Report on the capacity building needs of IPBES and IPCC National Focal Points

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Summary

One central function of the RESPIN project has been the task to empower knowledge holders as well as national focal points in selected EU countries and partner countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Africa and Latin America.

This report provides an analysis of the capacity building needs of IPBES and IPCC National Focal Points (NFPs). Results are based on a survey developed by RESPIN, to understand barriers and incentives to the engagement of knowledge holders in IPBES and IPCC processes. In addition, we explored and analyzed the capacity-building needs of the National Focal Points during some of the workshop sessions at our PESC-RESPIN event, which took place in Brussels, from the 10th-13th of March 2025.

The report analyses first the profile of the 36 National Focal Points that answered the survey, namely their:

- professional background
- expertise
- job title
- engagement with IPBES and IPCC
- potential cross platform collaboration
- engagement with knowledge holders
- the issues they identified with the IPBES and IPCC process

Furthermore, the report assesses the participation of National Focal Points in capacity building activities. It explores which capacity-building activities could be useful for NFPs, identifies potential capacity-building needs for National Focal Points and suggests some areas of improvement with some potential solutions. This report underscores the pressing and ongoing need to enhance both in-person and online capacity-building initiatives—particularly at national and regional levels—to strengthen knowledge exchange and ensure that global biodiversity and climate science processes (IPBES and IPCC) better reflect local contexts and priorities. Where these needs exceed the mandates of IPBES or IPCC, complementary initiatives such as RESPIN are well-placed to provide support. Accordingly, a set of action points for RESPIN has been developed, organized into four key areas: capacity-building materials, events, stakeholder engagement and participation in IPBES/IPCC processes.

In the first 18 months of the project, RESPIN Function 1 already initiated or co-organized a few capacity-building activities, such as a webinar on the topic of institutional support, as well as some side-events organized during COP16 in Cali and an event organized in September 2024 by the French Foundation for Research on Biodiversity (FRB) for IPCC and IPBES stakeholders. These events serve as early contributions to addressing the barriers identified by NFPs and other stakeholders, and are described in this report.

RESPIN has identified gaps and barriers to the engagement of knowledge holders in IPBES and IPCC processes. Based on these insights and existing experiences with IPBES and IPCC engagement, the project and other similar initiatives can develop targeted capacity building formats to facilitate and strengthen future SPI engagement. The next steps for the RESPIN project centre on continuing strengthening the capacity and collaboration of IPBES and IPCC National Focal Points (NFPs), particularly in underrepresented regions. RESPIN will expand capacity-building resources—such as webinars, factsheets, and online courses—and organize regional and national meetings to foster peer exchange, share best practices, and support expert engagement. The project will also conduct interviews to assess the experiences of knowledge holders and NFPs and use these insights to inform inclusive,

practical, and sustained capacity-building strategies. These efforts will be coordinated across tasks and regions, aiming to enhance science-policy interfaces and ensure broader, long-term engagement with global assessment processes.

The report can be read in conjunction with deliverable 1.1 ("the analysis of barriers, incentives and capacity building activities for knowledge holders to engage with IPBES and IPCC in target countries and regions").

List of abbreviations

AR7	7th Assessment cycle of IPCC
AF	African States
AP	Asia-Pacific States
BELSPO	Federal Public Planning Service Science Policy of Belgium
CBD	Convention of Biological Diversity
DG	Directorate-General
DoA	Description of Action
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EC	European Commission
ECA	Eastern Europe and Central Asia
EE	Eastern European States
EU	European Union
FRB	French Foundation for Research on Biodiversity
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GRULAC	Group of Latin America and the Caribbean
ILK	Indigenous Local Knowledge
IPBES	The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
NFP	National Focal Point
PESC	Pan-European Stakeholder Consultation
SPI	Science-policy Interface
SPM	Summary for Policymakers
TSU	Technical Support Unit
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UfZ	Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research
WEOG	Western European and Others Group

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change and biodiversity loss are one of the major challenges of our time that policy making across scales is facing. Strengthening the targeted provision of knowledge to inform policies and increasing the dialogue and shared understanding between actors in the policy arenas is key to achieving the global biodiversity goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the climate goals of the Paris Agreement. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) were created to synthesize the best available knowledge in biodiversity and climate change, and inform decision makers on implications and risks related to these environmental problems. While these institutions were created to synthesize existing information on these highly interlinked challenges, their outputs and processes remain isolated from each other, falling short in mobilizing inputs from underrepresented regions, scientific disciplines and non-scientific knowledge holders. IPBES, IPCC and other related Science-Policy Interfaces (SPI) often operate in parallel, reinforcing the fragmentation between biodiversity and climate governance. The missing translation of existing information hinders the uptake of knowledge at European, national and local levels and the connection between knowledge needs and provision.

The RESPIN project (RESPIN for REinforcing Science-Policy INterfaces for integrated biodiversity and climate knowledge and policies) aims to support the integrated provision and use of IPBES and IPCC processes and outputs. RESPIN also supports the development of capacities to incorporate IPBES and IPCC findings into decision making at EU level. Additionally, the project identifies gaps in knowledge provision and develops strategies to address them, improving the engagement of diverse knowledge holders, with particular support for underrepresented regions in Central Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America.

RESPIN has five main functions:

• Function 1 enhances the participation of diverse knowledge holders in IPBES and IPCC by assessing engagement levels and improving capacity-building activities.

• Function 2 identifies gaps and barriers in using IPBES and IPCC findings, aiming to improve data integration, policy coherence, and collaboration between climate and biodiversity efforts.

• Function 3 integrates IPBES and IPCC findings into EU decision-making and supports EU delegations in international negotiations.

• Function 4 raises awareness of IPBES and IPCC processes by translating findings into accessible resources, developing training courses and fostering strategic partnerships for effective outreach and dissemination.

