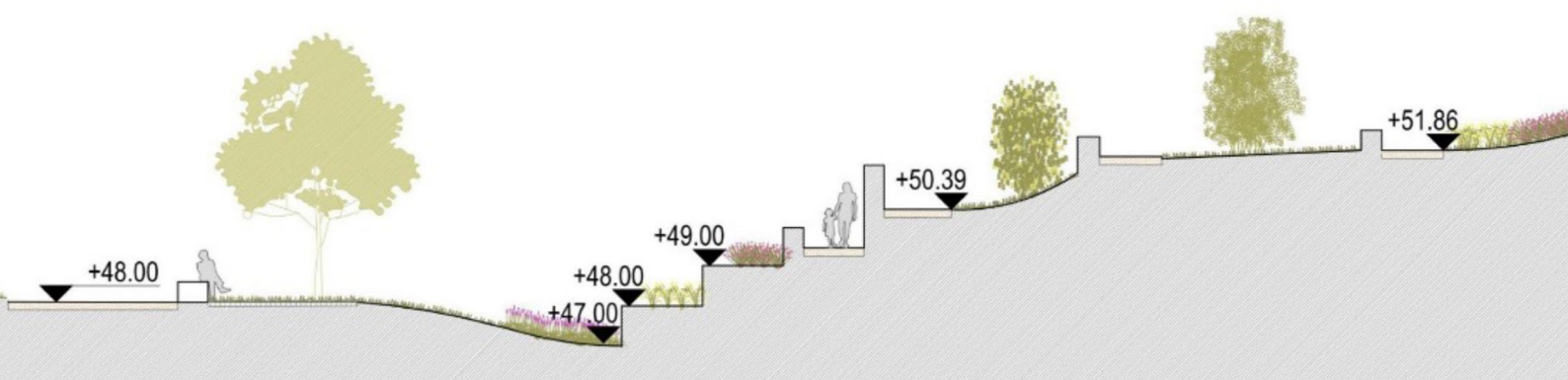
One of the nature-based solutions implemented in the Gavoglio urban park in Genova is the rain garden, which is located in an important area of the park at the intersection of two valleys - here rainwater flows naturally thanks to the local topography. Additionally, there is a continuous leak from the valley's retaining walls due to the former lake that once existed uphill. During heavy rain events, excess runoff becomes a significant issue in the area.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

The rain garden was planned in a spot where there is a continuous water flow from natural slopes uphill. This spot also forms the lower point of the steeper part of the park, thus

constituting a natural catchment point for rainwater runoff. Grasses have been selected to resist both flooding and protracted drought periods. Ideally, they will recreate a natural-like hygrophilous ecosystem with local species. Two willow trees were placed at the sides to provide shade and foster a moist environment. The most visited part was reinforced with a vegetated pave in order to allow grass to survive and to keep the ground plane and stable.

The layout of the rain garden is set out in three main zones according to a gradient of accessibility and attendance: a vegetated grid pave closer to the path, which is separated by a row of benches; a meadow with trees; and a temporary pond with water-prone grasses.



ADDRESSED SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

- Place regeneration
- Biodiversity enhancement
- Climate resilience
- Green space management
- Health and well-being
- Natural and climate hazards
- New economic opportunities and green jobs
- Water management

MONITORING

- Carbon sequestration
- Temperature
- Air quality
- Biodiversity and number of pollinator insects
- Stormwater retention and runoff
- Evapotranspiration
- Access to green spaces
- Citizen well-being
- Active involvement of citizens
- Real estate value

SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Financing strategies and business models that enable or support NBS implementation



TYPE OF RESOURCE:

Report and inspiration cards



TARGETED STAKEHOLDERS:

Municipalities, administrative staff, urban planners, investors



LINK TO THIS RESOURCE:

<https://unalab.eu/system/files/2021-06/business-models-and-financing-strategies-nbs2021-06-15.pdf>

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

Although municipal administrations already have the competences to plan, finance and implement infrastructure projects through traditional approaches, the adoption of alternative financing strategies encourages the participation of the private sector in sharing costs and gains as well as risks and benefits. The financing strategies for nature-based solutions focus on potential municipal finance innovation pathways, ranging from attracting additional capital investments for public projects to encouraging private sector implementation of NBS. This report presents five broad groups of financing strategies that can support NBS implementation, as well as examples of business models for selected NBS.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE

This report provides information on the key components of NBS business models, using the Business Model Canvas (BMC). The BMC is an easy-to-use tool that helps capture the business model of an NBS in a visual format and is intended to help develop new or change existing business models. The NBS financing strategies have been categorised in the following five broad groups:

- Innovative municipal financing approaches
- Public-private partnerships

- Mandatory requirements and tax initiatives
- Incentive programmes
- Municipal funds

For each financing strategy, different advantages and disadvantages are discussed and related financing options are presented. The *inspiration cards* aim to support planning processes in cities by providing inspiration and scientific knowledge on the topic of different financing options for NBS.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The financing strategies can be used to inspire different ways to mobilise additional financial resources for NBS and climate adaptation measures. The use of the Business Model Canvas can, on the one hand, help to point out connections in projects and recognise possible synergies. On the other hand, new ways and possibilities of financing can be discovered. Using the report and the inspiration cards can lead to financial savings, meaningful linking of projects, accreditation of investors as well as a better overview of both financial and non-financial aspects of the project or initiative.



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