

Deliverable D5.7

Cross-fertilisation among other initiatives under the topic of nature-based solutions_v1

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
CBS	Statistics Netherlands
CRL	Leça River Corridor (<i>Corredor do Rio Leça</i>)
CWC	Canary Wharf Consultant
DF	Demonstrator Fellows
EAG	Ethics Advisory Board
ES	Experimental Sites
ESEJD	João de Deus Higher School of Education
GA	Grant Agreement
ICB	International Collaborative Board
M	Month
NBS	Nature-Based Solutions
NBT	Nature-Based Therapies
PBL	Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
SIH	Social Innovation Hub
WP	Work Package

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Executive Summary

This report outlines the NATURELAB project's strategic efforts to foster cross-fertilisation with other initiatives under the theme of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), with a specific emphasis on enhancing health, well-being, and community resilience. As part of Work Package 5 - Communication, Dissemination & Exploitation, this deliverable highlights collaborations, synergies, and stakeholder awareness raising activities developed over the first 24 months of the project.

NATURELAB aims to increase the visibility and integration of Nature-Based Therapies (NBT) within urban and social contexts by demonstrating their health and well-being benefits across fifteen experimental sites in Europe and Latin America. The report elaborates on the project's multidimensional approach that aligns environmental sustainability with public health through forests, urban parks, and horticultural spaces.

The document details NATURELAB's coordinated actions with key Horizon Europe projects - GreenME, RESONATE, UP2030, and OneAquaHealth - alongside broader networking via platforms like NetworkNature. These collaborations encompass joint communication strategies, shared data initiatives, event participation, and co-development of policy briefs and educational resources.

A central innovation is the launch of the NATURELAB Social Innovation Hub (SIH) - an interactive platform that fosters stakeholders' dialogue, resource sharing, and cross-disciplinary knowledge exchange. The SIH exemplifies the project's commitment to co-creation and long-term stakeholder engagement.

The report concludes with reflections on achievements to date and outlines upcoming actions, including an international workshop aimed at consolidating NBS and NBT integration strategies. These efforts are designed to reinforce NATURELAB's legacy, promote the adoption of nature-based interventions, and catalyse systemic change at policy and practice levels.

1. Introduction

The present report was prepared under the scope of the NATURELAB project. NATURELAB aims to increase the recognition, the promotion and the use of green and blue spaces as care providers by investigating the benefits of Nature Based Therapies (NBT) that promote well-being and support health prevention and rehabilitation and, thus, contribute to more resilient and sustainable communities.

NATURELAB works on fifteen Experimental Sites (ES) in two continents (Europe and Latin America) and five countries, namely: Portugal, Greece, the Netherlands, Germany, and Peru. The geographic location of the ES was chosen to represent diverse climate and geographic settings, socio-cultural contexts, etc. NATURELAB established a framework of nature spaces and activities that are more likely to be used by urban populations and have a high potential to support health and well-being. These three categories are: i) forests and protected areas; ii) urban parks; and iii) horticultural and gardening spaces.

The participants in the NBT include several types of populations, of all ages, and individuals with significant health issues, including mental disorders, depression and hypertension. NATURELAB will deal with densely populated cities (e.g., Lima, Peru) and smaller cities, as well as a low-income neighbourhood with a large population of immigrants and refugees in Amsterdam.

The variety of the ES nature areas (*cf.* Table 1) raises the opportunity for a comprehensive test and validation of the best indicators to characterise the healing potential of the blue and green nature areas - forests, urban parks, and horticulture and gardening spaces. This variety of spaces will be addressed at the 15 ES and 4 demonstrator fellows (DF), allowing the project to evaluate factors such as cultural, geographical and climate pre-conditions, among others.

Through NATURELAB, city managers, decision-makers, healthcare, social and educational sectors, green space designers and managers and nature protection organisations will be empowered with relevant information.

The project is organised into six work packages. The Work Package 5 (WP5) “Communication, Dissemination & Exploitation” aims to raise awareness and engage all stakeholders, promoting their participation, evaluation, and feedback on NATURELAB activities but also, ensure the project's major findings reach all those interested, motivating the adoption and implementation of NBT to increase health and well-being.

Table 1. Characteristics of the NATURELAB Experimental Sites

Exp. Site (Country)	Nature type
#1 National Park Sintra Cascais (PT)	Forest and protected area Area for nature conservation, Natura 2000 Main touristic area in the surroundings of Portugal's capital, Lisbon Area: 14,6 ha Water bodies: Yes/Lagoon
#2 Ribafria farm, Sintra (PT)	<i>A NATURELAB <u>Healing Garden</u> is being designed and implemented in this area.</i> Green area with identified biodiversity Area: 13,3 ha Water bodies: Yes/Stream, cascade, lake
#3 Allotment in Algueirão parish, Sintra (PT)	<i>A NATURELAB horticulture & gardening space is being implemented.</i> Promotion of sustainable urban drainage and water use. Area: 0,8 ha Water bodies: Yes/Ground water
#4 Rinchoa-Eco-Park Sintra (PT)	Urban Park Managed by the parish of Rio de Mouro (47,000 inhabitants). Area: 12 ha Water bodies: Yes/Stream
#5 Foz do Neiva (PT)	Forest and protected areas Nature 2000 site, with biodiversity and providing geological artefacts. Area: 2797,80 ha Water bodies: Yes/River
#6 Esposende municipality (PT)	Horticulture and gardening Public and private gardens and backyards from local social charities, daycare centres, schools and houses located within the Northern Littoral Natural Park. Area: Various Water bodies: No
#7 Garden of Brasa, Amsterdam (NL)	Urban Park The garden established on top of a tunnel covering a major highway with five sub-gardens, each with a different focus: flowers, vegetables, herbs, tea and agroforestry. Area: 0,2 ha Water bodies: No
#8 Gelderland province (NL)	Forest, parks and protected areas (including the Veluwe; Natura 2000 site) Area: 514 ha Water bodies: Yes/Rivers, canals, lakes, ponds
#9 Cologne city forest (DE)	Urban Park Located on the left bank of the Rhine River with an extensive network of paths and a game reserve. Area: 200 ha Water bodies: Yes/Ponds, water channels
#10 & #11 Alkyonis & Calypso Houses Kapandriti, Attica (EL)	Farm Area: Each site has 400 – 500 m ² with outdoor spaces & surrounding green parks Water bodies: No
#12 Prooptik House Xylokastro, Corinthia (EL)	Farm Area: 900m ² with outdoor spaces & surrounding green parks Water bodies: No
#13 Puericultorio Perez Aranibar,	<i>A NATURELAB <u>Healing Garden</u> was already designed and implemented in this area.</i> Area: 0,15 ha Water bodies: No

Exp. Site (Country)	Nature type
Lima (PE)	
#14 Lima (PE)	<i>A NATURELAB <u>Healing Garden</u> is being designed and will be implemented in this area.</i> Area: ± 1,00 ha Water bodies: No
#15 Oxapampa Forest (PE)	Forest Protecting area of Yanachega Chemillen Area: Various Water bodies: No

NOTES: Shadowed rows are ES that are under the supervision of private or public organisations.

This deliverable is prepared under WP5, more specifically, the work was done under task “T5.4 Fostering cooperation and synergies with other initiatives”. This task aims to foster cross-fertilisation among other initiatives under the topic of nature-based solutions (NBS) and ensure NATURELAB legacy and ongoing exploitation of key results, maximising the project's impact and continuous involvement of key stakeholders. Cooperation with Horizon Europe projects funded under CL6-2021-BIODIV-01-05, CL6-2022-BIODIV-01-03, CL6-2022-COMMUNITIES-01-05, and CL6-2021-COMMUNITIES-01-06 is planned in the GA. Clustering with similar initiatives, at all levels and space scales, is among the project initiatives to increase the impact of NBS and NBT.

Moreover, NATURELAB aims at promoting citizen and stakeholders' engagement and co-creation of knowledge by organising and contributing to joint engagement events, namely the project will organise two international workshops (by M28 and M40), to communicate ongoing and final results, consult stakeholders and policymakers on the methodologies and approaches designed, and to promote active participation and engagement of civil society.

This document presents the first version of the *Cross-fertilisation among other initiatives under the topic of nature-based solutions* deliverable. It starts with a short overview of the wide dimensions of NBS, and how policy documents and international research are currently addressing the concept. The Introduction chapter presents the NATURELAB project integrative approach, where NBS, NBT, the sustainability and the resilience of communities are intertwined.

Chapter 2 explores the various dimensions of NBS and how the NATURELAB project addresses them, highlighting the interconnections between NBS and NBT, and emphasizing the importance of communicating this relationship effectively to society at large, and to specific sectors that play a key role in the implementation of NBT and the management of NBS.

Chapter 3 describes the cooperation and synergies already developed by NATURELAB during the first 24 months of the project implementation, and the last chapter evaluates the achievements so

far and elaborates on the next steps. Potential measures to increase the synergies and collaborations, at national and international levels, are indicated.

Moreover, a preliminary program of the NATURELAB International Workshop I is presented in Annex 1.

DRAFT

Chapter 2

Dimensions of NBS and the NATURELAB approach

2. Dimensions of NBS and the NATURELAB approach

2.1 Concept of NBS: from projects to multidimensional solutions

For decades, research into and the promotion of nature-based solutions (NBS) has focused on projects for the management, treatment and reuse of rainwater, thereby supporting environmental sustainability and pioneering approaches to urban water cycles (Qiu et al., 2021; Duffaut et al., 2022). Additional dimensions have been subsequently incorporated into these strategies, namely the enhancement of cities' resilience to climate change. NBS contribute to mitigating heat waves and dampening the impact of extreme precipitation events, such as floods (e.g., Kumar et al. 2020; Kõiv-Vainik et al., 2022).

Conversely, emerging scientific evidence concerning the crucial role of nature in promoting well-being and health, coupled with the experiences of the recent pandemic - during which many individuals across the globe sought out the often limited urban green spaces as venues for leisure, exercise, and for restoring physical, mental, and emotional balance - has provided a valuable opportunity. This opportunity lies in integrating transdisciplinary approaches into the objectives, design, and maintenance of nature-based solutions, thereby maximising their diverse economic, social, and environmental benefits.

The European Commission's 2021 handbook, *Evaluating the Impact of Nature-based Solutions: A Handbook for Practitioners*, defines nature-based solutions (NBS) as "*solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions*" (EC, 2021). This definition underscores the multifaceted benefits of NBS, emphasizing their role in enhancing biodiversity and delivering a range of ecosystem services. By integrating natural elements into urban and rural settings, NBS aim to address various societal challenges, including climate extremes, disaster risk, and social well-being.

EC (2021) further elaborates on the importance of evaluating the impacts of NBS across 12 societal challenge areas: Climate Resilience; Water Management; Natural and Climate Hazards; Green Space Management; Biodiversity; Air Quality; Place Regeneration; Knowledge and Social Capacity Building for Sustainable Urban Transformation; Participatory Planning and Governance; Social Justice and Social Cohesion; Health and Well-being; and New Economic Opportunities and Green Jobs.

Research has substantiated the link between natural features and the enhancement of human health and well-being. NBS have emerged as a focal point in advancing environmental and social

sustainability within urban areas, fostering resilience to climate change, and enhancing public health and well-being, while also supporting the provision of urban ecosystem services. Importantly, the development and implementation of NBS should occur through a collaborative, transdisciplinary co-creation process that actively involves local communities and relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the design of such solutions should be informed by international scientific knowledge and adapted to the specific socio-environmental context of each urban area. (Barbosa and Rebelo, 2023).

2.2 NATURELAB integrative approach to NBS

NATURELAB proposes an integrative and innovative approach to contribute to resilient communities with a focus on health and care prevention. The project works towards the enhancement and expansion of the green and blue areas' benefits - as the resilience to climate change, the promotion of biodiversity and urban water management – and link all of these to a Health Pillar and a Societal Pillar (cf. Figure 1). The consortium is working closely with stakeholders and communities, providing solutions to improve health and well-being and promoting the protection of biodiversity and sustainability. The NATURELAB's approach is fully consistent with the findings of the EC (2021) report.

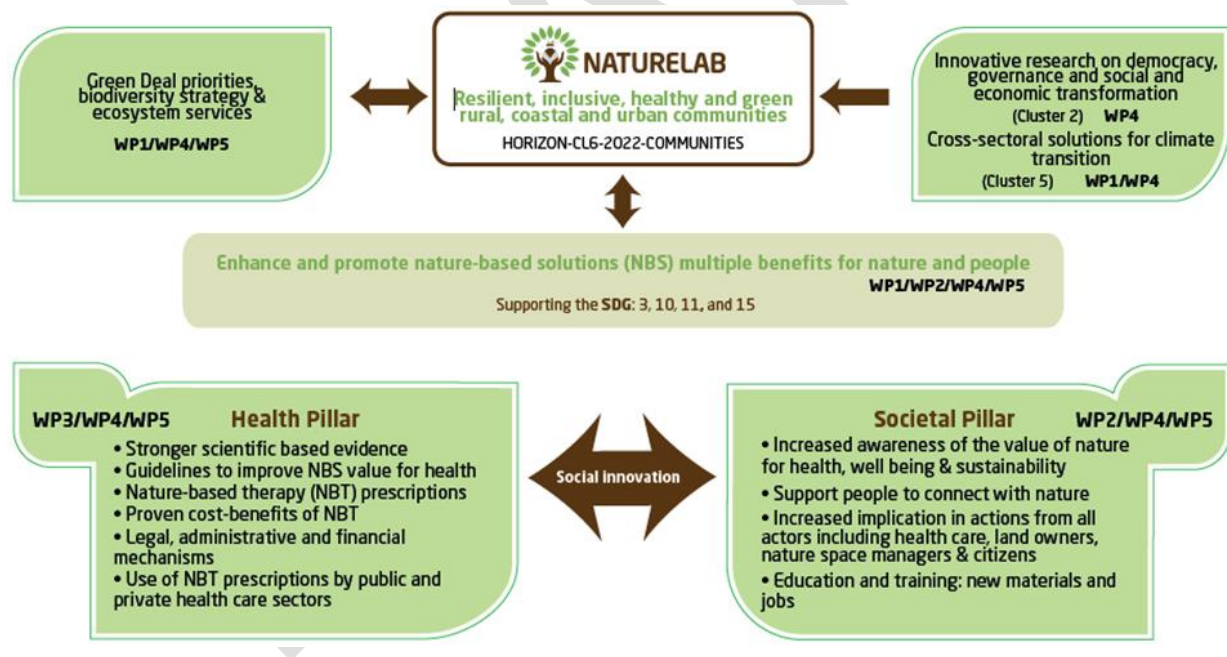


Figure 1. NATURELAB context and pillars to support global benefits of NBS for nature and human-being: relation to Work Packages (WPs) and to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The project will deliver guidelines for the sustainable design and management of healing gardens and horticulture and gardening spaces supported and illustrated by the NATURELAB showcases. Governance concerns will be addressed, and the practical results will inspire and guide public and private stakeholders to take on an innovative and comprehensive approach when designing and

managing urban green spaces, bringing the concept from research to exploitation. The work of Barbosa and Rebelo (2025) highlights the interconnections established by the NATURELAB project between water, nature, and society.

2.3 The importance of raising awareness of the links between NBS and NBT

As humanity faces the twin crises of climate extremes and deteriorating public health, NBS and NBT emerge as complementary approaches focusing on environmental sustainability and human well-being. Even though these approaches have frequently been discussed separately, increasing awareness of their interconnection can catalyse integrated strategies that simultaneously promote global human health.

Despite the different origins, NBS rooted in environmental science, and NBT in health and psychology, both approaches are inherently interconnected. Urban parks created as NBS for stormwater management also serve as therapeutic landscapes. Similarly, forest conservation efforts not only preserve biodiversity but also provide essential spaces for mental health interventions.

Recognising this overlap can encourage policymakers, urban planners, healthcare providers, and conservationists to collaborate more effectively. For example, a hospital integrating therapeutic gardens into its design could partner with city planners involved in green infrastructure development. Additionally, aligning NBT within the broader NBS framework can help attract funding and policy support, as the co-benefits become more apparent to stakeholders in both the environmental and health sectors.

By illuminating the deep and mutually reinforcing relationship between NBS and NBT, NATURELAB opens new pathways for sustainable and holistic responses to the interconnected crises of our time. Promoting this awareness is not just an academic exercise - it implies interdisciplinary work that is increasingly valued for its potential to address complex societal and scientific challenges, presenting a range of challenges that can hinder collaboration and productivity. These challenges span epistemological and communication dimensions. Regarding epistemological challenges, while the social sciences may prioritise qualitative methods and contextual interpretation, the natural sciences often emphasise quantitative analysis and generalisable findings. Reconciling these different approaches requires a meta-level negotiation of standards for evidence and validity (Miller et al., 2008). Communication issues are another critical challenge. Disciplinary jargon can impede mutual understanding, especially when collaborators are not trained in the terminologies and conceptual frameworks of other fields. This problem is exacerbated when researchers assume implicit knowledge or fail to recognise the limitations of their own disciplinary perspectives. Effective interdisciplinary collaboration demands not only a common and harmonised understanding of

concepts and approaches but also an appreciation of diverse perspectives and the development of a shared lexis.

Despite these difficulties, strategies exist to support effective interdisciplinary collaboration. These include fostering interdisciplinary education and training, developing integrative frameworks and models, and reforming evaluation criteria to capture better the unique contributions of interdisciplinary work (Boix Mansilla, 2006).

One relevant aspect on this matter is the ongoing NATURELAB International Storytelling Campaign, which aims at amplifying the voices of those directly impacted - both participants and caregivers – through a narrative highlighting the profound effects of NBT on well-being and quality of life.

This international campaign will appoint one NBT Ambassador per country who will serve as an advocate for the relevance and therapeutic potential of NBTs. This ambassador will be responsible for engaging healthcare professionals, policymakers and the public in meaningful discussions about integrating NBT into national healthcare and social support frameworks.

By using a storytelling method, this Campaign represents an interdisciplinary form of collaboration that seeks to mitigate the existing epistemological and communicational barriers around the NBT topic and its connection to NBS, by directly reaching multiple stakeholders from several fields of expertise - including healthcare professionals from public and private sectors, policymakers and government representatives, researchers, educators and academic institutions, NGOs, environmental organisations and, ultimately, and society at large.

Though the focus of the campaign is the integration of NBTs in healthcare and social care systems, NBS will inevitably be covered throughout this process, precisely because they are intertwined. Indeed, NBS '*offer the stage*' for NBTs to happen, as the latter cannot take place without the former. Thus, the international storytelling campaign will eventually foster the adoption of NBS, especially in urban contexts, where there is a lack of nature spaces (both green and blue)¹.

¹ This matter was particularly expressed during the Focus Group Discussions that took place in each country in the context of T4.1.

Chapter 3

**Cooperation and
synergies
developed by
NATURELAB**

3. Cooperation and synergies developed by NATURELAB

3.1 Cooperation with Horizon Europe-funded projects

3.1.1 Synergies with GreenME and RESONATE

The Horizon-CL6-2022-COMMUNITIES-02-02 topic encompasses three projects concerning nature-based therapies and nature-based solutions: NATURELAB, RESONATE and GreenME. These are 3 projects that, notwithstanding their different approaches, aim to contribute to 5 expected outcomes:

- Sharper view of green space management, nature protection, agriculture and forestry sectors as care providers and their possible linkages with the healthcare, social and educational sectors;
- Stronger evidence base for the causal relationships between nature and health and well-being for more effective nature therapy prescriptions;
- Cost-effective nature therapy prescriptions are more widely used in the health care sector;
- Greater citizen and policy-maker awareness of the positive benefits of nature for health and well-being;
- Wider utilisation by healthcare professionals and citizens of nature therapy as a form of preventive medicine.

The RESONATE project² - *Building individual and community resilience through nature-based therapies* – has the mission of bringing together experts on NBTs from around the world to unite them with people from different sectors, such as health, environment, economy, and society. By doing so, the project aims at:

- a) Collecting more proof that shows how nature can improve our health and well-being, by demonstrating how nature helps us physically, mentally, and socially.
- b) Showing how people from different sectors can work together to make nature-based therapies that are suitable for everyone.
- c) Making more people, including the public and policymakers, aware of these benefits and make them more accepted.

² Learn more about the RESONATE project at: <https://resonate-horizon.eu/>

- d) Encouraging more use of low-cost nature-based therapies to help making individuals and communities stronger in cities, towns, and coastal areas.

On the other hand, the GreenME project³ aims to identify ways in which effective nature-based therapies and a broader green care framework can be scaled-up to improve adult mental health and well-being equity in Europe, while contributing to multiple socio-ecological co-benefits. The project's outcomes include:

- a) Cost-effective nature therapy prescriptions to be more widely used in the health care sector.
- b) Stronger evidence base for the causal relationships between nature and health and well-being for more effective nature therapy prescriptions.
- c) Sharper view of green space management, nature protection, agriculture and forestry sectors as care providers and their possible linkages with the healthcare, social and educational sectors.
- d) Greater citizen and policy-maker awareness of the positive benefits of nature for health and well-being & wider utilisation by healthcare professionals and citizens of nature therapy as a form of preventive medicine.

By looking at the aforementioned descriptions from the three sister projects and considering the Horizon-CL6-2022-COMMUNITIES-02-02 call's expected outcomes, one may spot the similarities among them. This is, indeed, a consequence of the common effort towards the shared goal set by the call text.

The three projects, thus, share a common ground which must be harnessed in the most fruitful ways possible. In this sense, the NATURELAB project has been in continuous contact with members from the two sister projects, especially the three projects' coordination teams. Examples of this collaboration are the participation of the NATURELAB coordination in the GreenME kick-off meeting in Barcelona (on site) in January 2024, and in the RESONATE annual meeting (online) in July 2024 (Figure 2). These events offer valuable opportunities to learn and discuss the projects' achievements and highlight on the prospects coming from continued collaboration among the projects, creating synergies, and fostering cross-fertilisation.

³ Learn more about the GreenME project at: <https://greenme-project.eu/>

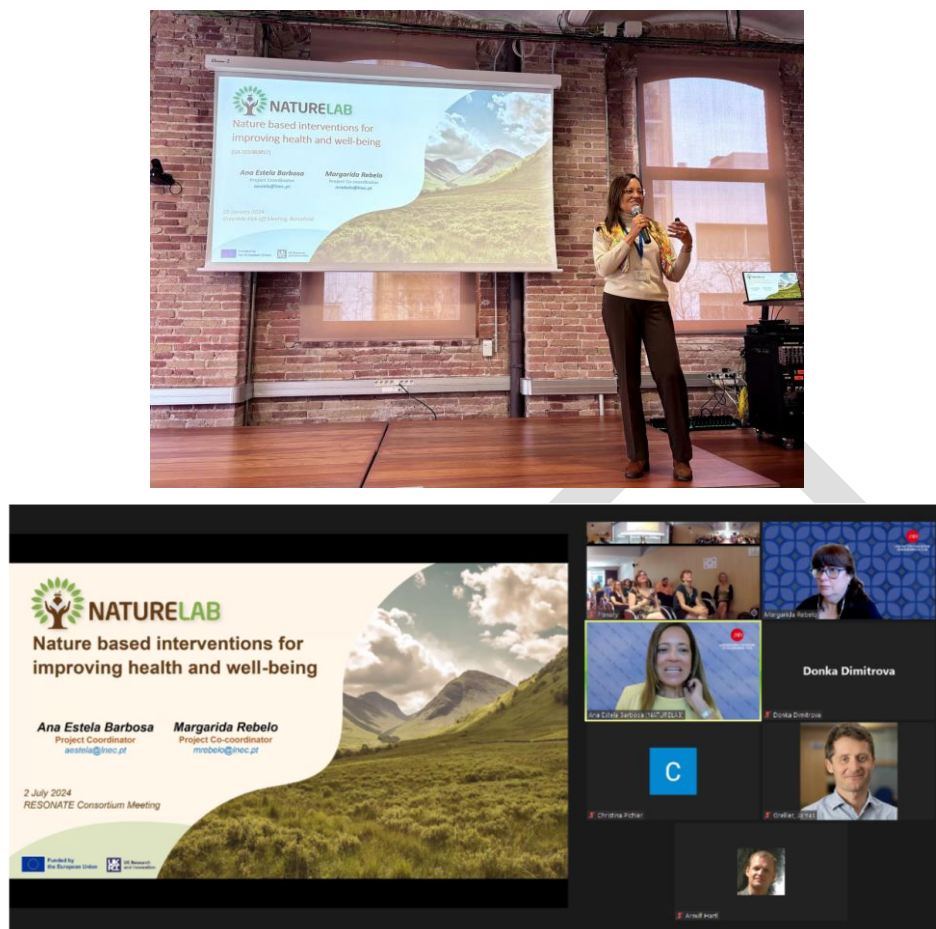


Figure 2. NATURELAB's presence at the GreenME kick-off meeting and at the RESONATE annual meeting

The close collaboration has also allowed a recurring exchange of ideas between the coordination teams of the three projects and the invitation for the NATURELAB team to participate in two surveys from the GreenME project.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that the events where the NATURELAB coordination team has participated have been featured on the NATURELAB's newsletters #2 (M10) and #3 (M14)⁴, as well as on the news on the NATURELAB's website⁵. Posts on the project's social media channels have also been crafted, namely on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook and X (former Twitter)⁶.

Additionally, the NATURELAB's communication team has created a social media campaign starting in M21 (February 2025), aiming to address the sister projects directly. This campaign resulted in a post for each of the sister projects on each NATURELAB's social media channel (excluding

⁴ All NATURELAB newsletters are available at the project's website in [here](#).

⁵ NATURELAB's news available in [here](#).

⁶ All NATURELAB's social media channels can be found on the project's [Linktree](#).

YouTube), publicising their efforts, goals and what these sister projects share in common with the NATURELAB approach. The GreenME project presentation video was also shared (Figure 3).

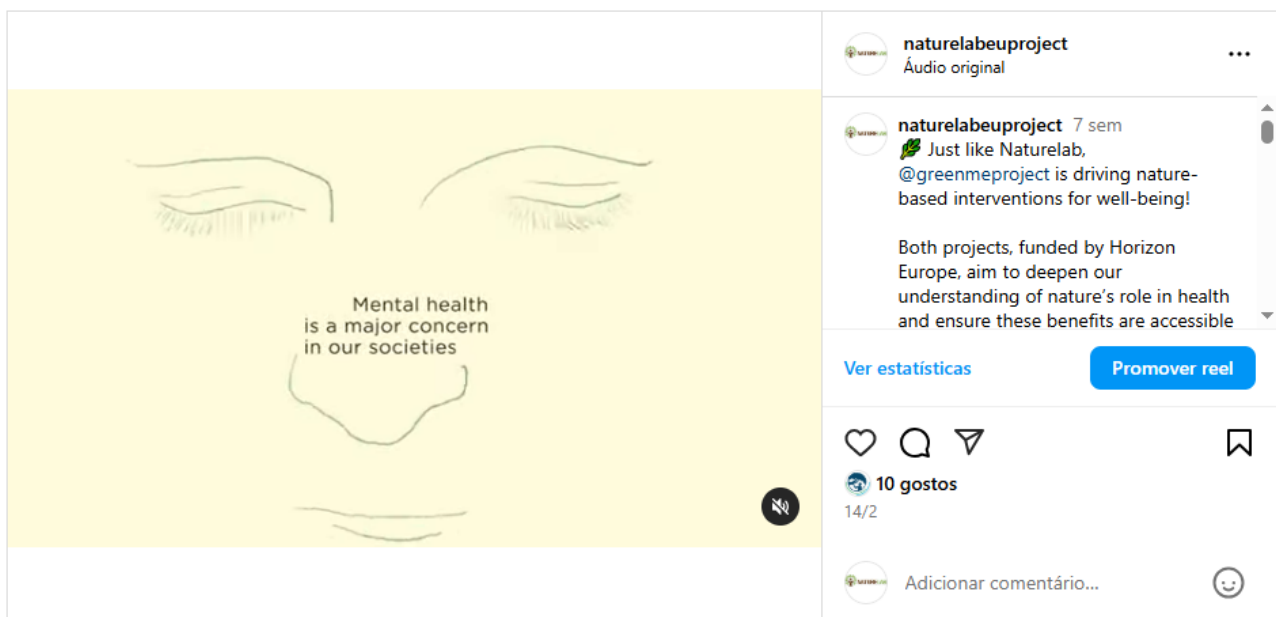


Figure 3. Instagram post about the GreenME project, featuring the project presentation video

As a direct result of this initiative, the three sister projects' communication teams have decided to meet on a more regular basis to discuss communication, collaboration and data sharing among them. The first meeting (Figure 4) was held in M23 (April 2025), leading to a significant number of joint initiatives, namely:

- Schedule recurring meetings every 4-6 months to align communication and content opportunities.
- Develop a concept for a joint interactive map, featuring layers with information regarding practitioners, projects, green/blue spaces, and others.
- Organise joint webinar series.
- Feature the different projects on the podcast series with cross-episode collaborations.
- Joint promotion via social media tags.
- Newsletter collaboration, with each project dedicating a section to the sister projects' latest news and general information.
- Crafting a joint policy brief (closer to the end of the three projects) on integrating nature-based therapies into national health systems.

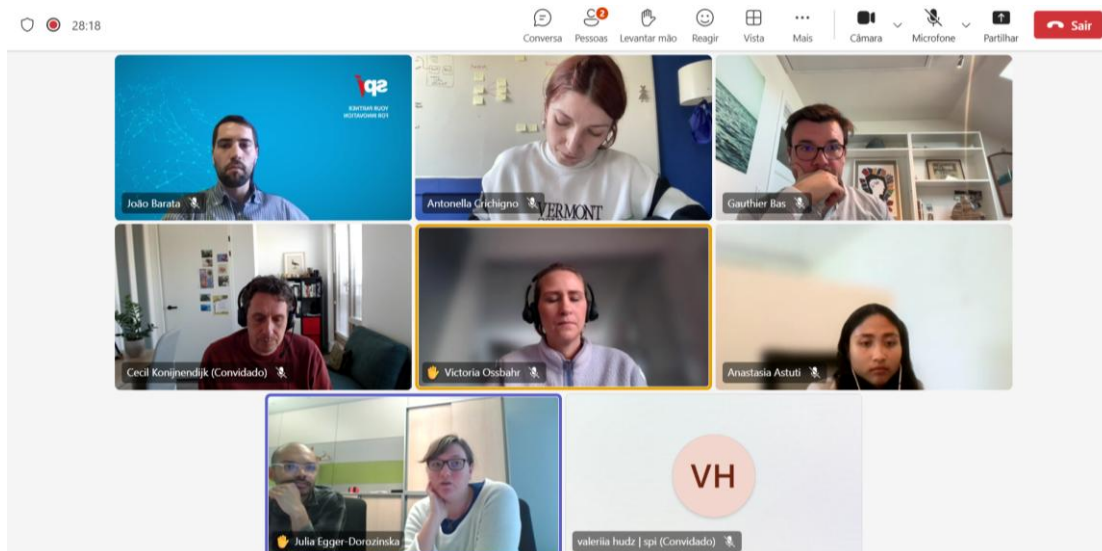


Figure 4. The first meeting of the sister projects communication teams

The collaboration between Etifor, a partner in the Horizon Europe RESONATE project, and the NATURELAB team stems from a shared interest in advancing NBT through complementary initiatives. Following a compelling presentation of the project at the RESONATE Annual Meeting in Barcelona, Etifor recognised the potential for synergy between their work on Work Package 6 of the RESONATE Horizon project—specifically Task 6.4, which focuses on analysing the European NBT market and developing a “NBT Sustainable Financing Guide”—and the NATURELAB’s development of a “Guide Program of Funding Schemes for NBT Prescription”, to be developed under Task 4.4 under the responsibility of Canary Wharf Consultant (CWC). Given the overlap in goals related to financing mechanisms for NBT, the two teams see a valuable opportunity to exchange insights and collaborate, potentially enhancing the impact and coherence of their respective outputs.

More recently, FTHub has been invited to collaborate with a research initiative led by Etifor under the scope of RESONATE project. The focus of the study is to assess the market potential and funding landscape for NBT across Europe. As part of this effort, Etifor is currently engaging with experts and potential funders through semi-structured interviews to gather insights on financing mechanisms, barriers, drivers, and emerging trends within the NBT sector. The invitation is to FTHub to contribute with their expertise through an online interview, emphasising the importance of their perspectives in shaping a deeper understanding of the NBT funding environment. This collaborative approach reflects the project’s commitment to stakeholder engagement and evidence-based research.

3.1.2 Cooperation with UP2030 and OneAquaHealth and other projects

In addition to the sister projects, NATURELAB has also collaborated with other Horizon Europe initiatives. One of those is the UP2030⁷, a project that aims to support cities in driving the socio-technical transitions required to meet their climate neutrality targets by leveraging urban planning and design (LNEC, 2025). Through an innovative methodology (the 5UP-approach), project city stakeholders and local authorities will be supported and guided to put carbon neutrality on the map of their communities in day-to-day actions and strategic decisions, ensuring a resilient and just transition. This 5UP-approach comprises:

- **Update** the policies, codes and regulations that have to be abandoned to make way for a new vision.
- **Upskilling** by empowering the entire ecosystem of stakeholders in the city that must carry out the action.
- **Upgrade** by developing prototype solutions (digital and physical) in selected neighbourhoods.
- **Upscale** to achieve city-wide impact by formatting governance arrangements and matching project portfolios with financial resources.
- **Uptake**, by getting involved with the Mission and sharing best practices between European cities.

In this context, the NATURELAB coordination team participated in the “Urban environments and human health” Conference in Lisbon, Portugal in M4 (September 2023), an event organised by the national partners of the UP2030 project, converging leading experts and innovators from the domains of urban planning, health, and environmental sustainability. The NATURELAB Project stood out amidst the discussions with the theme “Nature-based interventions and strengthening health and well-being” (Figure 5).

⁷ Learn more about the UP2030 project at: <https://up2030-he.eu/>



Figure 5. NATURELAB being promoted by the coordination team at a UP2030 conference

Another Horizon Europe project with which NATURELAB has collaborated is the OneAquaHealth - Protecting urban aquatic ecosystems to promote One Health (2023-2026)⁸. OneAquaHealth seeks to improve the sustainability and integrity of freshwater ecosystems in urban environments by investigating the interconnection of ecosystem health and human well-being. This initiative will identify early warning indicators and enhance environmental monitoring with AI-assisted tools, thus supporting decision-makers in making adequate and timely decisions as well as effective measures to restore aquatic ecosystems' health and promote OneHealth.

Given that these two projects seek to deepen the links between human well-being and the sustainability of ecosystems (in this case, blue spaces), the NATURELAB and OneAquaHealth coordination teams joined forces and co-organised an event intitled “Nature for a Healthy and Sustainable Society” at the ‘Ciência Viva 2024’ event, in Oporto, Portugal in M14 (July 2024) (Figure 6).

⁸ Learn more about the OneAquaHealth project at: <https://www.oneaquahealth.eu/>



Figure 6. NATURELAB and OneAquaHealth teams at the *Ciência Viva* scientific event (Oporto, Portugal).

It is also worth mentioning the indirect cooperation with the environMENTAL EU-funded project, an initiative dedicated to studying the impact of climate, pollution, urbanicity, regional socioeconomic conditions, as well as the Covid19 pandemic on brain health, and characterising its underlying biological mechanisms⁹

During the environMENTAL annual meeting in September 2023, where the team gathered to share their preliminary findings and set the course for the future of the project, the three sister projects supported by the HORIZON-CL6-2022-COMMUNITIES programme (NATURELAB, RESONATE and GreenME) were presented by the RESONATE coordination team.

3.2 Collaborations with Network Nature

The NATURELAB project is framed in the Horizon Europe Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment, which includes a significant number of projects that fall in the realm of NBS. For this purpose, a community was conceived with the aim of creating opportunities for local, regional and international cooperation to maximise the impact and spread of NBS – the NetworkNature¹⁰.

The NetworkNature's work encompasses a diverse and science-based repository of evidence on NBS, the strengthening of partnerships and fostering of new relationships around a clear, strategic framework for action. Its work is underpinned by an up-to-date EU Research & Innovation NBS

⁹ Learn more about the environMENTAL project at: <https://www.environmental-project.org/>

¹⁰ NetworkNature Website: <https://networknature.eu/>

Roadmap and six priority themes: Biodiversity enhancement and ecosystem restoration; Sustainable food systems; Zero Pollution; Climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience; Sustainable finance, investment and just transition; Sustainable urban and regional transformation (NetworkNature, 2023).

This network comprises six Task Forces (TF):

- TF1 – Data Knowledge Sharing.
- TF2 – Integrated Assessment Framework.
- TF3 – Finance and Business Models (for NBS) in a Nature-Positive Economy.
- TF4 – NBS Communicators.
- TF5 – NBS Education.
- TF6 – Co-creation and Governance.

As the NATURELAB coordinator, LNEC has been invited to join the TF1. As a result, the LNEC team presented the NATURELAB project on the online Task Forces Cluster meeting in M10 (March 2024) in the session “Introducing new Horizon Europe projects on NbS”, under the topic of “Health”, together with the two other sister projects, GreenME and RESONATE.

Following that session, WP5 leader, SPI, was invited to join TF4 as the NATURELAB communication team. Since then, SPI has participated in all the NetworkNature online quarterly sessions with the aim of synergising and enhancing communication approaches and messages across the different NBS projects. These meetings have proven to be valuable opportunities for sharing results, publications, upcoming events, and common doubts, as well as a place for asking guidance on specific matters. Common initiatives such as the TF4 Communications Toolkit have also encouraged cross-project collaboration.

Furthermore, TF4 has a monthly digest that is featured on the NetworkNature website, where all the members are invited to share their project updates, upcoming events, calls for proposals, calls for abstracts/publications, and other opportunities. The NATURELAB project was featured in the April 2025 digest (Figure 7), where the project presentation video was shared with the community¹¹.

¹¹ NetworkNature TF4 April Digest: <https://networknature.eu/networknature-tf4-april-digest>

NetworkNature TF4 April Digest

NEWS

31 March 2025

The [NetworkNature](#) Task Force 4 (Communicators) is pleased to provide you with a summary of upcoming events and opportunities announced by Horizon 2020/Europe projects and select Missions. This Task Force is responsible for synergizing and enhancing communication approaches and messages across Nature-based Solutions (NBS) projects. If you are not a task force 4 member, but would like to submit to this informal digest, please reach out to hello@networknature.eu. We will get back to you as soon as possible with instructions!



TF 4 Digest: April 2025

Project Updates

- NetworkNature partner TNOC has published a [roundtable on the Nature Restoration Regulation](#).
- The [PONDERFUL](#) Project [has published a Technical Handbook and Policy Guidance](#) on "Ponds and Pondsapes as NBS". Also has made available two animated short films (in 13 languages) on "[The Importance of Ponds as NBS](#)" and "[How To Build A Pond](#)".
- The BIOFIN-EU project is now in its second year! Explore our [achievements and what's coming next!](#)
- Introducing NATURELAB, a 4,5 year-project (June 2023 – November 2027) that aims to go beyond the present knowledge of the positive impact NBS offer to society, encompassing nature-based therapies (NBT) for common health, well-being and community resilience. Find out more about this initiative by exploring the project [website](#) and watching its [presentation video!](#)

Figure 7. The NATURELAB project was featured on the NetworkNature TF4 Monthly digest

The NATURELAB project was represented by the LNEC team at the NetworkNature annual event in Brussels in M16 (September 2024), themed "Busting myths: People or with nature". This one-day conference explored how NBS can reverse biodiversity loss by emphasising the synergistic relationship between nature and people. Three key elements were covered: regenerating nature actions, governance and policy, and economy and valuation.

In M22 (March 2025), the NATURELAB communications team (SPI) participated in the online Task Forces Cluster meeting.

3.3 Other synergies and collaborations

The NATURELAB project has been attentive to additional synergies and collaborations that go beyond the scope of the European Commission initiatives.

The project coordination team, LNEC, established in M17 (October 2024) a Collaboration Agreement with an association of four Portuguese municipalities (*Corredor do Leça*¹²), aiming at expanding and using the NATURELAB approach, working jointly towards research and innovation, as well as disseminating the outcomes of the collaboration. The Agreement has the following key objectives:

¹² Corredor do Leça website: www.rio-leca.pt

- a) Research and development of approaches and methodologies that integrate water cycle management (quantity and quality) with the protection of natural ecosystems and the promotion of biodiversity, through nature-based solutions.
- b) Collaboration in the study and implementation of nature-based solutions and integrated approaches that emphasise the contributions of natural areas and water to resilience against extreme climatic events and to the cultural ecosystem services, particularly in relation to public health and well-being.
- c) Preparation of applications for national and European funding programmes and implementation of funded projects, with the aim of maximising their potential to deliver research outcomes and solutions with direct, relevant application within the Leça River Corridor (CRL) territory.
- d) Promotion and supervision of internships, master's dissertations, and doctoral theses on the aforementioned topics, as well as the organisation and participation in knowledge dissemination activities.

Within the last objective, the joint abstract “Barbosa, Branco and Canastra (2025) *Connecting water, biodiversity and cultural ecosystems services – Research and Practice*” has been successfully submitted to the 41st IAHR (Singapore, 22-27 June 2025) and was accepted as an oral presentation. The purpose of this manuscript is to demonstrate, in theory and practice, how the NATURELAB and CRL approaches towards expanding NBS are both aligned and provide mutual opportunities for learning. Both showcase real examples that can inspire other regions globally to harness the full potential of NBS.

The NATURELAB coordination team has also been in close collaboration with the João de Deus Higher School of Education (ESEJD) in Lisbon, Portugal, regarding the *SuperiorMente* project. *SuperiorMente* is an ongoing initiative focused on the mental health of higher education students in Portugal to provide practical tools so that students can face academic and personal challenges more effectively, promoting emotional well-being and resilience in their personal and professional lives. So far, this partnership has resulted in two events held at the ESEJD facilities (Figure 8):

- Launching of the book titled “*WATER SUSTAINS AND IS SUSTAINED BY NATURE & BIODIVERSITY and by all of us*” in M22 (March 2025), a publication developed with the aim of raising awareness about the positive impact that natural areas can have on people's quality of life, with highlights on the NATURELAB project. The LNEC team and Eliseth Leão, a

member of the NATURELAB International Collaborative Board (ICB) and the Ethics Advisory Board (EAG), have been authors of this publication.

- Dissemination and Introductory session to Nature-based Therapies in M23 (April 2025), where the NATURELAB project was presented to an audience mainly composed of undergraduate future teachers in the context of the *SuperiorMente* initiative, followed by a practical session at a nearby urban garden, Jardim da Estrela, with NATURELAB WP2 leader, a certified nature-based therapist from the consortium team member FTHub.



Figure 8. Launching of the book (left) and introductory session (right) in the context of the *SuperiorMente* project

Acknowledging the high potential for fruitful collaborations, the project coordination team, LNEC, established in M22 (March 2025) a Collaboration Agreement with the João de Deus Higher School of Education (ESEJD), aiming at boosting the synergies between the NATURELAB and SuperiorMente projects, as well as joining forces in the study and promotion of integrated approaches that highlight the contributions of natural areas and NBS to public health and well-being. The promotion and supervision of internships, master's dissertations, and doctoral theses, as well as the organisation and participation in knowledge dissemination activities are among the objectives of the Agreement.

Furthermore, the NATURELAB project has cooperated with a substantial number of initiatives through the participation in conferences and events by the consortium members (Figure 9). Table 2 presents a brief summary of other relevant initiatives with which the NATURELAB project has collaborated.

Table 2. Conferences and Events with which NATURELAB has collaborated

Conference/Event name	Location	Partner(s)	Date	Role
16th Water Congress	Lisbon, Portugal	LNEC	March 2023	Abstract on the topic "Transdisciplinarity and innovation at the service of environmental and social sustainability: The NATURELAB project"
I Global Summit, Science, Nature and Health	Online	LNEC	March 2023	Presentation of the paper entitled "NATURELAB project approach to nature-based interventions for health and well-being."
18th National Healthcare Industry Conference	Rostock, Germany	UG, BCV	M1 (June 2023)	Networking activities
WBGU Forum: Healthy living on a healthy planet	Berlin, Germany	UG	M2 (July 2023)	Networking activities
5th International Congress on Forests and Its Potential for Health	Kranjska Gora, Slovenia	UG, BCV, FTHub	M4 (September 2023)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB (FTHub); Networking activities (UG, BCV)
Therapeutic Horticulture Conference - Prince Edward Island (CA)	Virtual Prince Edward Island, Canada	APHTS	M4 (September 2023)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
H2020 CLEVER Cities' "Advancing Social Impact through NBS" Conference	Hamburg, Germany	LNEC	M4 (September 2023)	Poster presentation about NATURELAB
Seminar (no name specified)	Derby, UK	FTHub	M4 (September 2023)	Lecture conducted with reference to the NATURELAB project
Showcasing Healing Forests Site	Heringsdorf, Germany	UG	M4 (September 2023)	Networking activities
3rd World Conference Forests for Public Health	Quebec, Canada	FTHub	M5 (October 2023)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
Bridging the World of Forest Therapy	Vancouver, Canada	FTHub	M5 (October 2023)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
Exploring the connection between forests and health	Online	FTHub	M5 (October 2023)	Lecture conducted with reference to the NATURELAB project
Introduction to team working on natural capital accounts in Statistics Netherlands (CBS)	Hybrid	WU	M5 (October 2023)	Presented research project to people working on natural capital accounts. Received input on the work on natural capital accounts
National Innovation Alliance for Forest Therapy and Health Promotion of the State Forestry and Grassland Administration and the Beijing Forestry Society	Beijing, China	FTHub	M6 (November 2023)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
Planetary Health Forum '23	Berlin, Germany	UG	M6 (November 2023)	Networking activities
SENSE A1 course - poster session	Wageningen, Netherlands	WU	M6 (November 2023)	Presented research project, received input from starting researchers from environmental sciences

Conference/Event name	Location	Partner(s)	Date	Role
Alignment meeting with Statistics Netherlands (CBS)	The Hague, The Netherlands	WU	M7 (December 2023)	WU presented research project, received input on past research, discussed alignment between their research and the government frameworks for statistics
Alignment meeting with Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL)	The Hague, The Netherlands	WU	M9 (February 2024)	Exchange of inputs around the NATURELAB project and the topic's research field
Cycle of lectures "THIS LAND, NOW! GOVERNMENTS AND WAYS OF ACTING"	Online	LNEC	M9 (February 2024)	Introduction to the NATURELAB project in the round table "Well-being, health and nature"
Network day of NEO BV (Dutch geo IT company)	Amersfoort, the Netherlands	WU	M10 (March 2024)	Discussion with potential data providers and relevant municipal authorities about the NATURELAB research
II Global Summit Science, Nature and Health	Online	FTHub, KMOP, BCV	M11 (April 2024)	Three NATURELAB consortium partners were speakers at the conference and used the NATURELAB approach as an example
6th Euro-Mediterranean Conference for Environmental Integration (EMCEI-2024)	Online	LNEC	M12 (May 2024)	The extend abstract was presented in a pre-recorded session. It was based on the indicators established to evaluate NBS contribution to sustainable communities (from Deliverable 1.1). The complete manuscript was accepted and awaits publication.
Avistar - Conference and Fair	São Paulo, Brazil	FTHub	M12 (May 2024)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
Nature, Sport in Mental Health: Modern Practical Tools	Athens, Greece	KMOP	M12 (May 2024)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
Planet Water Conference: Life, Economy, Security and Sustainability	Lisbon, Portugal	LNEC	M12 (May 2024)	Networking activities with distribution of in-paper brochures
Global Leadership Exchange	Utrecht, the Netherlands	VU	M13 (June 2024)	Networking activities
Green Mental Health Match of Global Leadership Exchange	Eindhoven, the Netherlands	VU	M13 (June 2024)	Presentation on NATURELAB and findings from WP4. Focus on networking and sharing knowledge and experience around green mental health.
Podcast on nature and citizen science as part of EASST Forest Festival	Amsterdam, the Netherlands	FICUS	M13 (June 2024)	Participation in a podcast organised by Amsterdamse Bos and the Athena Institute to discuss citizen science, biodiversity and Health, where the NATURELAB project was presented.
6th ISFT's International Congress "Forest and its Potential for Health"	Druskininkai, Lithuania	FTHub	M15 (August 2024)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB

Conference/Event name	Location	Partner(s)	Date	Role
Conference at Psychology Faculty of Riga Stradins University in Latvia	Riga, Latvia	FTHub	M15 (August 2024)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
Conference on Nature-based Interventions for Psychologists	Barcelona, Spain	FTHub	M17 (October 2024)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
World Forum of Forest Therapy	Daejeon, Korea	FTHub	M17 (October 2024)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
8th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research	Nagasaki, Japan	FICUS, VU	M18 (November 2024)	Organised session of 90-minutes, including nature-based sensory activity, and overview of NATURELAB, NBT, and comparative findings from key informant interviews of WP4. Active debate by attendees.
2024 International Conference on the Cooperation and Integration of Industry, Education, Research, and Application	Fujian, China	FTHub	M18 (November 2024)	Presentation with reference to NATURELAB
ESP Europe Conference - One Health, One Planet	Wageningen, Netherlands	WU	M18 (November 2024)	Attended conference, discussed relevant topics with people, shared about existence of NATURELAB in informal meetings, etc
Make space for health meeting	Utrecht, the Netherlands	WU	M18 (November 2024)	Participation in discussions and workshops where references to the NATURELAB project were made
1st Congress on Research and Innovation in Non-Communicable Diseases	Lima, Peru	APHTS	M19 (December 2024)	Networking activities
III Global Summit Science, Nature and Health 2025	Online (FTHub & Deputacion Barcelona)	LNEC	M22 (April 2025)	Presentation of the paper entitled "Towards the comprehension of Nature features and Stakeholders' awareness of Nature-Based Interventions"



Figure 9. Examples of other synergies and collaborations with the NATURELAB project

3.4 NATURELAB Social Innovation Hub as a booster of collaboration

In the context of WP4 ‘Governance, social innovation and uptake of nature-based therapies’, and as a result of the outcomes of Task T4.1 ‘Community engagement & awareness for the adoption of NBT’, Task T4.2 foresees the creation of a NATURELAB Social Innovation Hub.

The Social Innovation Hub is designed to promote active dialogue between partners and participants with distinct knowledge and experienced backgrounds, establishing cross-learning and a transdisciplinary knowledge co-production environment. It is expected that this Hub will foster a strong interaction with key stakeholders and communities at the local, regional, and national levels of the Experimental Sites (ES) and Demonstrator Fellows (DF), bearing in mind that the dimensions of health and well-being have a strong behavioural and social background, as does the conceptualisation of the value of sustainability and nature in promoting health.

Thus, this Hub seeks to cultivate collaboration around NBT and support health and well-being, creating an inclusive online space for innovation and exchange. All users may share/upload/download content or documents and other resources and participate in group discussions. Its main goal is to raise awareness and foster a thriving culture around NBT, Health and Wellbeing, while simultaneously promoting the NATURELAB project.

The NATURELAB Social Innovation Hub was officially launched in M22 (March 2025) and is available at the project’s website. One can access it directly here: <https://naturelab-project.eu/forum/>.

The Hub comprises categories, with their respective topics of discussion (Figure 10). It is within each topic of discussion that the main interactions are to occur.

Discussion Topics		Posts	Topics
 General Naturelab Topics		4	1
	Recent Topics ^		
 How did you hear about the NATURELAB project?		 By Joao Barata	5 days ago
NBT and NBS publications		Posts	Topics
 NBT-related publications		6	1
	Kindly share publications related to the Nature-based Therapies subject.		
Recent Topics ^			
 NBT-related publications		 By Joao Barata	4 days ago

Figure 10. Examples of the Social Innovation Hub Categories and respective topics

Two main categories of discussion are currently being fed with content regularly:

- General NATURELAB topics – with specific topics of interest to the project's development (e.g. *'What challenges do you see in integrating nature-based therapies (NBTs) into mainstream healthcare, and how can they be overcome?'*).
- NBT and NBS publications – where all users are invited to share scientific publications or findings on these fields of expertise. This will encourage the sharing and updating of the scientific support so necessary for the development of NBS and NBTs.

As the Social Innovation Hub requires registration for all its users, it is possible to find all the members who are part of it and check their profiles. Each profile shows a picture of the member, the indication of the User group (Administrator, Moderator or Member), when the person joined the forum and the number of topics and posts to which they have contributed so far. Additionally, by visiting each member's profile, one may get further information on them, such as their location, occupation and expertise, signature, and also their multiple social networks. A user may also choose to follow the person's activity by clicking the 'Follow' button. These features facilitate direct contact between the different members, should they so wish.

Moreover, the Hub also comprises an Event Calendar, where previous and upcoming events can be publicised so all the members of the Hub may be informed.

The Social Innovation Hub presents, then, a platform that intends to boost collaboration among different experts and interested parties in the field of nature-based interventions, namely NBS and NBT. By congregating a wide array of stakeholders on a single space solely dedicated to this field of expertise, each member is invited to deepen their knowledge on NBS and NBT, exchange points of views, share content and new findings, and get involved in the promotion of nature-based interventions while forging a solid and welcoming community. Moreover, this platform comes in the context of almost two years of work on the project, in which the NATURELAB team already has in-depth knowledge of the characteristics of the stakeholders in the various countries and the barriers to the adoption of NBTs. In fact, some of the main barriers pointed out in the KII and FGD - such as the lack of knowledge on the subject, scientific validation and awareness - are to some extent dynamised in the Social Innovation Hub, so it is fair to say that this will be an important vehicle for setting a common ground for effective collaboration.

4. Final remarks and next steps

This deliverable describes the cooperation and synergies developed by NATURELAB during the first 24 months of the project implementation. The first two chapters contributed to highlighting the several geographic, environmental, social and health care dimensions addressed by the project, demonstrating that Nature-based Solutions (NBS) and Nature-based Therapies (NBT) have a huge potential to contribute towards sustainable communities. Effectively, NBS and NBT are closely interlinked, as both rely on natural processes to address environmental and societal challenges. Within the scope of NATURELAB, it is evident that promoting these approaches requires targeted awareness-raising efforts across sectors and stakeholder groups. To enhance their effectiveness, it is essential to foster cross-fertilisation among related initiatives and projects, enabling the exchange of knowledge, practices, and lessons learned. Such collaborative dynamics—both nationally and internationally—support greater coherence in knowledge development, planning and implementation, while reinforcing the broader recognition of the benefits and potential of NBS and NBT in policy and practice.

The cooperation and synergies established by the NATURELAB consortium are both substantial and far-reaching. These include engagement with H2020 and Horizon Europe-funded initiatives - such as the sister projects GreenME and RESONATE, as well as UP2030, OneAquaHealth, EnvironMental, and CLEVER Cities - as well as formal Cooperation Agreements with municipalities and a higher education institution. The consortium has also actively participated in more than 40 national and international conferences and related events. The broad spectrum of stakeholder interest—evident in the regular consultation of online project resources (e.g., deliverables), direct inquiries for further information, and requests to engage with the consortium—demonstrates that the project is progressing effectively and generating meaningful impact.

The recently launched Social Innovation Hub aims to serve as a catalyst for collaboration among experts and stakeholders engaged in the field of nature-based interventions, specifically NBS and NBT. It is a dedicated space focused exclusively on this area of expertise, a platform that fosters opportunities by bringing together a diverse range of actors, allowing them to expand their knowledge, exchange perspectives, disseminate content and recent findings, and actively contribute to the advancement of nature-based approaches. In doing so, it supports the development of a cohesive, inclusive, and engaged community of practice.

In conclusion, the NATURELAB consortium has laid a strong foundation for advancing nature-based solutions through strategic partnerships, active stakeholder engagement, and knowledge exchange across multiple levels. The diversity of initiatives and the growing interest from public and institutional actors underscore the relevance and potential of the project. Building on these achievements, the

consortium believes that continuing along the same strategic course will enable sustained and expanded engagement, fostering broader cross-fertilisation at a global level. Such continuity is essential for deepening the impact of nature-based approaches and contributing meaningfully to environmental resilience, well-being, and sustainable development.

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6. Annex – Preliminary programme of the NATURELAB International Workshop I

Overview Agenda (draft version)

9th October Plenary room

Time	Description
8h30-9h00	Registration
9h00-9h30	Opening/Welcome and objectives. The NATURELAB project.
9h30-10h45	NATURELAB actionable outputs overview
10h45-11h15	<i>Coffee-break</i>
11h15-12h00	RESONATE: objectives and main actionable outputs overview GreenME: objectives and main actionable outputs overview

Parallel sessions

Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Posters display	Posters display	Experiences with NBT & feedback: • Short guided Forest Bath	Presentation of selected videos

LUNCH BREAK – 12h30-14h00

Plenary room

Time	Description
14h00-16h00	Invited speakers
16h00-16h30	<i>Coffee-break</i>
16h30-17h00	Panel discussion

Parallel sessions

Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Posters display	Posters display	Experiences with NBT & feedback: • Horticultural therapy • Guided Forest Bath	Presentation of selected videos

10th October
Plenary room

Time	Description
9h00-10h45	Presentation of accepted technical communications
10h45-11h15	<i>Coffee-break</i>
11h15-11h45	Presentation of accepted technical communications
11h45-12h00	Wrap-up and follow-up of the International Workshop I

Parallel sessions (9h00-11h45)

Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Posters display	Posters display	Experiences with NBT & feedback: • Therapeutic Horticulture • Guided Forest Therapy	Presentation of accepted technical communications



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