• Function 5 ensures coordination and synergy among project activities.

This report is part of the first phase of Function 1: identifying gaps and barriers to the engagement of knowledge holders in IPBES and IPCC processes.

This report evaluates the capacity building needs of IPBES and IPCC focal points and their engagement in the IPBES and IPCC process and activities in target countries and regions (Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America and the African Region).

First by analyzing the profile of the 36 National Focal Points (NFPs) that answered the survey, with a focus on their professional background, expertise, job title, their engagement with IPBES and IPCC, potential cross platform collaboration, their engagement with knowledge holders and the issues they identify with the IPBES and IPCC process. Furthermore, the report assesses the accessibility to and participation of National Focal Points in capacity building activities. It explores which capacity-building activities could be useful for NFPs, identifies

potential capacity-building needs for National Focal Points and suggests some areas of improvement with some potential solutions.

This report also identifies possible courses of action to improve the work and the engagement of National Focal Points in both processes, taking also into consideration regional needs. The upcoming steps for the RESPIN project are outlined to identify where it can best address capacity-building needs—through the development of capacity-building materials, organization of events, enhanced stakeholder engagement and participation in IPBES and IPCC processes.

Results are based on a survey developed by RESPIN, to understand barriers and incentives to the engagement of knowledge holders in IPBES and IPCC processes. In addition, we explored and analysed the capacity-building needs of the National Focal Points during some of the workshop sessions at our PESC-RESPIN event, which took place in Brussels, from the 10th-13th of March 2025.

In the first 18 months of the project, RESPIN already initiated or co-organized a few capacity-building activities, such as a webinar around the topic of institutional support for experts that want to engage with IPBES and IPCC, as well as some side-events organized during COP16 in Cali and an event organized by the French Foundation for Research on Biodiversity (FRB) for IPCC and IPBES stakeholders. These events serve as early contributions to addressing the barriers identified by NFPs and other stakeholders and are described in this report.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data collection: survey on barriers and incentives for knowledge's holders engagement in IPBES and IPCC processes

We developed a survey to understand barriers and incentives to the engagement of knowledge holders in IPBES and IPCC processes, using the online survey development SurveyMonkey[1]. We invited contributors / potential contributors to / end users of IPBES or IPCC to fill the survey - including individual scientists, indigenous people and local communities, representatives of an institution, organization and group working in the field of biodiversity and/or climate.

A pilot version of the questionnaire was first designed and sent in July 2024 to a poll of 55 identified experts from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Colombia and DRC. The poll included experts in biodiversity and climate that had never been part of IPBES or IPCC reports, current or previous IPBES or IPCC authors, as well as NFPs and initiatives. 35 were able to give feedback on the questionnaire which greatly improved it to a final version that was translated in French, Spanish and Russian before being sent out at the end of October 2024. The final survey was designed as indicated in Figure 2. Most questions allowed participants to indicate multiple options or skip the question.

[1] SurveyMonkey Inc., San Mateo, California, USA, www.surveymonkey.com

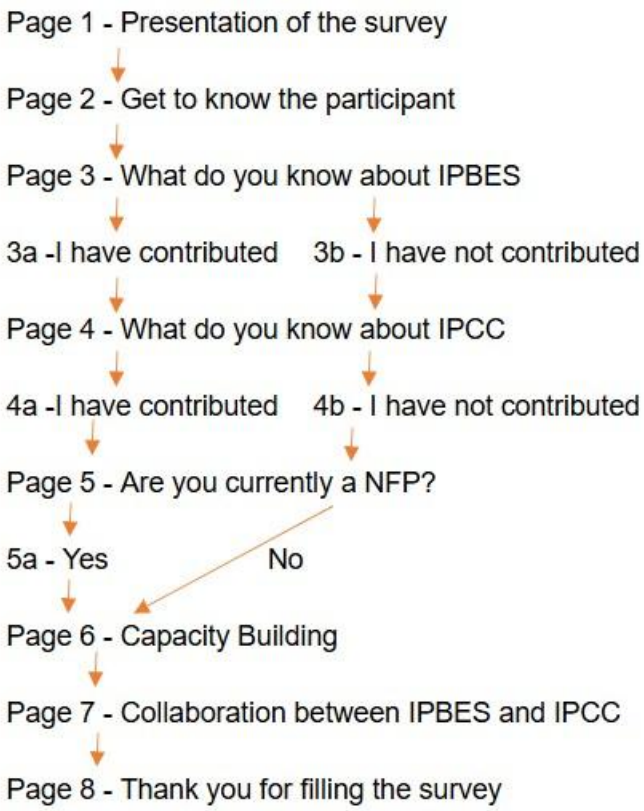

Figure 1: Design of the survey of barriers and incentives to the engagement of knowledge holders in IPBES and IPCC processes

We used snowball sampling to get participants, which is a recruitment technique in which the participants are asked to assist the survey's designer in identifying other potential subjects. The initial participants/snowballs we reached out to were composed of:

- RESPIN consortium's professional network
- RESPIN partners' organizations' network
- People following RESPIN social media
- Participants attending RESPIN workshops (including Colombian sub-national workshop on October 25, PESC-RESPIN event, French workshop for IPBES and IPCC experts in September 2024)
- Europe and Central Asia NFPs of IPBES and IPCC (via their invitation to the PESC-RESPIN event)
- IPBES and IPCC secretariats (including IPBES ILK and Capacity-building TSUs)
- Participants of IPBES Stakeholder Day at IPBES 11 Plenary in December 2024

Numbers of participants were regularly checked, reminders were regularly sent, and a preliminary analyses of the results was done in December 2024 and in March 2025 to ensure a good representation of regions, gender and expertise. The survey was closed on April 1st, 2025 and results extracted on the same day.

