



Bridging the gap between policy and knowledge
on biodiversity in Europe

CALL FOR EXPERTS No.10/2021
Eklipse – March 2021

How can ecosystem services be considered in plans, projects, programmes, policies and associated impact assessments with a particular focus on the avoid stage of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid-reduce-restore-compensate)? (CfR.5/2020)

Deadline for Call: **April 22nd, 2021**

Eklipse is inviting experts to join an Expert Working Group (EWG) to identify EU-wide cases and practices of considering/addressing ecosystem services in impact assessments, mitigation hierarchies or similar processes and developing guidance on best practice and information. This request was put forward by the Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB) – French Biodiversity Agency under the Ministries of Agriculture and Ecological Transitions.

- Are you an expert in environmental impact assessments, ecosystem services assessments, governance, and biodiversity policy with particular experience in dealing with the mitigation hierarchy?
- Would you like to contribute directly to a policy-relevant process in your field of expertise?
- Would you like to expand your network and learn about methods of knowledge synthesis?
- Are you interested in collaborating in a trans-disciplinary and multi-cultural setting?

Then please apply at <http://eklipse.eu/calls/>





Important dates and information:

- Interested experts should apply before midnight on April 22nd 2021, following the rules and procedures detailed below.
- The Expert Working Group will be selected and notified by April 30th 2021, and should start its work immediately thereafter.
- We will aim to have the first online expert group meeting in the week starting May 17th 2021.
- Depending on the set of methods chosen (see section 3 below), the deadline for 1st draft reporting will be planned sometime between autumn 2021 and spring 2022.
- The final deadline for reporting is planned for summer 2022.
- Participation in this EWG will require approximately 10% of your time – please find more information on expectations of and support to Eklipse Expert Working Groups [here](#).

Eklipse was created in 2016 to help governments, institutions, businesses, and NGOs make better-informed decisions when it comes to biodiversity in Europe.

More information on the processes at <https://eklipse.eu/>

1) Invitation to join an expert working group

Eklipse is inviting experts to join an expert working group to identify EU-wide cases and practices of considering/addressing ecosystem services in impact assessments, mitigation hierarchies or similar processes; and to develop guidance on best practice and information. In particular, the expert group will discuss questions like:

- How do ecosystem services and natural capital as concepts foster the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity;
- How have ecosystem services been used as a biodiversity proxy within mitigation hierarchies and impact assessment processes?
- How should natural capital/ecosystem services be assessed at the avoid level of the mitigation hierarchy by the authorities to ensure the project/programme/project/policy does not lead to biodiversity loss (also considering timeline and long-term impacts)?
- If / how/ where EU countries consider ecosystem services within the mitigation hierarchy, or in a wider sense with their spatial planning or impact assessment procedures?

- How can natural capital/ecosystem services be used more effectively in policy and developments (role of development plans in highlighting the Mitigation Hierarchy) to support developers to understand and adhere to the mitigation hierarchy and help evaluators consider the project/programme etc., impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services?

The activities should focus on the mitigation hierarchy “avoid” stage as this is where the research and policy gap is deemed to exist.

The EWG will cover diverse and complementary skills (including multidisciplinary skills and broad geographical coverage – see section 6.2). It will interact with relevant stakeholders to ensure appropriate methodological choices and uptake of outputs.

2) Request to be addressed by this call

BACKGROUND TO THIS REQUEST

The policy context is the adherence to and implementation of the mitigation hierarchy in France and other member states. Particularly in France, the mitigation hierarchy principles have been reaffirmed by the legislation “Reconquest of biodiversity, nature and landscapes” of 2016. Each project, plan or programme leading to an impact assessment is requested first to avoid, reduce, and mitigate its effects on biodiversity. Concerning the first stage of the hierarchy, ecosystem services are explicitly mentioned in the French legislation. To be authorised, a project, plan, or program must demonstrate the correct implementation of the hierarchy, including the first step of “avoid” in the impact assessment. The request’s main goal is to foster the consideration of ecosystem services at the first stage (avoid) of the mitigation hierarchy in the authorisation process. This request aims to help develop and apply transferable tools (potentially based on best practice) by a guidance document to help identify suitable ecosystem services consideration and natural capital of relevant project, plan, etc., in the mitigation hierarchy. This tool must be pragmatic, deliverable and co-created with practitioners’ involvement that will apply it. An additional objective is to understand the linkage of ecosystem services and biodiversity protection during the mitigation level evaluation.

