PROGRESS Interreg Europe

European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

PROmoting the Governance of Regional Ecosystem ServiceS

Action Plan for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

July 2022

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INTERREG EUROPE PROGRESS
PROmoting the Governance of Regional Ecosystem ServiceS

Partner responsible for this Action Plan:

ACTION PLAN

July 2022

Country: Ireland
NUTS2 region: Eastern & Midland
Contact person: Dr Owen Douglas
Email address: odouglas@emra.ie
Contact phone: +353 (0)1 8074482

Coordination and preparation of this action plan:
Dr Owen Douglas · Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

Special thanks:
To the local stakeholders and the Elected Members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly for their valuable contributions during Phase 1 of the PROGRESS project. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the work of Anne Murray, Biodiversity Officer in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council for her participation, initially as a key stakeholder and subsequently as a partner for our successful Pilot Action.

1 Introducing PROGRESS

1.1 Project Summary

What?

PROGRESS is an interregional co-operation project with the aim of initiating a process of policy change for maintaining nature's biodiversity, goods and services. The project brings together 6 regional partner organisations to exchange experience for the design, enhancement and implementation of policies protecting and valuing biodiversity and ecosystem services:

- National Association of Italian Municipalities Tuscany, Italy
- Riga Technical University, Latvia
- Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly, Ireland
- Tolna County Development Agency, Hungary
- Ecologic Research and Forestry Applications Centre (CREAF), Spain
- University of Craiova, Romania
-

Interreg Europe PROGRESS project
PRO*moting the* ***G****overnance of* ***R****egional* ***E****cosystem* ***S****ervice****S***
aims to initiate a process of policy change towards the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of nature's capacity to deliver the goods and services that we all need.

When?

This 4-year project started on 1 August 2019, was officially launched in Florence in October 2019 and will last until 31 July 2023.

Why?

The overall objective of the project is to initiate a process of policy change in the partner regions to improve the implementation of the policy instruments under Structural Funds programmes and other regional strategies dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity and maintaining nature's capacity to deliver wide-ranging goods and services.

Through policy learning and capacity building activities, PROGRESS brings together local authorities and their associations, local development agencies, universities and research centres to build capacity for the design and implementation of policies and best practices which are sustainable, actionable and protect and value wide-ranging ecosystem services.

The sub-objective is to contribute to capacity building and policy learning in the partner regions by supporting exchange of experience among relevant stakeholders, in order to:

1. Promote the **measurement of the costs and benefits of ecosystem services** derived from land use.
2. Support the **horizontal integration of ecosystem concerns into sectoral policies** and plans.
3. Explore innovative financial and marketing **mechanisms for payment for ecosystem services**.
4. Improve **landscape governance** for economic and environmental sustainability.

What will this project change?

PROGRESS will create a policy framework in participating regions which **establishes a more central role for ecosystem services in providing solutions for regional development** which are sustainable and actionable.

This is being achieved through policy learning and capacity building activities based on good practices identified in the partner regions and the development and implementation of 6 action plans that are specifically tailored to each region. These action plans should provide policy-makers with the knowledge and tools to swiftly develop and implement sustainable policies, business models and best practices which protect and value biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The Policy Instrument which this Action Plan aims to impact is the **Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031**.

Final Phase 1 Meeting of PROGRESS, 13th-14th June 2022 hosted by EMRA

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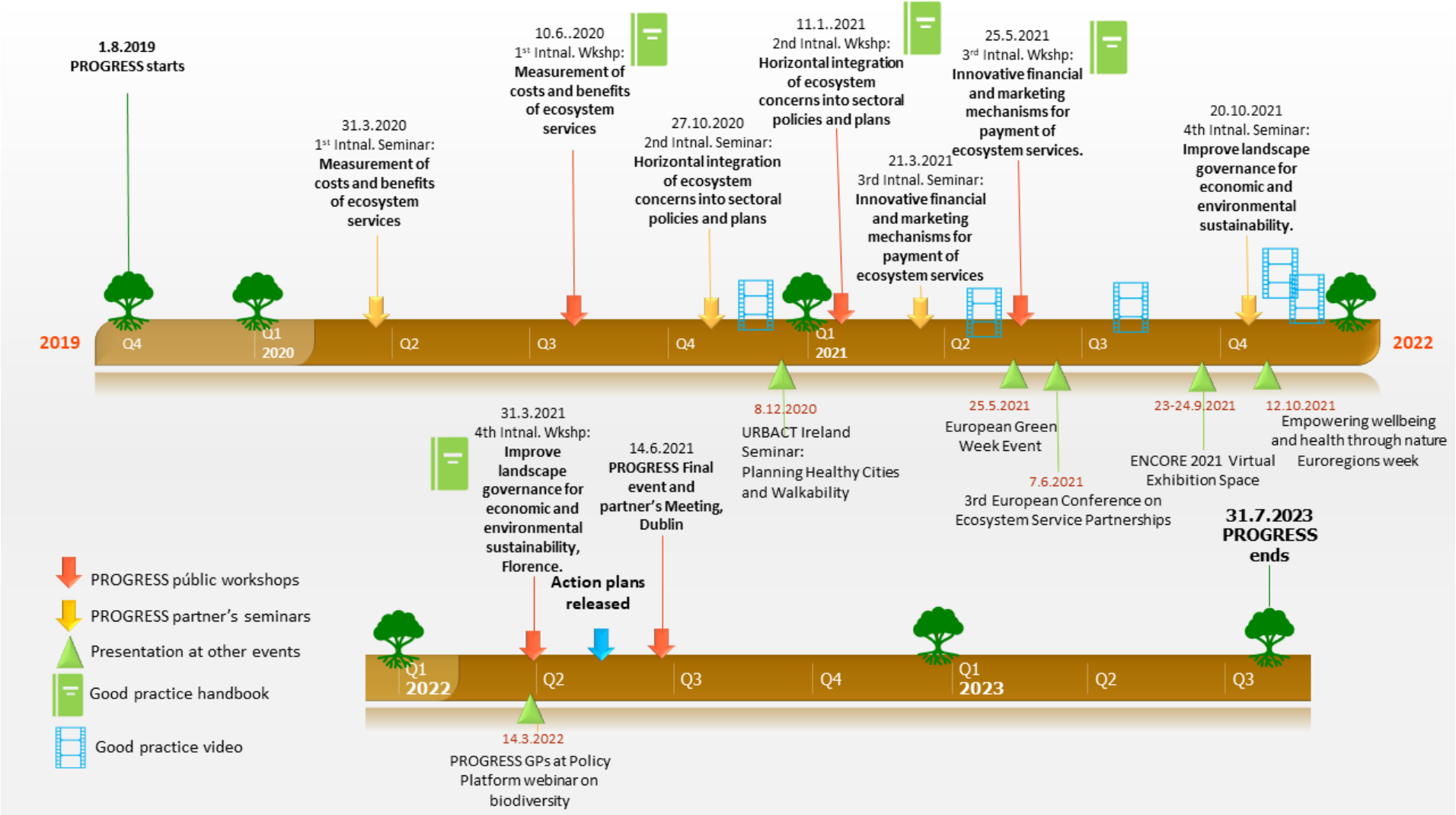
PROGRESS Time frame



2 The policy context

2.1 2.1 Policy Instrument Addressed

The policy instrument which is being addressed in the Action Plan for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is the **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031**. This policy instrument, by means of Regional Planning Objectives (RPOs), sets the context for each of the 12 local authorities (municipalities) within the Eastern and Midland Region to develop their county and city development plans in a manner that will ensure that national, regional and local plans are in alignment.