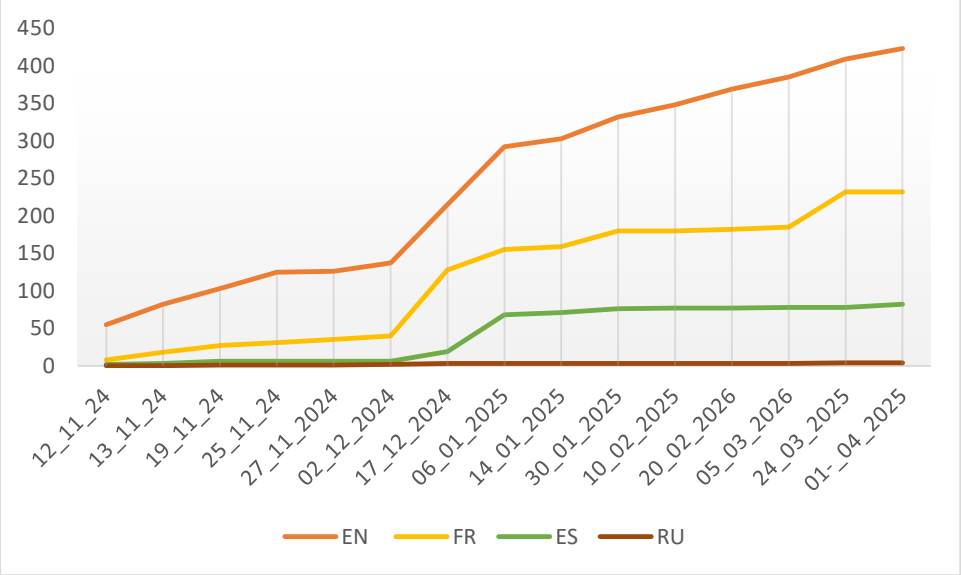

Figure 2: Number of participants filling the survey over time. EN: English, FR: French, ES: Spanish, RU: Russian.

There was a total of 741 participants: 423 filled the English version, 232 the French version, 82 the Spanish version and 4 the Russian version. Not all the participants filled the full survey and there were able to answer the questions they were the most interested in.

Results were analyzed using the SurveyMonkey tool and Microsoft Excel. Data were exported from SurveyMonkey for all the languages and merged together for each of the 63 questions. Moreover, a **data filter** was applied to ensure that only responses from National Focal Points were considered in this report (based on Q41: "Are you a NFP?"). 36 participants indicated that they were NFPs but because the survey was anonymous we could not verify who filled the survey. Open-Ended questions in French, Spanish and Russian were translated in English using DeepL[2].

For this report specifically, a detailed analysis was conducted on questions Q50, Q51, Q53, Q54, and Q56, as these are the questions regarding capacity-building. Where relevant, a distinction was made between National Focal Points for the IPCC and those for IPBES.

To have a more holistic overview of the background and experience of NFPs in general, we looked into other questions as well, such as the questions on the background of the NFP (Q.2-12); questions on collaboration (Q.43-47+59); engagement with knowledge holders (Q.48) and uptake (Q.49); interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change, IPBES and IPCC (Q. 57-59).

The questions on engagement with the IPBES process (Q15–26) and the IPCC process (Q28–40) were less relevant, as engaging with these platforms is clearly a core responsibility of the National Focal Point.

The full dataset with the survey's responses will be made available at a later date when the survey results will be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

[2] https://www.deepl.com/en/translator

2.2 Workshop execution and structure

The workshops that were held during the PESC-RESPIN meeting in Brussels (10-13th of March 2025)[3] were analyzed and presented in a qualitative, descriptive manner.

This report describes exclusively the sessions that can be counted as 'capacity-building' for National Focal Points or are closely related. Specifically, it analyses the parallel sessions held on the morning of Tuesday, March 11, titled "IPBES and IPCC processes and opportunities for NFPs".[4] The report also covers the session organized by the RESPIN Function 4 group, "Raising awareness of IPBES and IPCC processes as National Focal Point," which offered valuable insights into the needs of NFPs and how RESPIN can support them. All analyses are based on notes taken by designated note-takers during these sessions.

These sessions began with a series of presentations, during which invited speakers shared their insights on the various topics. This was followed by a more interactive workshop segment. During event registration, participants were given the opportunity to express interest in presenting, allowing for a co-created format where many attendees contributed by sharing their experiences and engaging in discussions with the audience. Participants were not required to sign up for specific sessions in advance and were free to attend those of their choice. This approach was designed to encourage cross-participation and knowledge exchange between IPBES and IPCC National Focal Points.

For the interactive portion, the organizers chose a "fishbowl" format to facilitate dynamic and inclusive discussion. In this setup, four or five chairs were arranged in an inner circle (the fishbowl), surrounded by concentric circles of chairs for the rest of the participants. A few individuals were pre-selected to start in the fishbowl, while the rest of the group observed from the outer circle. One seat in the inner circle was intentionally left empty to allow any audience member to join the discussion at any time. When someone took the empty seat, an existing participant would voluntarily step out, keeping the conversation flowing and open to all.

3 ANALYSES OF NATIONAL FOCAL POINT'S ENGAGEMENT IN IPBES AND IPCC

This chapter presents background information on the National Focal Points who responded to the survey and offers an initial look at their experiences engaging with IPBES and IPCC. It is important to note that the data collected are limited and not representative of the full NFP community, as the survey was not specifically designed to capture their experiences in depth. In particular, with only ten IPCC NFPs responding, meaningful comparisons between IPCC and IPBES NFPs are challenging. Many more NFPs have been contacted and invited to fill in the survey, but they have not responded. Additionally, attempts to analyze results by participant characteristics such as age, gender, expertise (climate or biodiversity), or region (e.g., Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the African Region) were limited by the small dataset and did not yield meaningful comparisons. As such, all findings should be interpreted with caution, and no definitive conclusions can be drawn at this stage.

