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Sustainable and smart cities and communities - Nature-based solutions (NbSs) - Terminology and classification

Táto norma obsahuje anglickú verziu európskej normy.
This standard includes the English version of the European Standard.

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Sustainable and smart cities and communities - Nature-based solutions (NbSs) - Terminology and classification

Villes et communautés territoriales durables et intelligentes - Solutions fondées sur la nature (SFN) - Vocabulaire et classification

Nachhaltige und intelligente Städte und Gemeinden - Naturbasierte Lösungen (NbL) - Terminologie und Grundsätze

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European foreword

This document (EN 18140:2026) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 465 “Sustainable cities and communities”, the secretariat of which is held by AFNOR.

This European Standard shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by October 2026, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by October 2026.

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EN 18140:2026 (E)**Introduction**

At European level the European Commission (EC) released the first document on NbS: *Towards an EU Research and Innovation policy agenda for Nature-Based Solutions and Re-Naturing Cities*, in 2015. In this document the EC identified four goals that can be addressed by nature-based solutions:

- enhancing sustainable urbanisation;
- restoring degraded ecosystems;
- developing climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Improving risk management and resilience.

In the recent document “EU taxonomy for sustainable activities” (2021c) has considered as environmental objectives the following categories: climate change mitigation and adaptation, the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, the transition to a circular economy, pollution prevention and control, the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Evaluating the impact of NbS the “Handbook of practitioners” (2021a) reported a gap analysis in terms of:

- lack of a widely agreed definition of Nature-based Solutions (NbS);
- lack of NbS monitoring methodology and implementation stages (longer-term evaluations to assess NbS effects over time and guaranteeing continuity of monitoring measurements);
- measurability of intangible impacts (e.g. aesthetic enjoyment) and spillovers (impact of NbS intervention may spread beyond the treated area or group);
- accounting for trade-offs, difficulties in communicating to non-scientific partners the need and the challenges in a less -technical language.

The United Nation Environmental Agency with the resolution 5 provided the NbS definition that has been adopted in the present document. This definition, reported at paragraph 3.1, is the most widely accepted and multilaterally agreed NbS definition currently available (UNEA, 2022).

The effectiveness and credibility of NbS depend on adherence to key principles. These include, but are not limited to:

- biodiversity net gain and ecosystem integrity;
- addressing societal challenges while enhancing nature;
- long-term sustainability and adaptive management;
- inclusive governance and social equity.

Ensuring that NbS are framed within these principles helps prevent misinterpretation and guarantees alignment with the UNEA definition and the IUCN “Global Standard” on NbS (IUCN, 2020 a,b).

The purpose of including 3.2. Terms broadly related to NbS, is to provide context, to distinguish those terms from NbS and to support the standardisation effectiveness. These terms are connected to NbS, but not necessarily part of the definition, they have been chosen because of their frequent use in the context of NbS and their presence in the document sources.

1 Scope

Building on the consolidated definitions of NbS, this document establishes a terminology to support the development of an agreed vocabulary, forming the basis of the standardisation process.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

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