The RSES is a twelve-year statutory strategic plan and investment framework for the Eastern and Midland Region which is aligned with the vision and objectives for national change in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP) (See Section 2.2.2). Replacing the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs), the RSES has identified the need to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of habitats and native species including landscape and heritage protection; identify, protect and enhance ecosystem services; ensure the sustainable management of natural resources, and; build climate resilience, to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050.

The RSES is implemented by way of review of all local authority Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) within the region. Key state agencies and sectoral bodies must also consider their strategies and investment plans in light of the RSES. There is a Programme of Works for the Implementation of these RPOs which outlines Priority Actions and Outcome/Measurement of Delivery for each RPO. Contained within this policy instrument is Chapter 5 - the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) - an an integrated land use and transportation strategy for the Dublin Metropolitan Area (DMA).

The first and current RSES was adopted by the Elected Members of the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly in June 2019 and covers the period to 2031. Therefore, the focus was on using the PROGRESS project as an **implementation tool** for the RSES.

The RSES does not have a set source of funding. Its implementation is dependent on **policy alignment** from other policy documents. These include local authority Development Plans, investment plans, and policy documents from Government Departments and State Agencies. Policy alignment is a key implementation mechanism for the RSES and this is reflected in the actions of this Action Plan.

This Action Plan has been developed based on the policy learning, interregional co-operation and capacity building activities of the Interreg Europe PROGRESS project and acts to further integrate the ecosystem services approach across all aspects of the RSES, thereby improving the governance of ecosystem services across the Eastern and Midland Region.

2.2 Policy Context for Ecosystem Services

2.2.1 EU Policy

The European Green Deal, approved in 2020 is a set of policy initiatives by the European Commission with the overarching aim of making the European Union climate neutral by 2050. It stresses the urgency of halting biodiversity loss and highlights that the EU is not meeting some of its most important environmental objectives. Under this framework, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 sets out a plan for protecting nature and reversing the degradation of ecosystems, while the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, calls for the development of a better understanding of the interdependencies between climate change, ecosystems, and the services they deliver. It is expected that the European Commission will put forward a proposal for legally binding EU nature restoration targets late in 2022.

2.2.2 National Policy

As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ireland is required to publish a National Biodiversity Action Plan which is updated every five years. The current plan to 2021 sets out Ireland's 'Vision for Biodiversity', which is 'that biodiversity and ecosystems in Ireland are conserved and restored, delivering benefits essential for all sectors of society and that Ireland contributes to efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems in the EU and globally'.

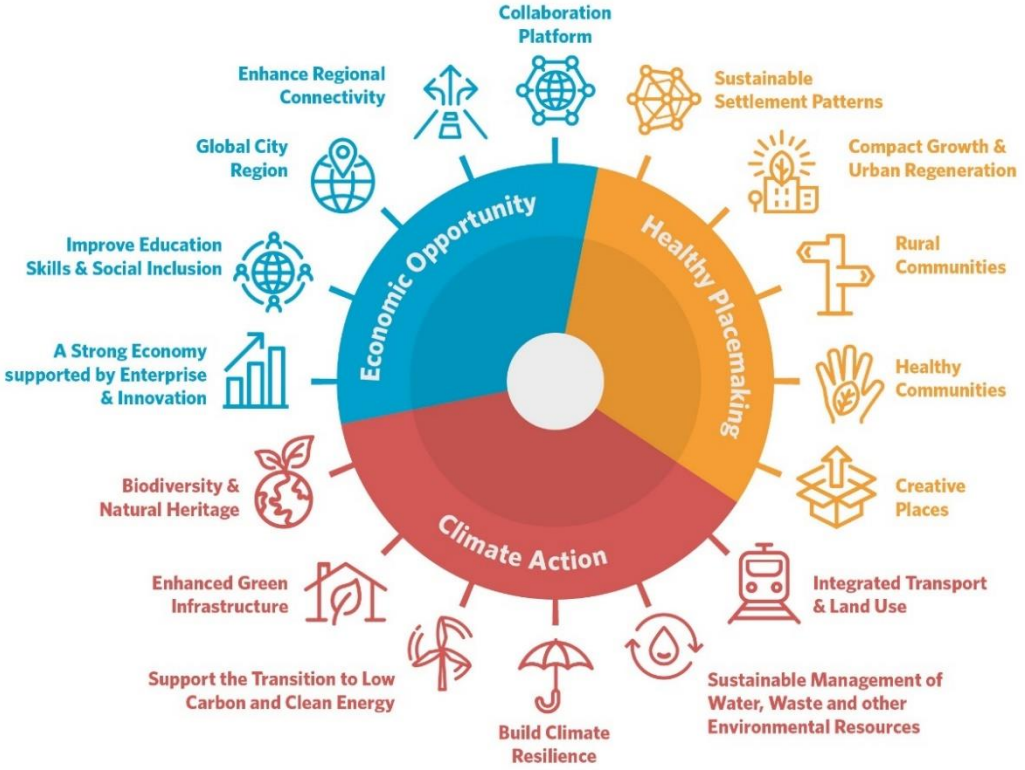
Within the National Planning Framework, there is a specific National Planning Objective (NPO 58) which requires that integrated planning for green infrastructure and ecosystem services is incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans. The National Development Plan recognises that biodiversity is declining and notes that most Irish habitats listed in the Habitats Directive have an unfavourable status and almost half are demonstrating ongoing declines. It recognises that this must be addressed to protect our economy, security, health and wellbeing.

Ireland's first National Marine Planning Framework 2021, a parallel document to the National Planning Framework recognises that biodiversity plays a key role in the functioning of ecosystems and their ability to provide ecosystem services. The value of biodiversity and benefits from ecosystem services reach far beyond that which can be measured in financial terms. Many of the interdependencies between biodiversity, ecosystems structures, functions and processes, and benefits to humans are not yet fully understood or appreciated. While this NMPF comes at a time of early thinking in relation to Natural Capital in Ireland, it notes that the concept should be given a sound footing in regulation to enable the understanding it provides to play its part in an ecosystem approach to marine management.

Finally, the National Climate Action Plan 2021 includes a number of actions to promote ecosystem restoration and conservation through payment for ecosystem services and investment in actions that increase carbon sinks - such as peatlands, woodlands and hedgerows - while promoting biodiversity.

2.2.3 Regional Policy

The overall vision of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019 – 2031 is "to create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunity for all." The vision is supported by 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs) that are framed around three key principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity.



KEY PRINCIPLES

Healthy Placemaking

To promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit and study in.

Climate Action

The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon economy recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.

Economic Opportunity

To create the right conditions and opportunities for the region to realise sustained economic growth and employment that ensures good living standards for all.

The RSES recognises that the incorporation and consideration of an ecosystem services approach can lead to significant policy enhancements which cross-cut these key principles. The principle of Climate Action specifically recognises the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in enhancing climate resilience and accelerating a transition to a low carbon economy.

Within the RSES, natural capital is defined as the stock of renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g., plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of ecosystem services that provide benefits to people. These benefits include clean air and water, a stable climate, protection from floods, food to eat, the resources we use for fuel, building materials, clothes and medicines, recreation and a sense of peace and wonder, as well as habitat for wildlife.

Dr Owen Douglas (EMRA) outlining the policy context, 13th June 2022

Managing natural capital so that it can continue to deliver the ecosystem services that give us these benefits is important in order to ensure sustainable development. Unmanaged natural capital risks the continued degradation and depletion of these assets, and in turn, of their capacity to provide the economy and society with the ecosystem benefits that they depend on. These services also regulate our climate and our water flows (e.g. through wetlands and forests), they sequester and store carbon in our peatlands and improve soil quality and provide pollination services for our crops. Access to a clean and healthy natural environment is also shown to bring multiple associated health benefits while environmental pollution can have negative effects on human health, on animals and plants and on natural ecosystems.