The main goal of the request, put forward by the French Biodiversity Agency, is two-folded:

1. to identify EU-wide cases and practices of considering/addressing ecosystem services in impact assessments, mitigation hierarchies or similar processes
2. to develop guidance on best practice and information on:





- a. if and how ecosystem services consideration or operationalisation can be integrated into impact assessments and mitigation hierarchies to enhance biodiversity conservation and understand risks and potential ecosystem service trade-offs.
- b. what kind of outcomes, impacts, challenges, solutions, etc., may occur when the ecosystem services concept is used in the impact assessment, mitigation hierarchies and similar processes.
- c. available and suitable tools to help the avoid stage or ways to enable planners to consider various options during plan preparation.

The activities should focus on the mitigation hierarchy "avoid" stage.

CALL FOR KNOWLEDGE

A Call for Knowledge related to this request was launched in October 2020 and was open until December 11th 2021. The Call for Knowledge was broadly disseminated through the different Eklipse social media platforms, i.e. LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, as well as via different mailing lists and networks. For details, see the Document of Work for [this request](#).

3. Suggested programme of work and methods

Given the feedback provided by the requester, the Methods Expert Group (MEG) members decided to run twice the MAGICKS tool for two options:

- Option A: 4-8 months' time frame and medium resources
- Option B: 8 months or upwards time frame and high resources

The 'multiple expert consultations with Delphi process' and the 'Bayesian belief network' scored highest for both options. MEG representatives believe that expert consultation with the Delphi process would be the most appropriate method. The deliberative consultation process within an expert group setting would provide the best tool for providing policy and practice recommendations. Further to this, we believe the best results would be achieved by combining an applied policy Delphi process (Glass et al. 2013) with an initial scoping review (medium time and resources) and systematic review (high time and resources). This combination is optimal for collecting and assessing relevant scientific and technical knowledge leading to conclusions/recommendations. It is also important that the expert group be transdisciplinary to allow expert input from different policy areas/sectors/stakeholders. The policy Delphi has six components but is flexible to any policy challenge:

1. Formulation of the issues from the literature and participants
2. Exposing the options
3. Determining initial positions on the issues
4. Exploring and obtaining the reasons for agreements/disagreements
5. (Re) evaluating the underlying reasons
6. Recommendations

A detailed description of potential suggested program of work and methods:

- Mapping ecosystem services' consideration and assessment regulation and practice at the EU Member States and impact assessment procedures and other appropriate tools within the mitigation hierarchy, applied on the 'avoid' stage.
- Collection of best practices and relevant tools of the above.
- Collection of evidence about ecosystem services and natural capital consideration contributing to biodiversity conservation/elevated policy focus.
- Collection of evidence in development plans and other statutory policies/plans/programmes/projects talking about mitigation hierarchy explicitly or implicitly.
- Methods Expert Group (MEG) suggestion to use the transdisciplinary expert group with an applied-policy Delphi process, complementing either scoping review (medium time and resources) or systematic review (higher time and resources) (more information [Document of work \(DoW\) Annex 3](#)).

Core reference: Glass, J.H., **Scott, A.J.**, Price, M.F. (2013). The power of the process: Co-producing a sustainability assessment toolkit for upland estate management in Scotland. *Land Use Policy*, **30**(1), 254-265

For more information on each of these methods, please refer to the [Eclipse report](#) on knowledge synthesis methods.

4 Implementation steps and timeline

The work is expected to follow the Eclipse knowledge synthesis process, i.e. it will include the following steps:

- Kick-off dialogue meeting between the Expert Working Group and the requester – the French Biodiversity Agency, facilitated by the Eclipse Knowledge





Coordination Body (KCB) ensures a common understanding of the request among experts (within two weeks of the expert group's nomination).

- Preparation of the work
- Scanning of literature and other sources
- Development of methodological protocol (with support of the Eclipse Method Expert Group for knowledge synthesis methods)
- Agreement of methodological protocol with KCB and requesters
- Review of the protocol through open consultation (organised by Eclipse)
- Programme of work
- Early draft (to be discussed with KCB and possibly requesters)
- Full draft completed for review.
- Finalisation including review

5 Support provided by Eclipse

Eclipse team: The EWG will be supported in all steps by the Eclipse Management Body (EMB) in communication, documentation (via the Eclipse website), and dissemination of products required for this request. The working group will be supported thematically and strategically by the KCB.

Financial support: Eclipse activities rely on in-kind contributions as in similar science-policy processes.

The benefits for experts and institutions arise from the networking in the group and the visibility of expertise to policy and society via the products. Eclipse will actively support this visibility of experts and their institution's contributions. In addition:

- kick-off meeting, focus group meeting and final meeting will be hosted by and travel costs covered via Eclipse funds as needed (depending on travel restrictions following lockdown development)
- Individual experts from Eastern and Southern European countries might be supported via an honorary contract by an Eclipse partner institution on specific requests.
- A maximum budget of € 2.500 can be granted for tasks such as the literature review and synthesis (for this, a separate contract is required to see section 6).

Technical support: Access to literature databases will be facilitated if needed. Eclipse will cover the layout, printing, and dissemination of interim and final products.

6 Eligibility and applicant information

6.1 Selection criteria for the composition of the Expert Group

Members of the EWG will be selected by the KCB according to the selection process and criteria outlined below (6.2) and on the Eklipse website. The expert working group should cover all relevant disciplines, including natural, social, economic and planning sciences. Gender balance and geographical diversity of EU countries will be considered in the selection. If teams are applying, this will also apply, and the KCB may decide to complement a team selected with additional individual experts. The working group is expected to have up to 10 experts.

6.2 Selection criteria for individual experts

- Demonstrated expertise or experience in relation to the call topic
- Experience with biodiversity, natural capital and ecosystem services and/or sustainable development, and European policy processes.
- Experiences in inter-and transdisciplinary work on topics related to the Biodiversity Strategy and in science-policy interface processes
- Experts will have to comply with the principles and rules of Eklipse (e.g. conflicts of interest policy (see <https://eklipse.eu/ethical-framework/> for more detail).
- Project partners of Eklipse and KCB members are excluded.

See [Guidance note 7c Preparing and managing calls for experts](#) for more information.

6.3 Process and eligibility criteria for supporting contracts

Based on the needs identified by the expert working group in its kick-off meeting, Eklipse can support the work of the group by sub-contracting some tasks to individual experts (or institutions, from and beyond the Expert working Group) via working contracts up to a total amount of 6,000€. The 2,500€ mentioned in section 5 is included in this subcontract). Please note that this amount will not be re-adjusted according to the sub-contracted third party's overheads.

The aim of these would be to carry out dedicated work supporting the Group, e.g., a literature search and/or review based on the protocols decided by the Group. Eklipse would prepare and issue a (restricted) call for tender for this purpose.



Honorary contracts will be given upon request to experts chosen for the expert groups on an individual basis if they could not contribute otherwise. We expect this to apply to experts, especially from eastern, central and southern European countries that might not join the activities otherwise. In case you require such support, please contact the Eklipse Management Body (EMB) (emb@eklipse.eu).

6.4 Data and information policy

All results will be made publicly available through the Eklipse website, and transparent procedures will apply, following Creative Commons Agreement 4.0¹, which includes the reference of authorship and involvement.

6.5 Information to provide

The Eklipse form should be completed, including a list of relevant publications and outlining relevant experience on the topic and details of experience in previous assessments or knowledge synthesis processes.

7 Application and notification of results

7.1 How to apply

The Eklipse expert form can be found on the Eklipse website under 'Open calls'. The completed form should be completed by midnight on **April 22nd 2021**. Should you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact us: emb@eklipse.eu.

7.2 Announcement of the results

Successful applicants will be notified directly by Eklipse EMB by **April 30th 2021**. As soon as they accept the nomination, selected experts' names will be made public on the Eklipse website.

¹ See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. It permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided appropriate credit is given to the original author(s) and the source, provides a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicates if changes were made.