Nevertheless, the responses highlight several areas that warrant further exploration, such as potential correlations between gender, age, and the professional roles of NFPs; the relationship between the hosting institution and region; and how these factors influence engagement with knowledge holders. Additionally, NFPs' perspectives on barriers to cross-

[3] https://respin-project.eu/index.php/news-events/pesc-respin

[4] Please find the program, presentations and event report on the RESPIN website https://respin-project.eu/index.php/news-events/pesc-respin

platform collaboration—such as issues of timing, relevance, and terminology—as well as their broader experiences, including perceptions of politicization within the process, merit closer examination. These themes will be explored in greater detail in the next RESPIN work package 6, which will focus more directly on the roles and experiences of NFPs.

3.1 Understanding the role of NFPs

National Focal Points are central to the effective functioning of both the IPBES and IPCC platforms. While their role includes communicating national positions, it goes far beyond simply relaying political messages. NFPs act as crucial intermediaries between the international science-policy platforms and national systems. They ensure that their countries are not only represented in these global processes, but also actively engaged through expert contributions, coordinated national inputs, and the uptake of assessment findings into policy and practice. The following sections outline the core responsibilities of NFPs in both IPBES and IPCC, highlighting how they facilitate communication, mobilize expertise, coordinate review processes, and support implementation at national and regional levels.

The key role of the IPBES NFP is:

The role of an IPBES National Focal Point involves a broad range of responsibilities aimed at facilitating their country's effective engagement with the platform. NFPs are expected to stay informed through IPBES communications, such as notifications, the website, webinars, and social media, and act as the key liaison between the IPBES Secretariat and national stakeholders. They support the submission of government requests for new assessments or work programme elements, ensuring these reflect national priorities and policy needs. NFPs also coordinate the nomination of experts to IPBES assessments, task forces, and other groups, promoting diverse and qualified representation across sectors and knowledge systems. A critical part of their role is organizing national input on draft IPBES products—such as assessments and scoping reports—by gathering and consolidating expert feedback. In addition, NFPs help promote the uptake of IPBES findings in national policy and planning and may organize or support events to disseminate key outputs. Beyond these core functions, they contribute to capacity-building by nominating participants for fellowships and training, engaging in dialogue meetings, and supporting outreach efforts. NFPs also facilitate coordination between government departments and regional platforms, encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration. Lastly, they may help initiate or coordinate national or subregional assessments using IPBES methodologies and guidance.[5]

The key role of the IPCC NFP:

The role involves three key areas of responsibility: communication and coordination, expert nomination, and review of IPCC drafts. Firstly, the individual or body acts as the official communication channel between the IPCC Secretariat and the national government, ensuring that relevant updates and calls from the IPCC are effectively disseminated through tools such as mailing lists, public announcements, and web portals. Secondly, they are responsible for identifying and nominating national experts in climate science. This includes maintaining an up-to-date database of qualified experts, distributing calls for nominations through academic, governmental, and private sector networks, coordinating the nomination process—often in consultation with expert panels or independent reviewers—and submitting completed nominations, including CVs and required forms, to the IPCC Secretariat. Finally, the role includes organizing government reviews of IPCC draft reports by collecting and integrating

[5] https://files.ipbes.net/ipbes-web-prod-public-files/2021-11/2021_IPBES_NFP_Guide.pdf

government comments, with a focus on evaluating the scientific accuracy, completeness, and balance of the IPCC's work.[6]

In some cases, a single NFP may serve both IPBES and IPCC. This dual role can bring significant benefits by enhancing coordination, coherence, and efficiency in a country's engagement with these global science-policy platforms. It enables better integration of biodiversity and climate change considerations, promotes consistent messaging, and facilitates more streamlined communication across relevant ministries and stakeholders. By bridging the work of both platforms, a joint NFP can help align national priorities with international agendas, reduce duplication of efforts, and support more holistic, cross-sectoral policy development that reflects the interconnected nature of environmental challenges.

3.2 Participant's profile

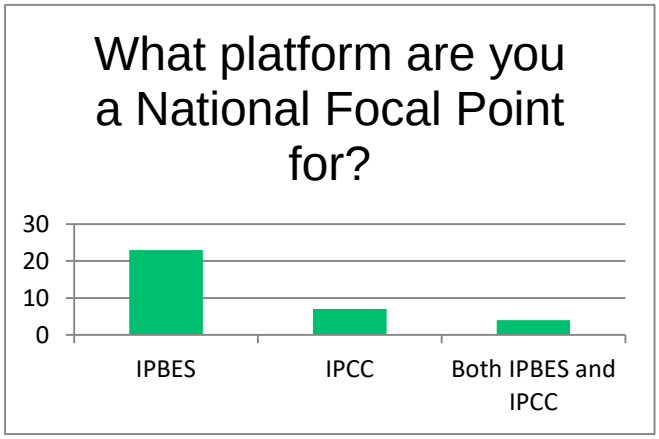

Figure 3: Responses indicating which platform the participant serves as the National Focal Point for. (N=34)

As shown in Figure 3, a total of 36 National Focal Points responded: 23 identified as representing IPBES, 7 as representing IPCC, and 4 as representing both IPBES and IPCC. However, upon reviewing the filtered survey responses and the profiles of the four individuals who indicated they represent both platforms, it appears that one response may have been incorrect. Therefore, the actual number of individuals representing both IPBES and IPCC is likely three.

Many more NFPs have been contacted and invited to fill in the survey, but they have not responded. Because the survey was anonymous we could not verify who filled the survey and if their answers are fully correct and coherent. Moreover, two respondents did not answer this question. Since the survey was conducted anonymously, we were unable to identify which platform these two non-respondents serve as National Focal Points for.