In full alignment with EU and National Policy, the RSES has identified a number of key Regional Strategic Outcomes relating to Ecosystem Services including:

- the need to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of our habitats and protected species including landscape and heritage protection
- the need to identify, protect and enhance our Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services
- the need to ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources
- the need to build climate resilience
- the need to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050

- the protection of the healthy natural environment to ensure clean air and water for all
- The need for integrated transport and land use

Central to the achievement of these outcomes is the promotion of an Ecosystem Services Approach in the preparation of statutory land use plans.

3 Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Regional Stakeholders

The PROGRESS project provided a unique opportunity for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly to investigate and understand the shared challenges in the implementation of an ecosystem services approach in our region across the four thematic areas of the PROGRESS project.

During Phase 1 of the PROGRESS project (August 2019 – July 2022), the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly engaged with the 12 constituent Local Authorities, relevant State Agencies, academic institutions and not-for-profit organisations as follows:

Name of Stakeholder	The 12 Local Authorities in our region including Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council, Kildare County Council, Laois County Council, Longford County Council, Louth County Council, Offaly County Council, Meath County Council, South Dublin County Council, Westmeath County Council, Wicklow County Council.
Type of Stakeholder	Local Government
Description	Local authorities provide a range of services within their boundaries. In relation to the PROGRESS project the most relevant services are planning (forward planning and development management), biodiversity, heritage, parks maintenance and water services.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	As constituent local authorities of the Eastern and Midland Region the above named Local Authorities play an important and statutory role in implementing ecosystem services policies at the local level.

Name of Stakeholder	National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)
Type of Stakeholder	Public agency
Description	The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national centre for the collection, collation, management, analysis and dissemination of data on Ireland's biological diversity. NBDC co-ordinates the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan which provides targeted and actionable information resources for wide-ranging stakeholders to reverse declines in pollinating insects (insect pollination is a key ecosystem service). It also leads the Protecting Farmland Pollination EIP project which is a pollinator scoring & results-based payment method for improving management practices for enhanced biodiversity on farms.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	The National Biodiversity Data Centre provides a holistic view of biodiversity. This is key in identifying opportunities for biodiversity gain through an improved ecosystem services approach. Based on the learnings from the PROGRESS project, EMRA will discuss 'Opportunities for Biodiversity Management' through Regional Assemblies at the European Green Leaf Award Conference in September 2022, organised by NBDC.

Name of Stakeholder	Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs)
Type of Stakeholder	Public agency
Description	The CAROs provide guidance, advice and support to Local Authorities to leverage the capability, reach and resources of the sector to effectively address climate change across Ireland.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	As set out in the RSES Climate change poses a real threat to the functions of ecosystems. Working with the CAROs, better governance of ecosystem services can boost resilience to climate change by regulating our climate, acting as natural flood defences (e.g. through wetlands and forests), storing carbon in peatlands and providing pollinators for crops.

Name of Stakeholder	Natural Capital Ireland (NCI)
Type of Stakeholder	Not-for-profit organisation
Description	NCI is made up of a group of organisations and individuals from academic, public, private and NGO sectors, interested in the development and application of the natural capital agenda. It is the main driver and promoter of awareness and capacity building for natural capital accounting in Ireland and is currently funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, under National Government by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, as well as the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	NCI promotes the adoption of natural capital concepts in public policy (including ecosystem services) and corporate strategy, supporting informed public and private sector decision-making. NCI supports the promotion of improved governance of ecosystem services.

Name of Stakeholder	National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
Type of Stakeholder	Public agency
Description	The NPWS has responsibility for the protection and conservation of Ireland's natural heritage and biodiversity at national government level.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	In 2015, the National Ecosystem and Ecosystem Service Mapping Pilot for a Suite of Prioritised Services (NEES Mapping Pilot) was commissioned by the NPWS to establish a framework for a National Ecosystem Assessment for Ireland within the context of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy. While having a national level focus, this project has indluenced existing approaches to ES and GI mapping in Ireland.

Name of Stakeholder	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Type of Stakeholder	Public agency
Description	The EPA is an independent public body responsible for protecting and improving the environment as a valuable asset for the people of Ireland.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	The EPA funds environmental research to identify pressures, inform policy and provide solutions in the areas of climate,

	water and sustainability, including research relating to ecosystem services and green infrastructure. This research informs EPA guidance, education programmes and awareness raising.

Name of Stakeholder	Coillte Nature
Type of Stakeholder	Semi-state company
Description	Coillte Nature the not-for-profit branch of Coillte (meaning "forests" in Irish) a commercial forestry business owned by the Irish state, managing 7% of Ireland's land. Coillte Nature is dedicated to the restoration, regeneration and rehabilitation of nature across Ireland. 20% of the Coillte estate is currently managed for biodiversity.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	The Dublin Mountains Makeover (DMM) involves the implementation of a multi-generational forest management model across an area of over 900 hectares of forest at the southern edge of Dublin City. The practice is being implemented across nine Coillte forests in the Dublin Mountains. The DMM involves a transition away from a traditional clearfell and replanting cycle, with 'Continuous Cover Forestry' (CCF) principles being applied to maintain the green canopy on a permanent basis.

Name of Stakeholder	University College Dublin (UCD)
Type of Stakeholder	Academia
Description	The UCD School of Geography led the development of the EPA funded Environmental Sensitivity Mapping Webtool which is a novel decision-support tool for evidence-based Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and plan-making, applicable to multiple sectors (EMRA sits on the steering committee). The UCD School of Architectutre, Planning and Environmental Polcy has undertaken research relating to green infrastructure, ecosystem services and population health and wellbeing. The UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science is partner on the Interreg Ireland-Wales

	Ecostructure project which researches and raise awareness of eco-engineering solutions to the challenge of coastal adaptation to climate change, including marine ecosystem services (EMRA sits on the steering committee).
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	Engagement with academia ensures that the most advanced research and scientific knowledge informs the implementation of the Action Plan. During the lifetime of this Action Plan, EMRA will engage with the UCD led 'SEAWAY' and 'Green Space Engage' projects.

Name of Stakeholder	The Universty of Dublin, Trinity College (TCD)
Type of Stakeholder	Academia
Description	The TCD School of Botany leads the European Research Council funded NovelEco project, as well as the European Commission Horizon 2020 funded Connecting Nature project. It is also closely linked with Natural Capital Ireland and the INCASE project. INCASE (Irish Natural Capital Accounting for Sustainable Environments) is a multi-disciplinary collaboration between freshwater and terrestrial ecologists, geologists, economists, GIS analysts and accountants. The project is focused on applying the United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) at a pilot scale in Ireland in order to inform how national scale natural capital accounting can be rolled out.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	Engagement with academia ensures that the most advanced research and scientific knowledge informs the implementation of the Action Plan.

Name of Stakeholder	Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)
Type of Stakeholder	Public agency
Description	An independent public body, the OPR ensures that local authorities support and implement Government planning policy. The OPR delivers education and training programmes for both elected members and staff of local authorities and regional assemblies. The aim of the OPR's

	education, training and research programmes is to improve knowledge sharing and learning across the 31 local authorities, the three regional assemblies and wider stakeholders such as professional bodies and interest groups thereby helping to maximise efficiency, synergies and consistency across the planning system.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	The OPR funds training and research in relation to all aspects of the planning process. Close engagement could enhance opportunites for research, training and policy improvement relating to ecosystem services, as well as enhanced decision-making.

