



**NATURANCE**

Nature for insurance,  
insurance for nature

## Milestone 5.2 Online citizen forum launched

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# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Concept</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Definitions</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Naturethon</b>	<b>4</b>
4.1 Overview	4
4.2 Timeline	5
4.3 Nature-Champions	5
4.4 Groups	6
4.5 Structure	6
<b>5. Dissemination</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6. Challenges</b>	<b>8</b>

# 1. Introduction

Mobilizing public and citizen engagement is essential for inclusive practices toward social change, fostering a sense of empowerment and creating conditions of full transparency, accountability, and trust. The Council Recommendation on the Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe calls for a more active citizens and societal engagement in research and innovation to be promoted in all its dimensions, to raise awareness of the benefits and impact of research and innovation in people's daily lives, ensure a greater diversity of approaches for designing and implementing research and innovation policy and make them more relevant for society. However, citizen engagement for impactful knowledge valorisation presents opportunities and challenges due to the multifaceted needs and competences of the actors involved, which may include universities, research organisations, Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs), local communities and municipalities, non-governmental organisations, citizens groups, social partners, arts and cultural institutions,.

Two citizen engagement activities were included in the Plan for the Exploitation and Dissemination of Results of the NATURANCE project, under the initiative called [Naturethon](#). The initiative aims to encourage citizen engagement by inviting registrations from citizens groups with interest in the local application of Nature-based Solutions. A self-selected group leader, the *Naturethon Champion*, is the point of contact between the group and the project, and is responsible for the set up of informal discussions with friends, relatives, and colleagues to envision applicable Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in their neighbourhoods and explore possible financing options. The first of those initiatives will work as a pilot for the second one, in order to identify ideas, solutions, and challenges. The first online citizen forum was launched during the first NATURANCE festival (23-24 of May 2024), with the deliverable D5.3 (M30) reporting the outcomes in detail. A second forum is planned in M40.

## 2. Background

In order to effectively implement the initiative, the WP5 designed the Naturethon framework taking into account the [Code of Practice on citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation](#), recommended by the European Commission. The Code offers practical guidance to

strengthen links between research entities and societal actors for better uptake of research results. It identifies the need for a strategic approach at the organisation level which encourages cross-sector collaboration, awareness raising, and strengthening the role of intermediaries. It also proposes the use of incentives, co-creation tools and digital solutions with a human-centric and sustainable design. Moreover, the Code facilitates the creation of an **enabling environment** and participatory processes and practices of sustainable citizen engagement for improved knowledge valorisation.

The Code urges organizations to create **an engagement strategy** that includes impact pathways and a roadmap to ensure value creation for the economy and society. It also calls for organizations to foster synergies, emphasize capacity building, and develop skills in participatory processes. Additionally, the Code advocates for cross-sector and **cross-domain collaboration**, proper management of intellectual assets, recognition of citizens' contributions, and adopting an open science approach. To ensure **social inclusion**, diversity and gender equality, the Code stresses the importance of equal engagement of all target groups and addressing barriers to participation, as well as including specific professional skills and profiles needed. The Code gives recommendations on how to promote the **replication and scalability** of citizen engagement actions, including through toolkits, guidelines and best practices, platforms, and the role of intermediaries. The Code calls for **increasing awareness**, including through campaigns and training, and **recognition of the engagement efforts**, through incentives and rewards, prizes, and other recognition schemes. Finally, the Code gives recommendations for **assessing the efficacy** of citizen engagement and participatory processes that lead to knowledge valorisation, considering key areas for an evaluation framework and including appropriate indicators and metrics.

### 3. Definitions

*According to the Commission Recommendation (EU) 2024/736 of 1 March 2024 on a [Code of Practice on citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation](#).*

- **CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT:** involvement of citizens in participatory processes of decision making, implementation and monitoring, to improve quality, transparency and ownership of policies at local, national and EU level, which has been strongly

supported by the Conference for the Future of Europe and the resulting European Citizens Panels for addressing current and future challenges and adapting new tools through citizens' panels in key areas.

- **CITIZEN SCIENCE:** voluntary participation of non-professional scientists in research and innovation (R&I) at different stages and at different levels of engagement, from shaping research agendas and policies, to gathering, processing and analysing data, and assessing the outcomes of research.
- **KNOWLEDGE VALORISATION:** process of creating social and economic value from knowledge by linking different areas and sectors and by transforming data, know-how and research results into sustainable products, services, solutions and knowledge-based policies that benefit society.

## 4. Naturethon

### 4.1 Overview

The [Naturethon](#) concept was inspired by previous and successful similar experiences such as the EU [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) and the [Climathon](#) events. Indeed, Naturethon aims to tap into the collective understanding of Nature-based Solutions deployment, by establishing a series of thoughtfully orchestrated citizen groups. The initiative aspires to mobilise communities in Europe, and beyond, encouraging the exchange of ideas and proactive engagement. Ideally, these forums will provide a conducive environment for open discussions, ensuring that all contributions are acknowledged, and all viewpoints are taken into account. Naturethon supports the creation of citizen groups aimed at discussing Nature-based Solutions and their applicability to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in local communities. Participants will be able to acquire specific knowledge and skills virtually by joining recurring events and webinar series. Moreover, they will have access to a continuously updated *Digital Library*, gathering case studies, editorial and multimedia content, and a glossary. A periodic newsletter - including articles, videos, reports and inspiring stories - will keep the citizens engaged throughout the process.