Figure 4 shows the overall gender distribution was balanced, although there were more male NFPs for IPBES and more female NFPs for IPCC.

	Male	**Female**
IPBES NFP	15	8
IPCC NFP	2	5
NFPs for both IPCC- IPBES	2	2
No response	2	0
Total	**21**	**15**

Table 1: Gender distribution of NFPs by Platform

[6] https://archive.ipcc.ch/pdf/ar5/ar5-fp-guidance.pdf

Regarding the NFPs origins and resident country (figure 4), 9 respondents indicated coming from the **WEOG region** (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland). 8 participants are coming from the **African Region** (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mauritania, Togo, United Republic of Tanzania), and another 8 are coming from the **Eastern European Region** (Armenia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine. Finally, 8 participants originate from **the Latin American region** (Colombia) and 2 from the **Asia Pacific region** (India, Indonesia). After seeking clarification from an IPBES NFP regarding the unexpectedly high number of NFPs responses from one specific country in Latin America, the NFP explained that there are, in fact, only two official IPBES NFPs and for one IPCC NFP. He suggested that the discrepancy might be due to members of the countries' IPBES National Committee responding to the survey on behalf of the Committee. However, the NFP clarified that this Committee functions as the national biodiversity platform and is not formally designated as the National Focal Point. The responses from these five individuals are still included in the subsequent analysis (except for table 2), as it is not possible to exclude ('filter') their inputs. Moreover, they may offer valuable insights based on their close collaboration with the IPBES National Focal Point.

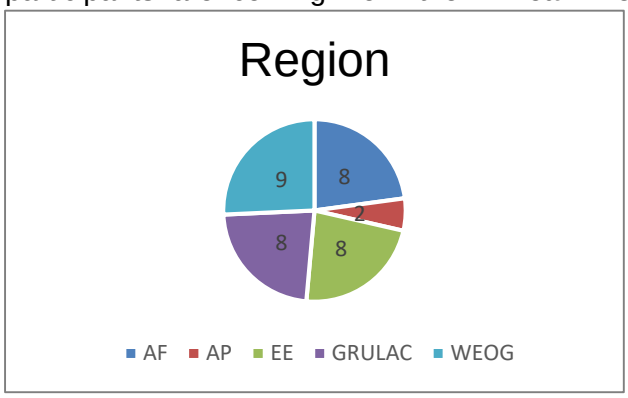

Figure 4: Participant's home region (N=36)

	WEOG	African Region	Eastern European Group	GRULAC	Asia Pacific
IPBES	3	8	6	2	2
IPCC	4	0	2	1	0
NFP for both	3	0	0	0	0

Table 2: Regional distribution of NFPs by platform

As shown in Table 2, there was greater representation of IPBES NFPs from the African and Eastern European groups, while IPCC NFPs were more prominently represented by the WEOG group.

Figure 5 shows that the majority of National Focal Points (11) fall within the 30 to 40 age range, followed closely by those aged 40 to 50 (10) and 50 to 60 (10). Only one NFP is under the age of 30, while three are over 60.

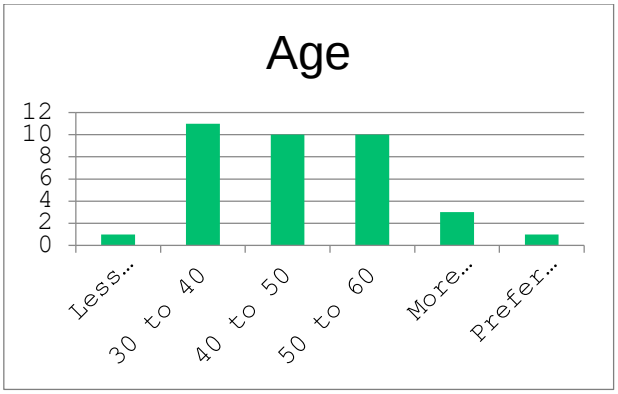

Figure 5: Participant's age (N=36)

3.3 Professional background and expertise

When asked to select the affiliation that corresponds mostly to their current activities, 42% of the respondents indicated that they are affiliated with academia or research institutions, while 61% work within government. A smaller proportion represent civil society organizations (5.5%) or the private sector (2.7%). The respondents had the option to tick several options.

	Academia or research institutions	Government
IPBES	9	16
IPCC	2	4
NFP for both	3	2

Table 3: NFP platform affiliation

As seen in table 3, the NFPs for IPBES are hosted more often by their government instead of by a research institution or academia. On the other hand, for IPCC it is less clear: IPCC NFPs are hosted more often by the Government, but this difference, with this limited amount of data, is rather negligible. In the question set-up, no distinction was made between a Ministry or a Government agency, so we do not have this information.

This issue of the hosting structure is already elaborated upon in deliverable D1.1.[7] In this deliverable, a landscape analysis was conducted to find out which structure hosted the National Focal Point for all countries in Western Europe (WE), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA), Colombia and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Ministry, Government agency, Research agency or university. It became clear that IPCC NFPs are in general mostly hosted by a Ministry (26 countries) or a government agency (21) and seven NFPs are hosted by a research institution. It is less clear for IPBES NFPs as for 15 of them we did not find information about their hosting organization or it was not relevant. 26 NFPs are hosted by Ministries, 9 by government agencies and 7 by research institutions. This is consistent with our observation in this deliverable, namely that IPBES NFPs are hosted more often by Governments. Potentially, this can limit the engagement with the research community in that respective country and the expert's participation in both processes, if we make the assumption that a research institution or a government agency is more likely to communicate about IPBES and IPCC with the research community in the country (for the call for experts, for the report's review but also for discussing the reports in Plenaries). However, this is an assumption that was not tested here and needs further research.