Name of Stakeholder	Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP)
Type of Stakeholder	Not-for profit organisation
Description	DMP was set up in 2008 with the aim of improving the recreational experience for users of the Dublin Mountains, whilst recognising the objectives and constraints of the various landowners. The partner organisations involved are Coillte, South Dublin County Council, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Dublin City Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Dublin Mountains Initiative.
Responsibilities/role within the development and implementation of the policy improvement	DMP are developing an integrated plan for the Dublin Mountains, linking existing and potential outdoor recreation components – in particular forests and other public or state owned lands, with the ultimate aim of improving the recreational experience for users of the Dublin Mountains. Collaboration between stakeholders is key to developing successful approaches to ES and GI mapping.

3.2 Problem definition

Engagement with the stakeholders has identified a general lack of understanding of ecosystem services, particularly in terms of the adoption of an ecosystem services approach in the making of statutory land-use plans and sectoral policies and programmes. There is no doubt that the stakeholders are motivated to adopt an ecosystem services approach as a means to address the climate and biodiversity emergency, but the pathway to this aspiration is not clear. Communication issues, often

rooted in disciplinary silos have hindered the effective integration of these concepts into both decision-making and implementation.

Stakeholder engagement revealed that while ecosystem services and associated concepts such as 'green infrastructure' are increasingly included and given more prominence in policies and plans, they are not interpreted or applied on a consistent basis. This implies that there are gaps in the policy approach (framework) and guidance (methodology). For example, in the Eastern and Midland Region, there is no consistent methodology for the measurement or mapping of ecosystem services at the regional or local level. This in turn means that public authorities are reliant on sometimes vague objectives in Development Plans and employ varied and inconsistent approaches to ecosystem services assessment and mapping.

There is also a lack of guidance and limited transfer of knowledge from good practices on how to undertake ecosystem services assessment and implement an ecosystem services approach. This knowledge deficit combined with the use of inconsistent approaches can lead to development which impacts the ability of natural ecosystems to deliver the services that we all need to survive and thrive. Thus, greater in-house knowledge, learning from good practices and a broadened understanding of ecosystem services is needed.

3.3 Transfer of Learning for Improving the Policy Instrument

It is evident that some partner regions like Barcelona, are very advanced in their use of an Ecosystem Services (ES) approach to inform their planning process and green infrastructure strategies. It is notable that strong foundations have already been established through strong policy approaches that have evolved over numerous years. This commitment has enabled more complex practices like detailed ES mapping to be implemented in that region.

Embracing a standardised and co-ordinated approach to ES mapping should be a long-term aim for the Eastern and Midland region. However, what is necessary in the short to medium term is a robust methodology for ES and green infrastructure mapping which is agreed and adopted by the relevant regional stakeholders at all levels. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, through implementation of the RSES, is uniquely placed to advance this coordination in terms of policy development and project implementation at the regional and sub-regional level.

For this reason, the journey that the Barcelona Region has taken to arrive at their current level is a source of inspiration to the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly. In the early 1990s, the Natural Areas Department of Barcelona opted to promote the protection of strategic areas for connecting existing parks, with the aim of establishing a true **network of interconnected protected areas, the "Green Ring"**. The establishment of a true green infrastructure network through integrated land use planning required cooperation and coordination between different levels and sectors.

This approach extended to land use planning beyond protected areas at both regional and municipal levels, which are the responsibility of the Government of Catalonia and the municipalities. To this end, the SITxell territorial analysis project was at the forefront

in providing technical assistance to the competent authorities in the urban and regional spatial planning processes. To date, this collaboration has been established with many municipalities and various departments of the Government of Catalonia, and it has allowed the application of the content of SITxell to multiple plans and projects, with very positive results for all parties.

Prior to the PROGRESS project, no standardised ES or green infrastructure mapping approach has been advanced for local authorities in the EMRA region. This Action Plan will assist in providing the vision for ES and GI mapping across the region. In particular, sharing and piloting of the SITxell territorial analysis system from the Barcelona region will support the definition of a standardised methodology and regional coordination, assisting in the implementation of nine RPOs contained in the RSES relating to ecosystem services, green infrastructure and riparian setbacks.

4 Policy Improvement: Implementation of the RSES

4.1 Statutory Submissions

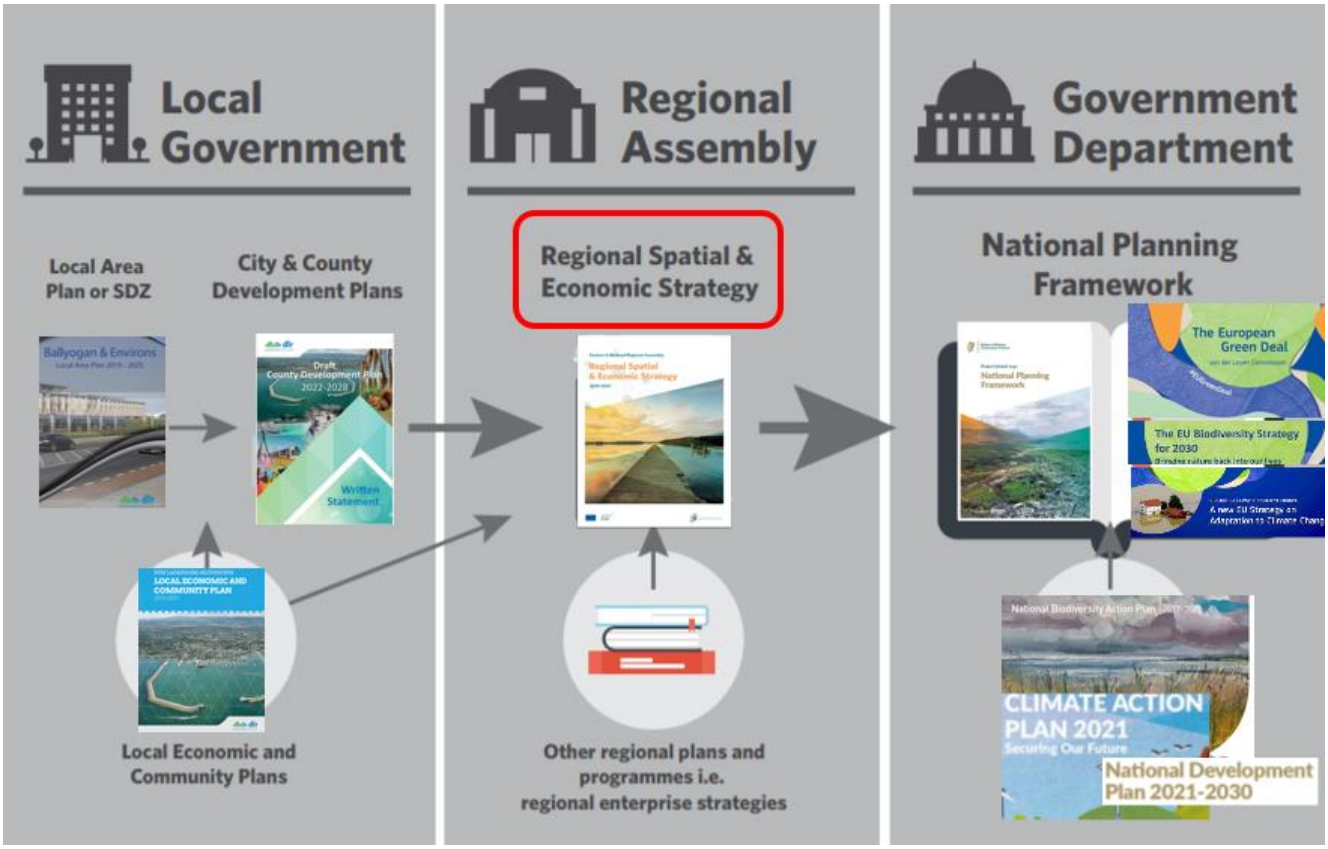
The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly has a statutory function to ensure alignment of local authority Development Plans with the RSES. EMRA therefore prepares statutory submissions on Development Plan reviews and variations. This is an important RSES implementation tool.

