

Business development and decision support

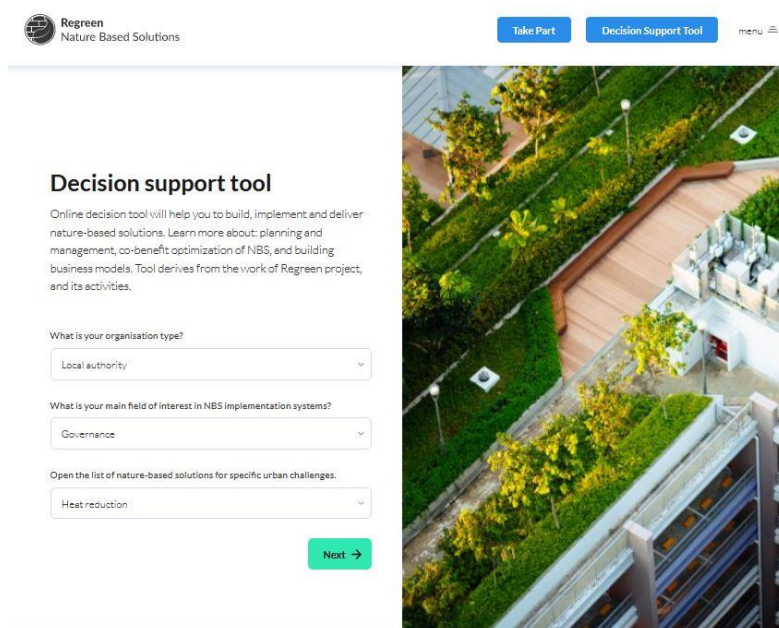
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To promote the implementation of NBS in cities, it is key to empower a diverse range of stakeholders and to identify and demonstrate successful replicable cases. This involves providing the necessary knowledge, tools, and support to replicate effective strategies, develop sustainable business models, and bridge the gap between research findings and practical application. In the REGREEN project, three distinct initiatives have been realised: an Online Decision Support Tool, a Prospectus for NbS Business Investment, and a Start-Up Accelerator Program. Each initiative addresses different aspects of promoting and scaling-up NbS.

The Online Decision Support Tool enhances the ability of users to navigate the complexities of NbS, empowering the replication of actions and strategies across various sectors and communities. The Prospectus for NbS Business Investment has resulted in the development of three business models: public-private driven, commercially driven consultancy, and citizen-driven, offering practical guidance with best practices and recommendations. The Start-Up-Accelerator Programme has facilitated knowledge exchange and created opportunities for collaboration, enhancing the capacity of enterprises but also generating evidence-based insights for decision-making processes.

Online Decision Support Tool

The Nature Solutions platform features a [Decision Support Tool](#) (DST) designed to guide users through the intricacies of NbS. Before accessing the tool, users are equipped with essential information and foundational knowledge about NbS, ensuring they are well-prepared to navigate the tool effectively. This online DST acts as a gateway to the wealth of knowledge and unique expert experiences garnered from the REGREEN project. It presents these insights in a clear, user-friendly manner, making complex information easily accessible and understandable. Users of the tool are empowered to replicate successful actions and strategies implemented within the REGREEN project, adapting them to their specific contexts. The primary objective of this web-based DST is to enhance the implementation and impact of NbS across various sectors and communities.



The screenshot shows the 'Decision support tool' interface. At the top left is the 'Regreen Nature Based Solutions' logo. To the right are buttons for 'Take Part' and 'Decision Support Tool', along with a menu icon. The main content area has a heading 'Decision support tool' followed by a descriptive paragraph. Below this are three dropdown menus: 'What is your organisation type?' (selected: Local authority), 'What is your main field of interest in NBS implementation systems?' (selected: Governance), and 'Open the list of nature-based solutions for specific urban challenges.' (selected: Heat reduction). A green 'Next →' button is at the bottom right of the form. To the right of the form is a large image of a modern building with a lush green rooftop garden.

Screenshot Decision Support Tool; REGREEN nature solutions platform

To ease the decision, we have gathered relevant information on the REGREEN activities that answer relevant questions stated in the [D.2.4 Guidance on development of the toolkit for exploring options and potential benefits of NbS design](#) (Tuerk , Reis , Jones, & Bird, 2022) to complete the “decision sheets”:

- Why should users repeat the REGREEN activity?
- What is the specific REGREEN activity about, what NbS or NbS combinations?
- Who is needed to complete the activity?
- Where and when can a similar activity be replicated?