[7] Danner, M.-C., Jata, D., Elst, N., Morata N., Laureau, C. (2025). *Analysis of barriers, incentives and capacity building activities for knowledge holders to engage with IPBES and IPCC in target countries and regions*. Deliverable D1.1, EU Horizon Europe RESPIN Project, Grant agreement No 101135490, p. 12-14.

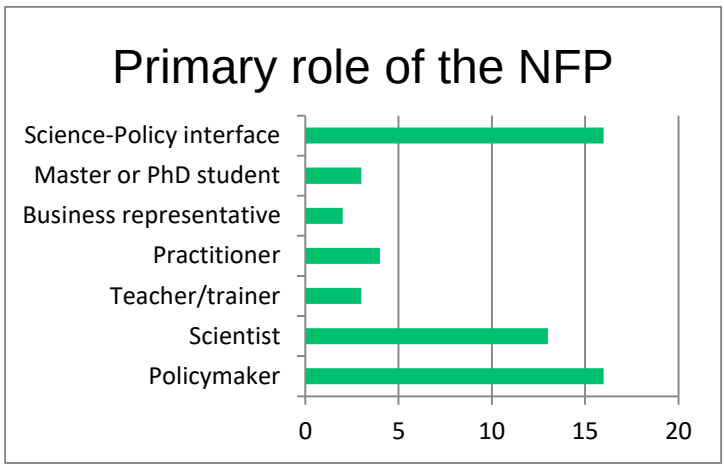

Figure 6. Responses indicating the primary role of the NFP (multiple options possible, N= 36)

National Focal Points are typically senior policy advisors with expertise in environmental science, international cooperation, or related fields. Their job titles range from directors and heads of units to scientists, (assistant) professors, and researchers. In terms of primary roles (figure 6), 16 NFPs identify as policymakers, another 16 operate at the science-policy interface, and 13 are primarily scientists. Fewer serve as practitioners (4) or teachers (3).

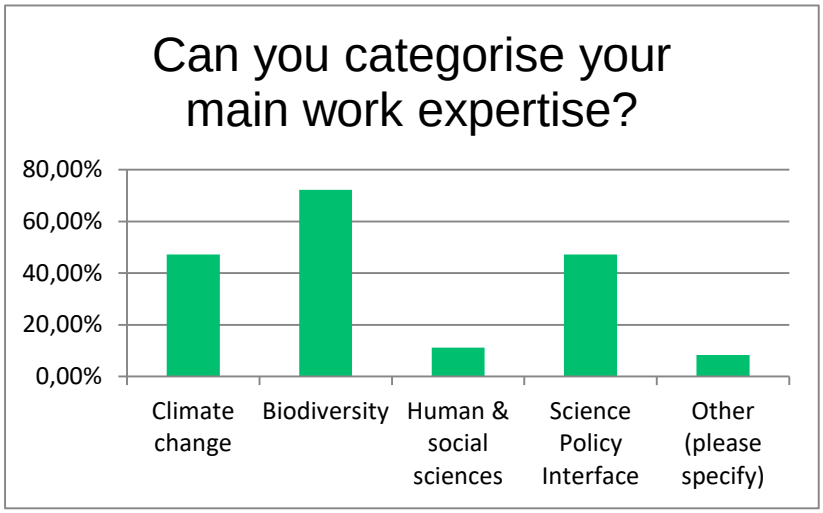

Figure 7. Responses indicating the main work expertise of the NFP (multiple options possible, N= 36)

As seen in figure 7, approximately 72% of National Focal Points have their **primary expertise** in the field of biodiversity, while 47% specialize in climate change and the science-policy interface. Another 11% are rooted in the human and social sciences. The survey results indicate that IPBES National Focal Points primarily have expertise in biodiversity (19), followed by science-policy interface (11), climate (8), and human and social sciences (3). In contrast, IPCC NFPs are predominantly specialized in climate (6), with limited expertise in the science-policy interface (2) and biodiversity (1).

When asking the respondents to share 1-5 key words to define their main research topic and field of expertise, it became clear that their areas of expertise span a broad range of **disciplines**, including modelling, monitoring, conservation, hydrology, protected areas, physical geography, landscape ecology, forestry, pollution, Indigenous knowledge and policy, research programming, and legislation.

Most NFPs (71%) placed their expertise at the national level. This is followed by 55% working at international or regional (sub-continental) levels, 21% engaged at the landscape or ecosystem scale (e.g., national parks, watersheds, coastal or protected areas), and another 21% operating at the local level (e.g., applied research with local organizations, towns, or provinces). Several respondents also emphasized that their work often spans multiple levels, integrating local, national, regional, and transboundary perspectives.

National Focal Points are primarily **motivated** to contribute to IPBES and IPCC by the potential to influence policymaking on biodiversity and climate change. Other key drivers include a strong belief in the relevance of their expertise, the opportunity to be part of a

politically endorsed knowledge synthesis processes, and the chance to build professional networks with other scientists and experts. The results also reveal that many NFPs have taken on additional roles within these platforms beyond their official functions in the Plenary. Their past contributions include serving as a coordinating lead author (1), as lead authors (4), contributing authors (4), review editors (3), task force members (3), and reviewers of draft documents (20).

The **engagement of experts** with the IPCC and IPBES process is analyzed in deliverable D1.1. However, when asking the question to the NFPs: "What challenges did you face when participating in IPBES and IPCC work?", these **challenges regarding process and funding** came up:

- Engaging and motivating experts to participate in IPBES activities, as there is a lack of awareness about the platform's importance, processes and timing.
- Ensuring the availability of sufficient resources for experts to attend IPBES events and workshops, and dealing with the limited capacity for experts to dedicate time to IPBES-related tasks which are of voluntary nature.
- Informing researchers how they can make their outputs/deliverables relevant in time and scope for IPBES and how to bring prioritisation into the identified research needs and knowledge gaps.