EMRA uses its statutory role as a prescribed body to promote local authority Development Plan alignment with regional policy relating to ecosystem services and green infrastructure. Submissions specifically cite the PROGRESS project and the importance of a strong local policy approach to ecosystem services and green infrastructure.

These statutory submissions are informed by stakeholder engagement in the PROGRESS project as well as the identified good practices. As the PROGRESS project has evolved, so too have the ES and GI content and recommendations in EMRA submissions. This acts to raise the ambition significantly for local policy and our local authorities have responded positively.

4.2 Non-statutory Submissions

In addition to its statutory function to ensure alignment of local authority Development Plans with the RSES, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly also prepares submissions in relation to plans and strategies of key state agencies and sectoral bodies. By partnering on the PROGRESS project, EMRA has improved the management of the RSES by enhancing the focus on ecosystem services and biodiversity in policy implementation. Submissions to date have specifically cited the PROGRESS project and the importance of a strong approach to ecosystem services, biodiversity and green infrastructure. This has raised the ambition significantly for sectoral policy and government departments, agencies and sectoral bodies have responded positively.



4.3 What does this Action Plan aim to achieve?

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly aims to use the PROGRESS project to implement the RSES through better governance and monitoring. This is the policy change expected and this is the added value of the project.

In addition to its statutory role, EMRA uses a lot of 'soft' influencing mechanisms. This requires working with a host of organisation to ensure that better outcomes are reached and policy ambitions are raised to higher standards. This includes addressing knowledge gaps and assisting organisations to develop ways to achieve better alignment with the RSES.

These 'soft' influencing mechanism were applied in Phase 1 of the PROGRESS project as EMRA identified a significant gap in both Ecosystem Services knowledge and current assessment and mapping approaches for ES and GI. The Actions contained in this Action Plan focus on improving governance and monitoring for the adoption of a standardised approach for ES and GI mapping across the Dublin Metropolitan Area. The emphasis in Phase 2 is ensuring that issues such as governance and monitoring relating to ES and GI are fully developed to a high standard, which will ensure that the knowledge levels attained and the mapping approach tested in Phase 1 are better applied and are further developed. This is essential to policy instrument improvement.

5 Project Partner Good Practice Exchange

5.1 The Good Practices

According to the Interreg Europe programme manual, a Good Practice (GP) is an initiative (e.g. project, process, technique) which has proved to be successful in a region and which is of potential interest to other regions.

The table below lists the GPs selected for inclusion in the four Handbooks of the PROGRESS project. These GPs were selected for inclusion in the Handbooks on the basis of a scoring procedure which was established to capitalise on project results and promote external learning. This approach also helped partners to identify which GPs are most relevant to their own regional context. On this basis, all GPs were scored by each partner on the basis of the following criteria:

- Evidence of success (results achieved)
- Potential for transnational learning
- Relevance for own region (transferability)

Based on this assessment, one GP was considered very relevant for the Eastern and Midland Region in terms of addressing the key problem identified at 3.2 above. That is, the **lack of a consistent methodology for the measurement or mapping of ecosystem services at the regional or local level**. Transfer of the SITxell Good Practice from the Barcelona region to the EMRA region sits at the core of this Action Plan, while the 9 Good Practices listed as having 'potential' will more generally inform EMRA's engagements with relevant government departments, agencies and stakeholders at the national regional and local levels when thematic alignment is identified (e.g., in relation to coastal ecosystems and forest ecosystems).

The four Handbooks of Good Practice of the PROGRESS project should be read alongside this Action Plan.

PROGRESS THEME	Name of GP	Country	Relevance to this Action Plan
1. Measurement of Ecosystem Services	All Ireland Pollinator Plan Framework	Ireland	
	National Ecosystem and Ecosystem Service Mapping Pilot	Ireland	
	Territorial Information System for the Network of Open Areas in the province of Barcelona (SITxell)	Spain	Very relevant
	Ecosystem Services Assessment Methodology (ESAM)	Latvia	Potentially relevant
	Guidelines for assessing soil ecosystem services in urban environment and their management	Italy	Low relevance
2. Integration of ecosystems into sectoral policies and plans at regional and national level	Dublin Mountains Makeover	Ireland	
	Forest Ecosystem Services Mapping and Assessment Methodology	Latvia	Potentially relevant
	Definition and indicators for the characterization of the Agricultural Areas	Spain	Similar to regional GP
	Catalan Forest Laboratory	Spain	Potentially relevant
	Citizen Council for Sustainability (Barcelona)	Spain	Low relevance
	Conservative management of habitats ROSCI0129 4070 and 9260 in the North West of Gorj, in Gorj County	Romania	Low relevance
	Protecting of the English oak in the cross-border area (Oak protection/ Hungarian – Croatian border area)	Hungary	Low relevance
	Introducing airborne imaging technologies in forest management near the Drava River (RedFaith)	Hungary	Potentially relevant
3. Payment for Ecosystem Services	Natural Capital Ireland Framework	Ireland	
	Protecting Farmland Pollinators	Ireland	
	Community supported afforestation (MyForest)	Hungary	Potentially relevant
	Community supported agriculture (MyFarm Harta)	Hungary	Low relevance
	Sincere-Forests for Water in Catalonia	Spain	Low relevance
	Greenhous Gas and Ammonia Emmision Reduction Tool	Latvia	Similar to regional GP
4. Improve landscape governance for	Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool to Support Strategic Environmental Assessment and Plan-making	Ireland	

	Landscape Charters in Catalonia	Spain	Low relevance
	Land-Sea-Act: Latvian case study on balancing the use of land-sea resources in Southwestern Kurzeme	Latvia	Potentially relevant
	Forest Restoration and Amelioration Program	Spain	Potentially relevant
	The Green Office	Hungary	Potentially relevant
	LIFE VIVA GRASS – Integrated planning Tool of grassland management	Latvia	Low relevance

5.2 Good Practice for Transfer

A- GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE FORM	
Title (and acronym if any)	**Territorial Information System for the Network of Open Areas in the province of Barcelona (SITxell)**
Website	http://www.sitxell.eu/en/default.asp
GP Holder	Provincial Council of Barcelona
Short GP description	SITxell is a territorial analysis system which is structured on the basis of numerous layers of geographic information and associated databases within a Geographic Information System (GIS). It is a tool that has acted to influence the process of territorial planning in the Barcelona region, both at the municipal and regional levels, by providing accurate, reliable and up-to-date information, as well as planning criteria, to plans and projects prepared by public administrations. In recent years SITxell has added the approximation of ecosystem services to its conceptual framework. It incorporates the identification, mapping and evaluation of direct and indirect benefits that ecosystems contribute to people's well-being. This approach compliments and overlaps with the classic conservation of natural and socio-economic values and provides a basis for enhancing a multifunctionality that allows it to provide the maximum number - and quality - of ecosystem services.
Methodology / Approach applied	SITXell is a cartographic and alphanumeric database organised into thematic modules. These include the different aspects involved in the definition of intrinsic and strategic ecosystem services. The system facilitates analysis of the significance of these areas on the basis of their geological, botanical, ecological, social and economic characteristics, using both basic parameters and complex indicators. The conceptual structure of the system is as follows:

	Environmental Modules. These include geology, hydrology, flora, vegetation and habitat, fauna, landscape ecology, cultural heritage and landscape. ***Land-use Modules***. These include socioeconomics, general and specific land policies and laws, urban planning, transport infrastructure and technical services. Each module consists of several layers of basic information – some already existing, while others can be created from scattered information or newly generated – and layers of specific evaluation, which are the result of expert assessment and the weighting of various parameters by project partners. The scale chosen as a reference has been 1:50,000. This scale displays the main elements and processes related to the dynamics and spatial planning of open spaces which is also adequate for further detailed developments. Also, the project considers the incorporation of information on a larger scale, as it already happens in many available layers, in which basic data has been obtained at 1:25,000 or even 1:5,000. However, the reference scale 1:50,000 is always kept for the comprehensive concurrence analysis in the different thematic modules.
Baseline data	Layers and cartography (Geology, hydrology, flora, vegetation and habitat, fauna, landscape ecology, cultural heritage); Socio-economic data concerning urban planning, transport infrastructure, technical services, etc.
Application scale	Scale 1:50.000 – 1:25,000 for plans and projects at macro-territorial level Scale 1:10,000 – 1:5,000 for urban planning *Regional*: planning of green infrastructure (Plan for the Metropolitan Region of Barcelona, support for the establishment of natural areas with special protection, implementation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Plan); *Municipal*: urban planning, planning and management of natural heritage; *Network of Natural Parks*: Identification of new protected areas and definition of protection and planning criteria.
Products derived from the GP	**Thematic maps produced in Catalonia** ***1. Habitats and Flora*** 1.1. Evaluation of botanical habitats 1.2. Small habitats 1.3. Presence and distribution of natural vegetation in agricultural habitats 1.4. Habitat ecotone 1.5. Identification and assessment of Habitats in the Llobregat River Basin 1.6. Identification and assessment of Habitats in the Ter River Basin ***2. Fauna*** 2.1. Evaluation of breeding birds 2.2. Presence of areas relevant for the conservation of biodiversity 2.3. Birds as bioindicators ***3. Socioeconomics*** 3.1. Socio-economic dynamism in agriculture 3.2. Future trends in agriculture

	4. Landscape ecology 4.1. Landscape mosaics 4.2. Landscape attributes for UTM grid 2x2 km 4.3. Types of vegetation structure 4.4. Landscape classification from the land cover map of Catalonia 4.5. Land cover ecotones **5. Geology** 5.1. Large lithological units 5.2. Surface geological formations 5.3. Geomorphological units 5.4. Potential erosion 5.5. Potential gravitational geological hazards 5.6. Hydrogeological units 5.7. Vulnerability of hydrogeological units **Mapped ecosystem services:** • ***Food*** (crops) (Supply service); • ***Forest biomass*** (Supply service); • ***Carbon absorption*** (Regulation service); • ***Erosion control*** (Regulation Service); • ***Potential recreational opportunities*** (Cultural Service); • ***Habitat for species*** (Support Service).
Users of the GP	Provincial Council of Barcelona, local authorities, managing bodies of protected natural areas, universities, research centres and scholars.
Funding resources used	€2 million (2003-2010) for data acquisition through contracts with Universities and Research Centers €50,000/year for updating data
Potential challenges	Acquisition and availability of basic data, large number of administrations involved in the decision-making process.
Other countries applying the GP	County Fingal (Ireland) applied an earlier version of SITxell to urban planning on a supra-municipal scale (without the ecosystem services module); The Province of Flevoland (Netherlands) has applied SITxell to identify intensive agricultural areas to be restored for conservation purposes; Hungary – applied the SITxell at the level of Natural Parks.
References available	**Key scientific article** Basnou, C., Baró, F., Langemeyer, J., Castell, C., Dalmases, C., & Pino, J. (2020). Advancing the green infrastructure approach in the Province of Barcelona: integrating biodiversity, ecosystem functions and services into landscape planning. Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, 55, 126797. **Key book chapter** Castell, C. 2019. Ecosystem services and green infrastructure: implementation at regional and local level. In: Renaturing cities. Barcelona Provincial Council's Press and Communication, pp. 36–56.

B- DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSFER PROJECT	
Why is it important for our region / municipality / etc.	Mapping represents a key element for decision-making in the field of public administration. Its explicit nature makes it the most commonly used way to study, analyse, plan and correctly manage ecosystem services in an optimal and efficient manner. Regarding Green Infrastructure specifically, the SITxell procedure can be used to propose a particular role for each element/zone of GI, based both on existing services and on their potential to increase existing services or provide new ones. This approach can then be incorporated into the planning decision-making process and establish appropriate management mechanisms for each element of the GI network. The substantial information contained in the SITxell module and its widespread implementation makes SITxell a benchmark in this field. Key features of SITxell which can improve municipal and regional mapping in the EMRA Region include: • It incorporates data which is available in multiple formats. • Its design promotes collaboration among research groups and government and the demonstration of direct impact on aspects relating to people's well-being makes it easier for proposals derived from adequate natural heritage protection to be integrated into the planning process. • It has already been applied for specific and successful uses such as the selection of natural areas for protection, territorial planning of several municipalities and cartography of ecological services at the regional level in Catalonia. • It has already been transferred to other European municipalities and regions.
Pre-conditions to apply the GP	Availability of data and thematic maps at the required level and creation of an appropriate stakeholder network which holds the data and can facilitate local and regional implementation of the GP.
Potential advantatges for the region / municipality	Improved and coordinated mapping of green infrastructure and ecosystem services as the regional and local authority level.
Actors to engage in the GP implementation	Regional Local Authorities (multiple departments), Climate Action Regional Offices, relevant Government Departments, the Office of the Planning Regulator and academia.
Potential users of the GP	Regional Local Authorities (multiple departments), Climate Action Regional Offices and private consultants.
Relevance of the GP to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 (RSES)	There are 9 Regional Planning Objectives (RPOs) of the RSES for which management will be improved through the transfer of the SITxell Good Practice as outlined in this Action Plan: **Two RPOs specific to the MASP (Chapter 5 of the RSES):** RPO 5.7: "***Co-ordinate across local authority boundaries to identify, manage, develop and protect regional Green Infrastructure, to enhance strategic connections and develop a Green Infrastructure policy in the Dublin Metropolitan Area***." The Outcome/Measurement of Delivery indicators for this RPO are 1) Develop Green Infrastructure policy for DMA, 2) Deliver metropolitan greenways, and 3) Participate in IE PROGRESS. This Action Plan

