



What will URBES do?

The URBES project is organised in four specialised and mutually supporting project components:

I: What is the relationship between urban biodiversity, ecosystem services and land use change?

Biodiversity underpins many ecosystem services, which are indispensable to the functioning and prosperity of cities. The ecosystem services in urban areas are generated by ecosystems both within and outside cities. Nature areas in or near cities, for example, play an important role in the provision of clean drinking water. Better integrating natural values in spatial planning can help minimise the impacts of land use changes threatening biodiversity and ecosystem services. Despite the imperative to better understand the relationships between biodiversity and the generation of ecosystem services in relation to land use change, these connections remain poorly investigated.

In this project component, URBES will analyse how land use changes translate into changes in biodiversity and ecosystem services.

II: What are the monetary and non-monetary values of biodiversity and ecosystem services for cities?

The value of ecosystem services is not always taken into account in market transactions or adequately quantified in economic terms. The increasing demands on urban land use need to be reconciled with the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The monetary and non-monetary values of ecosystem services, as well as the costs and impacts from their loss, must be fully incorporated in urban decision-making processes. There is a urgent need to improve the capacity to take into account the economic and non-economic values of biodiversity and develop an integrated assessment of ecosystem services for improved urban planning, as recently highlighted by The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study (www.teebweb.org).

URBES will focus on developing methods for monetary and non-monetary valuation of urban ecosystem services to support decision-making and urban planning.

III: How can cities integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into planning and management?

In the face of urban expansion and densification there is a need for effective mechanisms for the planning and governance of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Such mechanisms can improve human well-being and strengthen the capacity of cities to adapt to change. Local governments can benefit from taking the leadership role in the effective integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into land use planning, policymaking and management responses.

This research component will develop land use scenarios and strategies for urban transitions that strengthen the capacity of local governments and communities to mainstream urban biodiversity and ecosystem services values in planning and management.

IV: How can knowledge be translated into local action?

The URBES project will communicate the research outcomes of the project components I-III to key decision-makers at local, national and European policy level and deliver practical training and capacity building activities for cities in Europe. The focus of these activities will be on improved management of ecosystem services and enhanced responsibility for biodiversity at local level.

URBES will contribute to increasing the values of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The project will also enhance the knowledge and professional skills of civil servants of local governments across Europe on integrating these values into sectoral policies, plans and actions.

Definitions

Biodiversity

The variability among living organisms from all sources including, in terrestrial, freshwater, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems (Convention on Biological Diversity).

Governance of ecosystems

The process of regulating human behaviour in accordance with shared ecosystem objectives. The term includes both governmental and nongovernmental mechanisms (United Nations Environment Programme).

Ecosystem services

Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services such as flood and disease control; cultural services such as spiritual, recreational, and cultural benefits; and supporting services, such as nutrient cycling, which maintain the conditions for life on Earth (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment).

Project donor



Project partners

Stockholm Resilience Centre



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