3.4 Cross-Platform and community collaboration

Out of the 34 respondents who answered this question, 20 National Focal Points for either IPBES or IPCC have already collaborated with the other platform, while 14 have not yet had that opportunity (figure 8).

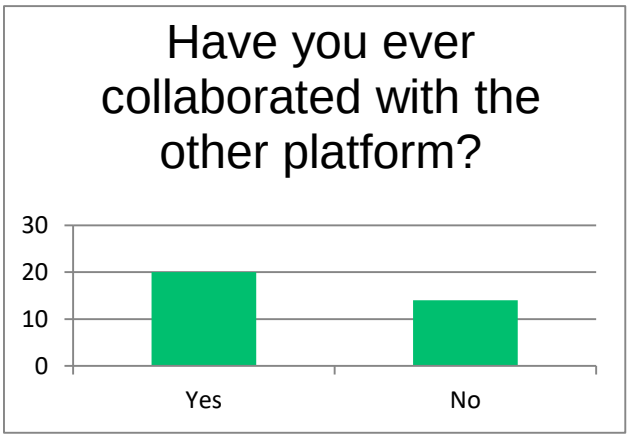

Figure 8: Responses indicating collaboration with other platforms. (N=34)

Of those that had already contribute to the other platform, 13 are IPBES NFPs and 4 IPCC NFPs.

Most collaborations took the form of attending a Plenary or COP (14), participating in dialogue workshops (11), and/or joining webinars (11). Additionally, 10 respondents contributed as reviewers of draft documents from the other platform, and 5 responded to calls for contributions. Beyond IPBES and IPCC, 23 of the 34 NFPs reported prior engagement with other international platforms such as the CBD or UNCCD, 13 had worked with the UNFCCC, and 7 indicated they had not collaborated with any other platform.

The National Focal Points are aware of the need for global collaboration on climate and biodiversity issues and interested to explore **possible ways for more collaboration**. When asking about practical suggestion to help built a stronger connection between IPBES and IPCC, respondents indicated the need for more:

- joint events (dialogues) (72%)
- joint communication on IPBES – IPCC (67%)
- stronger connection in research programming and funding (57.5%)
- stronger institutional ties between IPBES and IPCC platforms (48%)
- joint assessments (45%)

Additional written suggestions were made:

- Joint national workshops or meeting with the NFP for IPBES and IPCC, for example in preparation for a COP or a Plenary.
- Stronger involvement of the platforms in reviewing each other products to ensure consistency for instance in glossaries and coherence of the assessments to support policy making
- Strong need to have a better coordination between the two platforms to avoid meeting clashes. Scheduling conflicts between meetings limit expert participation in both platforms.
- More regional meetings for the exchange of best practices
- Organize joint seminars on biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation

Fifteen NFPs indicated that, in their country, knowledge holders such as Indigenous People and local communities (IPLCs) and researchers approach **biodiversity and climate change** differently, while 7— all IPBES NFPs—did not perceive such a distinction. Similarly, 18 NFPs observed a difference in how knowledge users, including policymakers and government actors, consider biodiversity and climate change, whereas 6 (again, all IPBES NFPs) reported no such difference.

When asking to explain the differences, following key points were shared:

- **Different knowledge systems**: IPLCs approach biodiversity and climate change holistically, rooted in traditional knowledge, while researchers and policymakers rely on scientific data and structured frameworks—highlighting the need for better integration of these perspectives.
- **Fragmentation among experts**: Researchers and knowledge users often work in silos, addressing biodiversity and climate change separately despite their interconnection, leading to limited cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- **Scale and policy differences**: Biodiversity solutions are typically more local and fragmented, involving multiple stakeholders and conventions, whereas climate change is addressed more uniformly under a single global framework, resulting in differing levels of policy uptake.
- **Priority and visibility gap**: Climate change receives more political and institutional attention than biodiversity, which is often reduced to physical conservation efforts, with limited application of social sciences and humanities insights.
- **Decision-maker perception**: Policymakers find climate change easier to understand and quantify (e.g., temperature rise), leading to a stronger influence from IPCC recommendations compared to those from IPBES, and a perception that climate issues are more urgent and concrete.

3.5 Engagement with knowledge holders

Of the 34 respondents, 25 reported **collaborating with knowledge holders** in their country through meetings, while 21 engaged through workshops and 8 through joint writing sessions (figure 9). No significant differences were observed between IPBES and IPCC NFPs in this regard. For both groups, workshops and meetings (or dialogues) emerged as the most common methods of engaging with knowledge holders in their respective countries. Only two IPBES National Focal Points (working in academia and for the government) indicated they had not directly collaborated with knowledge holders. This finding warrants further investigation, as it may reflect a genuine gap or a possible misunderstanding of the question.

In terms of information sharing, 82% of respondents use digital and online platforms—such as websites, social media, and newsletters—to disseminate knowledge. Additionally, 76% share information via official and formal documents (e.g., reports, policy briefs, position papers,

infographics) or through direct, interactive communication methods like emails, phone calls, webinars, expert consultations, and workshops.

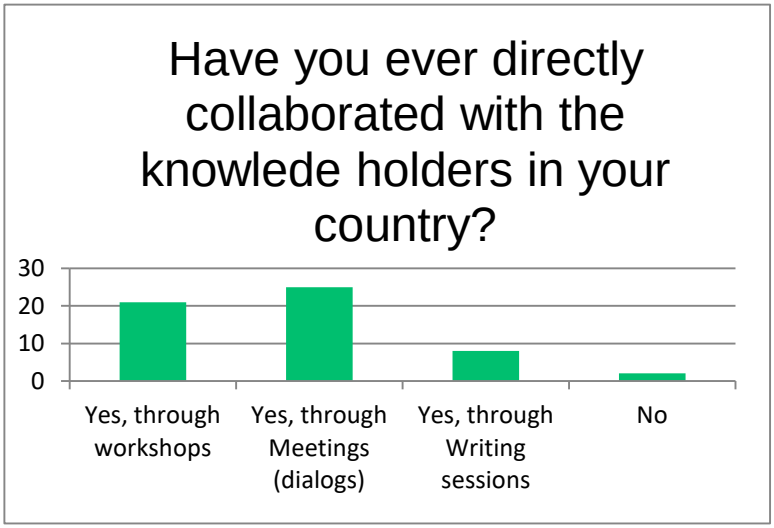

Figure 9: Responses indicating communications means with knowledge holders (multiple options possible, N=34).