	will contribute strongly to the enhancement of this RPO by providing a basis for informed decision-making for GI policy development. RPO 5.8: "***Support the promotion and development of greenway infrastructure and facilities in the Dublin metropolitan area and to support the expansion and connections between key strategic cycle routes and greenways as set out in the NTA Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan***." The Action Plan can contribute to improved decision-making where potential conflicts exist between the protection, development and maintenance of ecological networks and corridors and recreational and commuting greenways for walking and cycling routes, key strategic cycle routes and greenways. The ***One Year Progress Report for the MASP (January 2021) - Developing Green Infrastructure (GI)*** states the following, which clearly demonstrates the potential of this Action Plan to contribute to the improvement of the policy instrument: *"As a partner on the Interreg Europe PROGRESS project, EMRA has engaged with key stakeholders including the Local Authorities within the MASP to facilitate the integration of ecosystem services into policy and plan making and support the delivery of strategic GI across the MASP."…." The project, which runs to July 2023, will develop an Action Plan for the governance of regional ecosystem services which can inform Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services Mapping for the MASP."…"* ***EMRA will further explore how these methodologies could be built on to develop GI networks and inform the development of a standardised GI mapping approach for the MASP****."* **Six other RSES RPOs relevant to Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services (Chapter 7 of the RSES – Environment & Climate):** RPO 7.17: "***Facilitate cross boundary co-ordination between local authorities and the relevant agencies in the Region to provide clear governance arrangements and coordination mechanisms to support the development of ecological networks and enhanced connectivity between protected sites whilst also addressing the need for management of alien invasive species and the conservation of native species***." The Outcome/Measurement of Delivery is development of cross boundary coordination and development of ecological networks. The SITxell can provide inspiration for enhanced governance for regional ecosystem services. RPO 7.21: "***Local authorities shall promote an Ecosystem Services Approach in the preparation of statutory land use plans***". The Outcome/Measurement of Delivery of this RPO is that statutory plans are "consistent with the RSES". Transfer of this GP will provide a means to improve decision making for ecosystem services as they relate to Green Infrastructure strategies as set out in statutory land use plans. RPO 7.22: "***Local authority development plan and local area plans, shall identify, protect, enhance, provide and manage Green Infrastructure in an***

	integrated and coherent manner and should also have regard to the required targets in relation to the conservation of European sites, other nature conservation sites, ecological networks, and protected species." The Outcome/Measurement of Delivery of this RPO is that statutory plans are "consistent with the RSES". Implementation of this Action Plan will provide a means to improve decision making for GI and ES policy. RPO 7.23: "***Support the further development of Green Infrastructure policies and coordinate the mapping of strategic Green Infrastructure in the Region***". Delivery outcomes for this RPO are 1) Enhanced provision of green infrastructure, and 2) Mapping of strategic green infrastructure. Implementation of this Action Plan will facilitate improved decision making for GI policy and provision and can contribute to the improvement of the basis, quality and granularity of strategic GI through enhanced ES mapping. RPO 7.25: "***Support local authorities and state agencies in the delivery of sustainable strategic greenways, blueways, and peatways projects in the Region under the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways***". The Outcome/Measurement of Delivery of this RPO is "the advancing of national and regional greenways". Implementation of this Action Plan will support knowledge transfer and contribute to improved decision making for 'sustainability'. RPO 7.26 "***Support the development of guidance for assessment of proposed land zonings in order to achieve appropriate riparian setback distances that support the attainment of high ecological status for waterbodies, the conservation of biodiversity and good ecosystem health, and buffer zones from flood plains***." The Outcome/Measurement of Delivery of this RPO is "Finalisation of CDPs, UAPs, and LAPs deemed to be consistent with the RSES (i.e., inclusion of policy on maintaining riparian setback distances)". In differentiating cultural ecosystem services from those related to ecological functioning, the SITxell methodology demonstrates how enhanced decision making can be facilitated where potential conflicts arise between the protection, development and maintenance of ecological networks and corridors and recreational and commuting greenways for walking and cycling, particularly along riverbanks which can be highly sensitive ecologically. In addition to these RPOs, Point 3 of the Guiding Principles for GI contained in the RSES (p. 166) requires municipalities to consider the ecological impact of Greenways. The supporting text is as follows: "While the development of greenways and blueways has positive health and wellbeing benefits, there is also potential for habitat loss and disturbance due to increased movement of people. Therefore, there is a need to strategically plan, deliver and manage our GI networks and ensure appropriately designed infrastructure to reduce the impact on the natural environment." Transfer of the SITxell appraoach can improve the way GI is planned, delivered and managed to maximise ecosystem services provided and minimise environmental degradation.

5.3 The Potential Actions

The core objective of this Action Plan is to promote improved governance of ecosystem services and green infrastructure in the EMRA Region, primarily through the transfer of the positive experience demonstrated in the Barcelona Region through the SITxell Good Practice.

In particular, the SITxell conceptual framework for the approximation of ecosystem services and its application to the municipal and regional level offers real potential to advance ecosystem services mapping in the EMRA region, both in terms of methodology and regional coordination. This requires the cooperation and direct involvement of key stakeholders across the Local Authorities in the Region (including biodiversity officers, heritage officers, engineers, planners, parks officers, landscape officers and GIS technicians), the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs), the Office of the Planning Regulator, relevant Government Departments and the support of the Elected Members.

5.4 First Steps for Action from Phase 1

The SITxell GP was first presented to the Project Partners by CREAF on the 31st of March 2020 at the 1st International Thematic Seminar of the PROGRESS project. This GP was reviewed internally by the EMRA team and was seen to offer excellent potential for policy improvement and improved governance for ecosystem services. On this basis, invitations were issued to key stakeholders to attend the 1st International Thematic Workshop of the PROGRESS project on the 10th of June 2020. Subsequent to the workshop, a number of local stakeholders expressed interest in the GP and the EMRA Project Officer arranged bilateral meetings on that basis. One such meeting was with the Ecologist and Biodiversity Officer from one of the Local Authorities within the region, (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown) who had adapted and applied the NPWS National Ecosystem and Ecosystem Service Mapping Pilot methodology to Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown at a county level to examine its application, but was keen to learn more about the SITxell approach.

On the 16th of February 2021, Interreg Europe hosted a webinar which outlined the availability of funding to undertake Phase 1 Pilot Actions based on interregional Good Practice transfer. On the 17th of February 2021, the Project Officer from EMRA contacted the DLR Biodiversity Officer to propose the development of a Pilot Action to test the transfer the SITxell ecosystem services conceptual model to undertake improved ES and GI mapping in the DLR Local Authority. The DLR Biodiversity Officer responded very positively to this suggestion, leading to the development of a proposal over the following months. This included a meeting with the Provincial Council of Barcelona (the GP owner) and CREAF on March 5th 2021, a formal internal meeting with the Assistant Director of EMRA on the 14th of March 2021 and a meeting with the Interreg Europe Policy Officers to pitch the idea on the 20th of April 2021. On the basis of this meeting, EMRA as coordinating partner was invited to submit a formal application for Pilot Action which we did on the 18th of June 2021 with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council included as a new Project Partner.

The Pilot Action proposal document was reviewed by the Interreg Europe Joint Secretariat who provided comments (24th June 2021). A revised version was submitted

on the 1st of July 2021 and the Partners were informed on the 12th of July that the proposal would be recommended to the Interreg Europe monitoring committee. Following the written procedure, the Interreg Europe monitoring committee approved the Pilot Action on 13th August 2021, with EMRA being informed on the 25th of August 2021. The Pilot Action commenced formally on the 27th of September 2021 and ended formally on the 31st of January 2022 (with final deliverables and technical report following). Successful completion of this Pilot Action is included as a 'Completed Action' in this Action Plan and forms the basis for Action 2, the primary outstanding action included in this Action Plan.

Councillor Lettie McCarthy (Cathaoirleach) and Anne Murray (Biodiversity Officer), DLR launching the technical report of the PROGRESS project Pilot Action, Final Phase 1 Meeting, Dún Laoghaire, 13th June 2022.

6 Regional Actions

This section develops into actions the policy developments outlined in the previous section.

According to PROGRESS planning, the Action Plan will run from August 2022 to the end of the project in July 2023.

Each action is next described in a specific table consisting of:

Title: concise description of the action.

Relevance to the project: explains how the proposed action arises from or is sustained by contributions made during Phase 1 of the project dedicated to learning and exchange of experiences (either in the framework of the international seminars and workshops or working sessions of the local stakeholder group).