The decision support to NbS stakeholders is a crucial component to provide the basis for real-life-wide valorisation and implementation of NbS, it offers insights to the NbS stakeholders to take informed decisions. The value of the REGREEN project as a research project is having a scientific approach and developing results that are publicly available and easily picked up by various stakeholders wanting to build on our activities, methodologies, approaches, tools, and other. Most REGREEN activities are ready for real-life use and as such offer enriched perspectives to decision making.

Prospectus for NbS Business Investment

The aims of the Prospectus for NbS Business Investment (D8.8) are to provide an assessment of the NbS market and its regulations and frameworks, to give guidance and potential approaches for further research or business development, and to present three contrasting business models.

In detail, four aspects are discussed in the prospectus:

- an assessment of the NbS market, estimates to increase private sector investments, and how to overcome the main barriers to investments in NbS
- an assessment of the most effective regulations and policies to foster NbS
- guidance for business model development and improvement
- three business model approaches were developed in the REGREEN project.



In business model development, a viable path is to distinguish between environmental, societal, economic, and other benefits. An often neglected aspect is maintenance and service costs. The complex interplay of multiple benefits and a realistic longer-term cost estimate are the first challenges for which research still has to be done. The second one, which builds on this, is to express these indicators in terms of a net present value. In this direction, there is certainly a long way to go.

Policies need to drive action. With the Green Deal and circularity as core topics of EU policymaking, the EU is creating new transformational pathways to a sustainable future. It is necessary to evaluate tax systems and regulations on different levels (EU, national, and local) without neglecting the connection between the levels. Furthermore, in regulations, there is a need to differentiate between investors and the investments of companies. The EU taxonomy, is the most important piece of regulation because it defines what is legitimately sustainable in the economy. NbS has to be integrated

into the EU taxonomy. If NbS is included, it guarantees that investing in NbS is a sustainable Investment.

The three REGREEN business model approaches are based on actual business models with which our partners in the ULLs have gained experience. The models were further developed with the help of a business model canvas and in discussions. It is important to say that the boundaries between the models – public-private driven, commercially driven consultancy, and citizen-driven – are fluid and that hybrid models are possible.

More about the topic, and the three distinct models with characteristics and recommendations, here in the [Prospectus for NbS business investment](#).

Start-Up Accelerator Programme

Start-up accelerators are programmes that facilitate and provide professional advice to SMEs. By promoting innovation, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among stakeholders, the REGREEN Start-Up Accelerator Program aims to drive the adoption of NbS and contribute to the creation of more livable and sustainable cities.

The main objective is to empower SMEs, facilitate knowledge exchange, and drive the implementation of NbS in urban contexts. It aims to demonstrate how NbS can contribute to various aspects of urban life by providing evidence of the benefits and justifying investment in NbS projects. The programme aims to build capacity for industry and SMEs (including technical expertise, access to relevant networks and partnerships, and practical guidance on navigating regulatory and operational challenges) and support the participation of new players in the market chain, providing them with free and easy access to technological knowledge and business models.

The programme establishes a connection between the start-ups and SMEs and REGREEN experts. These experts will serve as mentors, providing guidance, support, educational courses, and training. In Aarhus, a workshop tailored for Nature-Based Enterprises, municipalities, landscape architects, and urban planners was organised to explore the business potential of NbS. In the Paris region ULL planned a one-day training course for landscape and ecological engineers to promote biodiversity in landscaping practices. In Velika Gorica, a start-up accelerator programme was set up to foster the growth of NbS in the context of the urban living lab. The feedback gathered from the companies participating in the accelerator workshops will be reported to relevant public bodies and policymakers to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by these businesses in implementing NbS. For example, during the accelerator event in Velika Gorica, participants had the opportunity to address the ministry and the city departments responsible for NbS market development, sharing their needs and perspectives on the rollout of the NbS market.



Aarhus workshop participants exploring the Aarhus walkable floormap; REGREEN

Incorporating Nature-Based Solutions into urban planning is essential for creating more sustainable and resilient cities. The program empowers SMEs and start-ups by equipping them with knowledge, skills, and support to develop and implement NbS projects. This enhances their competitiveness and positions them as hubs for innovation. This can attract investments and resources to implement NbS projects, driving economic growth and job creation.

Further Reading? [Report on Start up Accelerator Programme](#)