



## The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network BES-Net Trialogue Methodology

The face-to-face capacity building activities of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net) – the BES-Net “Trialogues” – are multi-stakeholder dialogues focusing on specific policy questions at the national and regional levels. The Dialogues bring together the three BES-Net communities of science, policy and practice into clear and constructive dialogue; hence the name ‘trialogue’. The Trialogue takes place over three days with 50-60 participants from 5 countries in the region.

### *Aims of the BES-Net Dialogues*

The BES-Net Dialogues aim to address the current problem of the weak interface between science/traditional knowledge, policy and practice, and the lack of capacity at national level to integrate findings from the IPBES assessments and the BES-Net thematic areas into policy and decision-making. Experience has shown that scientific reports and one-way transfer of information alone does not strengthen capacity nor lead to inclusive and effective decision-making. As the IPBES summary assessment report on Pollination, Pollinators and Food Production concludes, there is “a need for more flow of information in multiple directions...both bottom-up and top-down systems of sharing information to address the lack of coordination between sectors (conservation, infrastructure, energy, agriculture) that leads to a conflict in practices on the ground, and the loss of species and habitats”. The Trialogue methodology, therefore, aims to provide a constructive space to learn together, fostering inter-cultural understanding and inter-institutional coordination so that multiple stakeholders can i) jointly frame the problems around such issues as Pollination and Land Degradation and Restoration; ii) generate innovative solutions, iii) identify policy options within a given context, and iv) generate a commitment to action.

The methodology begins before the event itself to ensure that this is a capacity-building process rather than a one-off event. The specificity of the Dialogues resides in:

- **Preparation**
- **State-of-the-art facilitation**
- **Follow-up and outreach**
- **Monitoring and evaluation** of the capacity building impact of the Dialogues.

This is achieved through the following methodological elements:

### *The Background Document*

The Background Paper is a key tool for the Trialogue methodology. It aims to level the playing field for all participants in terms of knowledge on key issues by making the IPBES assessment findings accessible and relevant to the regional context. Through a series of selected interviews, the Document will generate a clear understanding of the regional and national context for the IPBES findings, the different perspectives held by stakeholders and the challenges and opportunities that exist for policy uptake and



changes to management practice. The draft of the Background Paper will be shared with original lead authors and regional stakeholders to ensure that there is agreement on the key elements and context-setting. The very process of reviewing and contributing to the Background Document is a first step in awareness-building and jointly framing the problems that need to be addressed. The drafting process also allows for the identification of opportunities and contentious issues that need to be addressed, and the voices that need to be heard during the Trialogue.

### ***Purpose-led Design and Agenda-Setting***

Detailed and iterative preparation of the agenda between the facilitator, BES-Net and national government organizers is undertaken to ensure that the design will achieve the agreed purpose of the Trialogue within the framework of the specific regional context, which has been clarified through the Background Document drafting process. Careful gender-based selection of participants from all three communities in each of the countries is undertaken.

### ***Creating a trusting and hospitable space for engagement***

From the moment that participants step foot in the workshop venue, they will be greeted warmly with creative visual stimuli and materials that immediately evoke the specific theme of the Trialogue. Awareness-building, networking and commitment to action depend on the engagement of all the senses and contact with inner motivation. Selection of the venue will ensure multiple working spaces that allow for interactive exercises and graphic records of discussions together with a vibrant communal space that allows for the celebration and sharing of stories and cultures. This provides the opportunity to engage in activities that allow participants to step outside their busy, everyday lives, generating shared experiences that can lead to lasting bonds across people from different communities. Chatham House Rules will also be applied to enable participants to speak more freely, thus overcoming assumptions and stereotypes, discovering passions and strengths, and opening minds and hearts to innovative problem-solving.

### ***Safeguarding time for quality dialogue.***

The Trialogues deal with high levels of complex information but ultimately their defining characteristic is the quality of the interaction and cross-fertilization between participants. Therefore, more time is given to Q and As and working group sessions than plenary speeches and presentations. Strict, fair and transparent control on time-keeping for all plenary presentations is critical to ensure full quality time for questions and discussions in plenary and groupwork. Clear guidelines and support will be given to speakers and panelists prior to the workshop to ensure their key messages are portrayed within the time allowed, and at the beginning of each session the facilitator will stress their role in safeguarding the time allocated for discussion and problem-solving.

### ***Inter-cultural Dialogue between the three communities.***

It is important to creating a level playing field during the Trialogue which empowers the voices of all three communities of science, policy and practice. It is not enough to ensure that there are equal and gender-based numbers of participants from each community. The Trialogue acknowledges that there are cultural differences in the ways the different



communities express themselves, and an inherent power asymmetry in the classic workshop format, giving greater voice to those who “hold” the knowledge and information delivered through technical presentations. The Trialogue provides the opportunity for participants from the Practice community to be the hosts and experts during the field trips which, in turn, provide context and guiding questions for the Panel sessions in which they also play a key role.

### ***Joint problem-solving and governance mapping***

During the Background Document and design stage, the facilitator and organizers identify the questions that matter in order to move the policy issue forward. These carefully-crafted questions will provide the focus for a mixture of World Café and focus group sessions focused on joint problem-solving. Visualisation in Participatory Programming (VIPP) tools, such as the use of cards, symbols and governance mapping, will be used to give time for critical reflection, allow for everyone’s participation and not just the more dominant characters, reduce repetition and connect ideas. The governance mapping will reveal the existing decision-making structures that both hinder and facilitate ways to influence policy – and identify opportunities for outreach and follow-up by the participants. Open space sessions will be included in the agenda to allow for the emergence of issues that have either i) not been addressed sufficiently or ii) have emerged and are inspiring opportunities for follow-up actions.

### ***High-Level engagement***

Awareness and political support from high-level authorities in each country, and at regional level, is critical for policy uptake. Whilst policymakers of the highest level cannot be expected to participate throughout the 3-day event, the Trialogue provides them with a special window into the event with a High-Level breakfast that they can attend before going on with their busy agendas. Every effort is made to make the High-Level event an attractive proposition. Firstly, the High-Level breakfast gives policymakers, donors and partners a closed affair, providing a safe and trusted space where they are given a bespoke presentation of the issues by renowned keynote speakers, access to donors and partners interested in supporting the countries, and the possibility to hear what their peers are doing in their respective countries. This is followed by a summary of the policy issues emerging from the Trialogue discussions before they then take part in a public Press Conference, and have a walkabout to see the displays of groupwork by participants. In this way, the Trialogues provide the opportunity for participants’ voices to be heard at the highest level, and for the results of the Trialogue to be newsworthy and shared through mass media and social networking tools.

### ***Spinning the Golden Thread for the Outcome-Based Report***

The facilitator will ensure that participants perceive there is a golden thread running through the course of the Trialogue, connecting the results of the multiple sessions with the overall outcomes and purpose, and showing how a collective narrative is being constructed together, mapping out convergences and divergences as the conversations progress, together with actions needed for change. The “golden thread” is supported by graphic visualisations (photographs, drawings, mindmaps) that capture the different stages of the Trialogue journey, synthesis of findings, and by testimonials invited from different participants. During the final sessions of the Trialogue, the participants will



develop a series of actions and outcomes to which they commit themselves, creating a regionally-adapted version of the policy and management options in the IPBES assessment. The outcome-based report will identify existing national and regional opportunities for networking and policy uptake.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

The Trialogues are a capacity building intervention which are evaluated by i) the participants' subjective evaluation of an increase in their competence and mutual understanding, ii) self-reporting and triangulation to measure increase in participants' capacity in networking and influence on the policy field; and iii) the Trialogue's media presence.