## 4.2 Timeline

A preview of the first Naturethon was published on the project website in April 2024, whilst the official launch was postponed to align with the [Finance Innovation Festival](#) held by the NATURANCE project on 23-24 May 2024. The initiative will run until September 2024.



*Figure 1 – Banner for the launch of the Naturethon initiative.*

## 4.3 Naturethon Champions

Naturethon needs *Naturethon Champions* to achieve its goal of stimulating dialogue and promoting the development of innovative ideas in the context of Nature-based Solutions. Naturethon Champions (hereinafter NCs) are leaders for the discussions of sustainable solutions in their communities. They are citizens who inform, inspire, and guide their communities and knowledge networks to take part in the public dialogue on issues regarding NbS implementation in the context of climate action and disaster risk mitigation.

- **Inform:** NCs play the role of knowledge disseminators, providing information about NbS and related financial solutions, as learnt from the content provided by the project team.
- **Inspire:** NCs can raise awareness about the co-benefits of NbS and promote the opportunity to get involved in supporting activities.
- **Guide:** NCs lead the dialogue within the group and the community.

The initiative represents an active path of growth and capacity building, with several opportunities for NCs to engage in the project activities. Moreover, NCs are expected to coordinate the activities of the group and recruit participants.

## 4.4 Groups

Ideally, each group should consist of a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 10 people, varied in age, gender, and citizenship. The target group of the initiative is students with diverse backgrounds, young professionals, entrepreneurs, innovators, developers, designers, policy makers, and generally interested citizens that belong to the NCs circle of acquaintances. Participants are individuals interested in adaptation issues in their local areas, who enjoy purposeful dialogue and exchange of views. The initiative aims to achieve the involvement of 300 citizens.

## 4.5 Structure

The first step of the Naturethon consists of NCs [registering their group](#) through a EUSurvey form. This ensures NCs will receive updates, resources, and support throughout the citizen engagement process. After registration, the group benefits from a series of supporting content and activities, designed to enrich citizens' understanding and involvement in Nature-based Solutions.

Participating in an exclusive series of webinars (one per month from July to September), registrants can also engage with leading experts in NbS. This is an opportunity to ask questions, explore challenges, and seek advice on how to effectively contribute to and advocate for these solutions within their community. Moreover, a [Digital Library](#) filled with inspiring stories, case studies, and talks, has been created to provide practical insights into the successful implementation of NbS across different contexts and communities. This content serves as a source of inspiration and a benchmark for what is possible. Finally, a periodic newsletter - including articles, videos, reports and inspiring stories - keeps the citizens engaged throughout the process.

At this point, NCs are ready to engage in dialogue within his/her group or community. With the knowledge and insights facilitated by the project and gained from webinars, the *Digital Library* and newsletters, the groups will be well-prepared to actively participate in the

implementation of NbS in their local area. Through the resources and expertise provided by the project to envision tailored solutions, the groups should tackle specific environmental challenges, pinpointing actionable Nature-based Solutions and collaborative opportunities for their community.

All the submissions will be collected in a comprehensive Naturethon proceeding and reviewed by experts; each group will receive a certificate of completion. The ideas may be shared with the Naturethon team in several formats, being that a drawing, a text, a video: any means to convey the imagined solution is appreciated. The best solutions will be rewarded by: (i) NATURANCE recognitions and enrolling in the project research and evidence seeking program, (ii) inviting the representatives of the teams to high-level project gathering.

## 5. Dissemination

The initiative has been disseminated, so far, through the NATURANCE channels (newsletter, social media, mailing list) and the major NbS for adaptation knowledge portals (Oppla, Climate-ADAPT, Futurium). The project consortium has been invited to share the initiative with their students and personal networks. Personal invitations have been sent to the sister projects, as well as to some knowledge networks.

## 6. Challenges

The policy brief ["Citizens' awareness of EU missions and opportunities for citizen engagement"](#) summarises the biggest barriers to participation in citizen engagement initiatives. Lack of awareness and lack of trust in public institutions were the most commonly-cited barriers to citizen participation in addressing the challenges. Lack of interest or not having enough time are, in most cases, seen as the least significant barriers.

Another barrier encountered involves expanding the initiative network beyond that of the project experts and highly skilled professionals. This has been addressed by connecting with NGOs and student networks, which have a more direct contact with non-professional interested groups. As experienced by previous similar initiatives, participation is often driven by specific incentives. While monetary prizes are often seen as the most effective



incentive to engagement, this initiative has opted for knowledge recognition and access to an experts network as participation rewards. This could be seen as a limitation, but will also guarantee a selection of highly motivated participants.