

Urban Nature Exchange #3

The **third Urban Nature Exchange** focused on how cities can tell whether their Urban Nature Plans improve biodiversity. With new EU rules requiring urban nature restoration, **cities need stronger biodiversity monitoring than just greenspace and tree canopy measures**. Cities shared that their monitoring capacity varies widely, with citizen science playing a major role but requiring standardisation and support. They also expressed the **need for biodiversity baselines and better data** to inform policy and communicate outcomes. Common challenges include limited resources, changing political priorities, and lack of specialist expertise.

Key Take-Aways

1

Biodiversity is in a **global crisis**. While EU policies such as the Birds and Habitats Directives have had a positive impact, they have not reversed the overall decline. The NRR emphasises the need to restore ecosystems and makes biodiversity **monitoring a cornerstone for tracking progress**, especially in urban areas.

Urban areas have a **critical role** to play in **restoring biodiversity**. UNPs provide a strategic framework to address biodiversity loss while integrating issues such as social equity. Effective biodiversity monitoring is essential to measure the success of these plans, going **beyond green space metrics to assess ecological health**.

2

3

The NRR's reliance on green space and tree canopy metrics, while helpful, is insufficient to capture the complexity of biodiversity and more **detailed survey of cities is required**. Cities vary in their capacity to monitor biodiversity. Some are establishing basic data systems, while others are exploring advanced assessments. Regardless of their stage, cities face **barriers** such as **limited resources and expertise, data centralisation issues** and the **complexity of monitoring biodiversity** comprehensively.

Key enabling mechanisms for enhancing biodiversity monitoring in cities include: **political support** (crucial for ensuring necessary budgets are secured), **citizen science approaches** (represent cost-effective and inclusive way to collect biodiversity data), and **capacity-building** programmes and **resource centres** (essential to equip and upskill municipal staff and citizen scientists).

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Advanced cities are moving **beyond local biodiversity assessments** to consider their **broader ecological impact** through approaches like biodiversity footprint monitoring. Monitoring efforts are motivated by the need to establish baselines, communicate biodiversity values, engage communities, and evaluate policy impacts.