

★ ESMERALDA ★

MAES Explorer

Guidance on Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services

The ESMERALDA MAES Explorer (<http://esmeraldaguidance.devtest.science/>) is an online stepwise guidance tool, designed to direct and advice you through the process of Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services in your country, region or local case. The tool is a product of ESMERALDA's close work with the European Commission and its working group MAES (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services).

www.maes-explorer.eu

STEP 1

What kind of questions do stakeholders have?

Following the start of MAES in 2012, the activities of the working group were guided by a set of policy questions and needs. Formulated during a two day workshop by EU biodiversity policymakers as a basis for discussions with EU Member States' experts, the questions addressed a range of broad policy needs, which can be summarized as follows:

Are Europe's ecosystems healthy so that they can continue providing ecosystem services in a sustainable way?

STEP 2

Identification of relevant stakeholders

The MAES Explorer will guide you through the identification of relevant stakeholders from policy, science and practice that are needed for successful implementation of MAES. Stakeholders can be determined by their field of interests, media and document analysis, focus group discussions and key-informant interviews in EU member states.

STEP 3

Network creation/ Involvement of stakeholders

A national or regional, active network on ecosystem services, biodiversity or natural capital formed by of scientists, policymakers and practitioners can enhance considerably the successful implementation of MAES. You will learn how to create a network of stakeholders through the experience of the Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP), which currently hosts eleven Regional Chapters, all containing various National Networks.

STEP 4

Mapping and assessment process

This step acquaints you with ESMERALDA's flexible methodology for ecosystem services mapping and assessment, which provides building blocks for regional, national and pan-European assessments. The MAES Explorer offers a comprehensive review of existing studies and detailed methods documentation of biophysical, economic and socio-cultural methods, as well as possibilities for their integration.

STEP 5

Mapping and assessment case study applications

Find working examples where mapping and assessment of ecosystem services has been applied in specific policy and decision making processes. The selected case studies are representative of:

- the variety of existing conditions across the EU, in terms of data availability, spatial scale, levels of implementation of EU 2020 targets, and expertise and experience in ES mapping and assessment;
- the geographical regions and biomes of the entire EU, including marine areas and the outermost regions;
- the variety of cross-EU themes relevant for ecosystem services, such as agriculture, green infrastructure, natural protected areas, forestry strategy, water, business and industry sectors, and health;
- the variety of policy and planning processes that can be used to mainstream ES in real-life decisions, such as spatial and land use planning, water resource management, flooding under the EU climate adaptation action, energy policy, strategic environmental assessment, protected area planning.

While a set of ESMERALDA Case Study Booklets describe the process of mapping and assessment of ecosystem services, their respective Method Application Cards synthesize the main characteristics of the applied methods.

STEP 6

Dissemination and communication

Appropriate and efficient communication of scientific findings to potential users from policy and decision making is the core of ESMERALDA's successful science-policy-society interface. The ESMERALDA approach followed a rigorous plan for dissemination and exploitation of results based on strong stakeholder engagement and networking, regular stakeholder-oriented project workshops across EU member states, a strong connection of the project partners and the international research community, collaboration with key projects on ecosystem services in Europe, teaming up with the MAES working group, an embedded connection with the Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP), harnessing of knowledge-sharing options with existing platform such as BISE, ESP or OPPLA based on an open data policy and direct interactions with the main users.

STEP 7

Implementation

ESMERALDA gained broad experience on how to implement MAES and its different components (including stakeholder involvement, mapping and assessment process, case study applications and results dissemination) in all EU member states and associated countries. Lessons learned from the project will show you the pitfalls and best cases, providing useful recommendations relative to the various ESMERALDA products and other relevant sources.

