

How to increase the uptake of biodiversity valuation resources in EU OR/OCT policymaking

Introduction

The EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories (EU ORs/OCTs) support unique ecosystems which are home to an estimated one-third of the globally threatened species, including many endemic species. The small economies of EU ORs/OCTs rely heavily on natural resources and biodiversity: sectors such as tourism, fisheries, and agriculture are the driving economic forces and clearly illustrate this dependence. Because of the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services in EU ORs/OCTs both locally and to the EU, it is essential to develop effective approaches to biodiversity governance. Yet often short-term economic interests are given priority over the preservation of ecosystem services. Ecosystem valuations offer a policy tool to convert the concrete and abstract value that ecosystems and biodiversity contribute to EU OR/OCT economies into a language that can speak to economically-minded stakeholders.

The NetBiome-CSA project has collected information about the ecosystem valuation resources which exist specific to EU ORs/OCTs and has investigated the reasons why valuation resources are or are not integrated into policy. This research brief presents key insights into how to increase the policy impact of biodiversity valuation research in the EU ORs/OCTs based on an analysis of existing scientific literature and a series of stakeholder interviews.

What can be done to improve the uptake of ecosystem valuation?

Closing gaps in knowledge and participation

Filling existing gaps in knowledge would support a wider integration of an ecosystem valuation approach

in policymaking. Research processes and outputs should be designed with usability in mind. This goes beyond just the subject of research. It is important to **prepare data in a form which is easily usable and accessible to policymakers**, such as policy briefs, concise user-friendly tables, infographics, or popular media articles rather than long technical reports or academic journal articles. Transparently acknowledging the limitations of a valuation approach can also help to inform stakeholders and policymakers on how they can make use of resources while increasing their faith in the validity of valuation data.

Part of making research designs more relevant includes **increasing inclusivity and participation in valuation studies**. This can help identify key areas and services for protection, identify the least inappropriate areas to allow potentially damaging activity, as well as increase public awareness about and acceptance of the use of valuation of ecosystem services.

Engaging with policymakers

Interest exists among policymakers to incorporate valuation data into policymaking, and better outreach and dissemination is a necessary step to promote such integration. There needs to be **more consistent engagement with policymakers in order to ensure that a valuation approach is put into practice**. Iterative meetings and active follow up with policymakers are most helpful, and offering trainings to policymakers on how to use data can reduce barriers to use. Initiatives such as NetBiome-CSA, which explicitly seeks to increase the exchange between policymakers, practitioners, and scientists, are crucial to bridge the gap between ecosystem and biodiversity valuation research and implementation.

Focus on integration into to existing processes and other policy spheres

The biggest potential for increasing the uptake of valuation resources in policymaking lies in **integration in existing processes and policy spheres**. Those with the biggest potential are tourism and economic development policy, e.g. to set tourism taxes. Marine and terrestrial spatial planning well as agriculture and fisheries policy can also benefit. Stakeholders could also promote the utilisation of valuation data to reduce and resolve land/marine resource use and development conflicts. Valuation data can be used to compare the costs and benefits investments in grey infrastructure versus green infrastructure, advocating for effective ecosystems-based solutions.

Beyond policymakers: outreach to the public, business, and other stakeholders

Finally, **raising awareness among business stakeholders and the public about the value of ecosystems and ecosystems services** is an important step to increase awareness and acceptance of an ecosystem valuation approach. Communication beyond specialised audiences can help raise public support for integration of valuation approaches. Public pressure can incentivise policymakers to take action.

Key leverage points to increase policy impact

- **Targeting valuation's application in tourism:** Tourism is an immensely important sector for the EU ORs/OCTs, largely driven by their unique biodiversity and ecosystems. Special effort should therefore be concentrated on integrating valuation data into tourism policy and other policies with a major impact on tourism. Focusing on working with tourism stakeholders in business and policy can raise support for a valuation approach among politically and economically powerful actors.
- **Actively engaging policymakers:** in most cases, it was not the lack of ecosystem valuation resources

that prevented valuation knowledge from being applied in practice, but insufficient engagement with policymakers. Researchers and other stakeholders should put emphasis on direct and repeated contact with policymakers as well as the translation of valuation knowledge into types of media and formats which are user-friendly for policymakers.

- **Reaching and including diverse relevant audiences:** to help deconstruct the mistrust of ecosystem valuation, researchers and other stakeholders should put effort into integrating diverse perspectives at all stages of ecosystem valuation. Broader coalitions of stakeholders can be built, if stakeholders feel like they have had the chance to represent their own interests.
- **Taking advantage of the connection to the EU and national level:** the EU and national level can provide influential support for a valuation approach in policymaking in the EU ORs/OCTs, both in funding and in supportive policy frameworks. Some EU overseas entities have already recognised the usefulness of this connection and can provide a good example to other ORs/OCTs. Stakeholders can take advantage of this e.g. for funding for valuation studies or to apply existing valuation knowledge to conservation projects



For further info and resources on biodiversity valuation in the EU ORs/OCTs,

please visit the **NetBiome-CSA Biodiversity Toolbox:**
<http://www.netbiomedata.org>

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