Nature of the action: Describes the steps to follow to implement the action.

Responsible: identifies the project partner or other main stakeholder who should lead and be responsible for the implementation of the action.

Other stakeholders involved / Role: other stakeholders are mentioned who should also be involved and collaborate in the implementation of the action, and what role they will play in the implementation (support, advocacy, technical advisor, networking, etc.).

Indicative costs: specify human, economic or material resources that are necessary for the implementation of the action.

Funding sources: institutions, entities or economic and/or financial instruments that could be used to finance the action.

Implementation calendar: the period during which the action should be executed. This section also specifies whether it is desirable or even imperative that the action be continued beyond July 2023.

Action 1 - Testing a Green Infrastructure Decision Support Mapping Approach for Ecosystem Services
Relevance to the project
Developing systems for mapping and assessing ecosystem services at all levels was one of the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. In response, municipalities and regions across Europe are increasingly attempting to map and assess their ecosystem services and use such information in the decision-making process. While methodologies for strategic ecosystem services mapping have been developed and are assisting in national, regional and local level decision-making, there are still practical challenges in applying the idea for policy and management purposes. The SITxell GP has demonstrated a robust and replicable mapping approach for ecosystem services which can be applied effectively at regional and local levels. This Pilot Action involved the testing the transfer of the SITxell methodology to the Irish context. This involved developing and testing a mapping methodology to

contribute to enhanced decision-making around Green Infrastructure in Dublin by scoring and mapping ecosystem services across the administrative area of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (DLR) local authority.

In so doing, the Pilot Action improved the implementation of nine specific Regional Planning Objectives (RPOs) of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), the target policy instrument and established the basis for Action 2 outlined below.

Nature of the action

In this Pilot Action, a methodology was developed and criteria were established to transfer the SITxell conceptual model and methodology to an Irish Local Authority area - Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. A range of ecosystem services were mapped for DLR on the basis of three 'contrasting perspectives': 1) Intrinsic value, 2) Functional value, and 3) Leisure/Cultural value. The Pilot Action also tested whether these three dimensions might be combined in order to identify the areas maximizing the sum and the diversity of values.

The Mapping Approach was evaluated by target users at dedicated workshops in January 2022 and it was determined that the methodology and mapping approach was both effective and appropriate to contribute to the development of a coordinated approach for ES and GI mapping in the Dublin Metropolitan Area. The technical report outlining the methodology of the mapping approach was presented by CREAF and launched by Councillor Lettie McCarthy, Chathaoirleach (Mayor) of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown on the 13th of June 2022.

Responsible

Overall coordination the Pilot Action was managed by EMRA. This included coordination between, CREAF, DLR and participating stakeholders.

Other stakeholders involved / Role

The technical development of the methodology and mapping approach were undertaken by CREAF in in close collaboration with EMRA and DLR. Two EMRA staff and the Biodiversity Officer in DLR worked directly with CREAF over the course of the Pilot Action period to set criteria based on sound methodologies and expert knowledge of the DLR context. All relevant and available local datasets and GIS files were provided by DLR.

Led by EMRA, evaluation of the Mapping Approach was undertaken by an expert user stakeholder network including biodiversity officers, heritage officers, water & infrastructure engineers, planners, parks officers, landscape officers and GIS technicians, the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) and private consultants involved in the development of municipal green infrastructure strategies in the DMA (25 individuals in addition to the Pilot Action team).

Indicative costs	€26,350 including staff costs, office and administration and contracted external expertise and technical services.
Funding sources	Approved Interreg Europe Phase 1 Pilot Action
Implementation calendar	27th September 2021 – 31st January 2022

Action 2 - Advance the coordination of a standardised Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Mapping Approach in the Dublin Metropolitan Area

Relevance to the project

On the basis of the completed Pilot Action (Action 1), Action 2 will advance the coordination of a standardised Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Mapping Approach in the Dublin Metropolitan Area with the SITxell GP as tested in DLR as the key inspiration.

There is currently a gap in structures to ensure RSES ES and GI policy is implemented. This Action will improve the target policy instrument by identifying a regional structure or group that will ensure RSES policy for ES and GI is better implemented. This will result in better clarification on responsibility and ownership for ES and GI mapping in the Dublin Metropolitan Area. The establishment and activation of a regional working group is the key change expected.

Nature of the action

Step 1: Establishment of a regional working group or engagement with an existing regional working group to take responsibility for regional coordination of a standardised Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Mapping Approach in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

This step requires scoping of existing and proposed regional structures. Potential existing structures include the Metropolitan Strategic Area Plan (MASP) implementation group, as well as the MASP and Strategic Planning Area (SPA) committees (EMRA structures). Local stakeholder engagement during Phase 1 identified an objective contained in the Climate Change Action Plans for the four Dublin Local Authorities for the establishment of regional working group for nature-based solutions. Such a working group could also be a potential route for regional coordination towards ES and GI mapping. EMRA has already made enquiries to establish the current status of this working group with this approach supported by key local stakeholders. Membership of this working group should comprise at least one representative for each of the seven local authorities located in the Dublin Metropolitan Area, as well as a representative from each of the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs), relevant Governement Departments, the Office of the Planning Regulator and academia.

Step 2: The regional working group will meet specifically regarding the identification of a standardised Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Mapping Approach for the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

At the **first meeting** of the regional working group in Q4 2022 the Green Infrastructure Decision Support Mapping Approach for Ecosystem Services (developed in Action 1) will be presented in order to start discussions regarding a standardised Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Mapping Approach in the Dublin Metropolitan Area. To facilitate this, technical experts in the field will be invited, including representatives from CREAF and the Provincial Council of Barcelona, the experts in the SITxell methodology. Working group members will be invited to provide feedback and input to suggest alternative and complementary approaches and methodologies which have

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">been developed or used in their organisations. Following the meeting, a pro forma will be circulated to the members to provide information on alternative and complimentary approaches.

Step 3: Consultation with Elected Members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

The Terms of Reference and progress of the regional working group (as outlined in Step 1) will be presented to the Elected Members of EMRA at an Assembly meeting in Q4 2022. The purpose is to address any comments or concerns by the Elected Members and to inform them of progress.

Step 4: Second regional working group meeting

The second meeting of the regional working group will take place in Q2 2023. Working group members with alternative or complementary ES and GI mapping approaches will be invited to present these to the working group for feedback and discussion. This will be followed by a discussion to agree the key elements for a mapping approach which can be standardised across the Dublin Metropolitan Area. The members will then explore the potential funding options for regional ES and GI mapping and will agree a timetable for the development and implementation of a standardised Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure Mapping Approach for the Dublin Metropolitan Area.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Responsible</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Overall coordination by EMRA with active engagement by the members of the working group.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Other stakeholders involved / Role</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">EMRA Staff - coordination
The regional working group – implementation
Elected Members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly - Oversight</td></tr>
<tr><td>Indicative costs</td><td>There will be staff costs to EMRA for ongoing coordination. Regional working group members will be required to identify funding from their own organisations and other relevant sources and technical development.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Funding sources</td><td>The target policy instrument is not a Structural Funds operational programme and does not have an implementation budget. The regional working group members will be required to secure funding from their own organisations and other relevant sources.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Implementation calendar</td><td>Step 1: Q3 2022

Step 2: Q4 2022

Step 3: Q4 2022

Step 4: Q2 2023</td></tr>
</table>

7 Approval

Date:	29th July 2022
Name of the organisation:	Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
Name and role of the representative:	Mr. Jim Conway, Director
Signature:	

Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly