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Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform Community Workshop

NBS for water management: a private sector perspective
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5 Key Takeaways

1 The NBS for water management market is upcoming. IRIDRA Srl, an Italian engineering firm specialised in sustainable water management, has been shifting over the last years from conventional schemes with end-of-pipe solutions to a Circular Economy and Ecosystem Service-based scheme, undertaking numerous R&D activities to experiment with new applications of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to be transferred to the market. This is bringing a lot of growth opportunities to the company, that has designed over 500 treatment wetlands and has delivered 120 scientific publications in the last 20 years.

“There is no doubt NBS can generate a Green Economy and promote job creation as additional benefits to the numerous ecosystem services they provide. For the transformation of cities and the transition from grey to green and smart, we need a lot of practitioners”
- Dr. Fabio Masi, R&D Manager and Technical Director of IRIDRA.

The webinar had around 80 participants from 16 different countries. Among the organisations represented, **universities & research centres** (32%) together with **Small and Medium-sized Enterprises** (23%) accounted for the majority. On the other hand, 11% of the participants represented city authorities and up to 14% were NGOs.

Most of the nature-based enterprises (NBEs) involved in water management indicated they offer services of consulting, monitoring and feasibility and impact assessments of NBS, followed by planning and design services. With regards to the products offered, **constructed wetlands, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), infiltrations basins** and **rain gardens** were the most common. Rainwater harvesting and river and wetland restoration were also provided by a smaller group of NBEs.

3 Challenges for a wider implementation of NBS exist for both enterprises and potential buyers. When asked about the challenges to the growth of suppliers in the sector, half of the NBEs agreed there is a **lack of networking and cooperation opportunities** with other organisations in the sector. The lack of evidence and effectiveness of their products and services and the little knowledge on market opportunities and business cases were also identified as obstacles, followed by a lack of funding and financial support (to carry out R&D activities, for instance). Interestingly, meeting regulations and legal standards with their products and services or measuring the impact of such solutions were not perceived as a challenge.

The majority of potential buyers (i.e., city authorities, private developers, individuals, etc.) experience a **knowledge gap in the type of NBS available on the market**. This gap includes evidence and effectiveness of such solutions. There is also a lack of experience when it comes to public and private procurement of NBS projects. On the other hand, there is no negative perception from citizens that could affect the acquisition and implementation of NBS for water management.

The **Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform** is a pioneering platform that supports the growth of the nature-based economy in Europe and beyond, by connecting demand with supply.

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Key actions were identified to increase the market uptake of NBS for water management. The potential buyers clearly identified a necessity for **sharing detailed designs and technical solutions available in the market**. On the other hand, the suppliers pointed out three main measures to be adopted: first, **legislation should be a driver for the market uptake of NBS**, and therefore an increase in policy support is needed. Second, **showcasing and sharing evidence of success stories**, including cost-benefit analysis, designs, photos, etc. would significantly contribute to a wider implementation of NBS. And third, there should be an emphasis on **training and transfer of know-how among practitioners**, but also awareness-raising and dissemination of solutions to public administrations, policymakers, water utilities, the general public, etc.

Other relevant actions suggested were the training of municipal authorities and technicians, increase the understanding of regulations to promote NBS application, a joint marketing strategy for the sector in offering NBS, promote a closed-the-loop approach in water management to decision makers, and gather and communicate of evidence of the economic, environmental and sociocultural impact of NBS.

5 Stay informed and get involved in the NBS for Water Management community. Most of the participants would like the Community to organise webinars with external experts while giving voice to our community members. The idea of preparing a shared publication or catalogue with the products and services offered by the NBEs registered also gained a lot of support from the respondents.

[Join our community](#) of enterprises and organisations leading the adoption of NBS in Water Management in cities and regions across Europe.

The most popular topics for future webinars revolved around **showcasing successful NBS projects** and **sharing evidence-based practice in the sector**. Another highly supported theme was the financial aspect of successful NBS projects: efficient business models, associated costs, economic assessments, and how to express the value of NBS in economic terms. More specific topics, such as the new Horizon Europe and the opportunities offered for NBS, circular economy and NBS, or the different approaches to integrate multiple functions were also pointed out by participants.

Next webinar "[NBS for Water Management community](#)"
21 April 2021 at 11.00-12.30 CET