3.6 Engagement with IPBES and IPCC processes

Participants were also asked if there were any aspects about IPBES/IPCC process that they would like to change to improve the platform, and most answers related to inclusivity, scientific integrity and politicization of the process, policy support and relevance and meeting efficiency:

These issues were raised specifically in relation to IPBES, though some may also be relevant to the IPCC context:

- Underrepresentation and integration of African experts and research
  - Concerns about the adequate inclusion of African experts.
  - The use and recognition of African research in assessments needs improvement.

- Enhancing Inclusivity through multilingual assessment processes
  - Participants highlighted language as a significant barrier to inclusive participation in IPBES processes. Currently, most activities and documents are available only in English, which poses challenges for non-English-speaking experts, as some French-speaking NFPs mentioned. To ensure broader and more equitable involvement, especially from underrepresented regions, it was suggested that the assessment process be conducted in all six official UN languages (from the production and not only during the discussion in Plenary). This would help enable diverse expertise and national perspectives to meaningfully contribute to and benefit from IPBES work.

- Scientific integrity
  - Need to protect the scientific integrity during the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) approval processes, as these are subject to line-by-line government approval. This means NFPs are involved in negotiation processes where scientific accuracy must coexist with political acceptability.

- Strengthening IPBES policy support and local capacity for practical impact
  - The policy support function and tools in IPBES need to be strengthened with specific advice to ensure assessments are practically useful for (sub)-national and local decision-making.
  - More targeted support for local experts and institutions, especially in data collection and handling and applying findings to local contexts. Suggestion for country- and region-specific training and resources, especially for applying IPBES results locally.
  - This was also addressed in a dialogue meeting with IPBES National Focal Points in December 2023. Participants noted there that supporting the uptake of IPBES assessments faces many different challenges, including lack of time, commitment and priority, inadequate financial resources, deficient expertise and lack of specialized knowledge on national strategies, policies and legislation, and a lack of links between the IPBES assessments and decisions under multilateral environmental agreements to foster effective implementation at the national level. [8]

These issues were raised specifically in relation to IPCC, though some may also be relevant to the IPBES context:

- Politicization
  - Politicization of content and procedures is seen as a challenge. Concerns were raised that government representatives often exert greater influence than scientific experts, which can undermine the integrity of the process. Additionally, one NFP noted that a small number of countries tend to dominate discussions, limiting broader participation. This causes some NFPs to find themselves navigating a complex space between science and diplomacy.
  - A call for greater flexibility in secretariat operations and procedures.

- Policy relevance
  - Understanding and extracting the relevant messages from IPCC for specific policy areas.

These issues were raised specifically in relation to both processes:

- More transparency in the review phase
  - While expert reviews are central to ensuring the credibility and quality of assessments, the current procedures can sometimes lack clarity—particularly regarding how comments are addressed and how final decisions are made.

- Meeting Efficiency and Preparation
  - Poor time management and lack of streamlined processes during meetings was mentioned as an issue.
  - Need for better preparation of documents prior to plenaries and more focused discussions during meetings. We can assume that the former applies slightly more for IPCC rather than IPBES, as the processes for IPBES are quite rigorous and the preparations extensive, whereas at IPCC, documents often arrive only very late.

[8] https://www.ipbes.net/events/dialogue-meeting-ipbes-national-focal-points

4 CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS OF THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

In addressing the capacity-building needs of the National Focal Points, our approach began with an analysis of the data collected through the survey to understand barriers and incentives to the engagement of knowledge holders in IPBES and IPCC processes. This initial step allowed us to gain valuable insights into the specific areas where support and development were most needed. Following this, we further enriched our understanding by incorporating observations and discussions from the PESC-RESPIN event. This event provided an important platform for direct engagement, enabling us to validate the survey findings and gather additional perspectives from stakeholders. Together, these two sources of information formed a comprehensive basis for identifying and prioritizing the capacity-building requirements of the NFPs.

4.1 Survey results

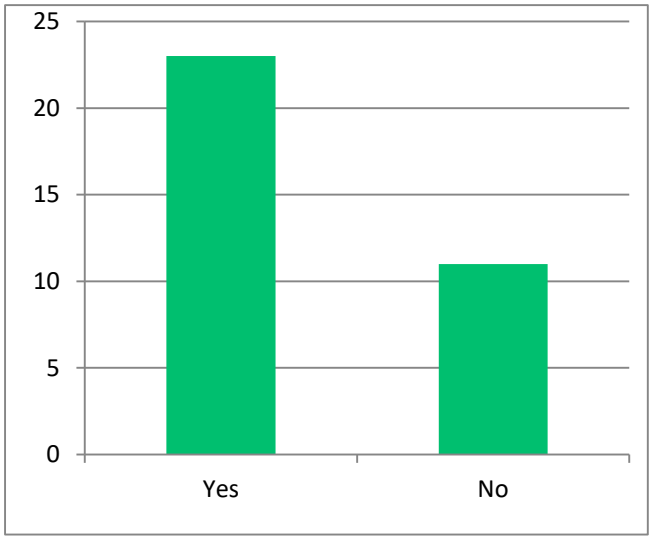

Figure 10: Responses indicating how many NFPs participated in capacity-building activities (N=34)

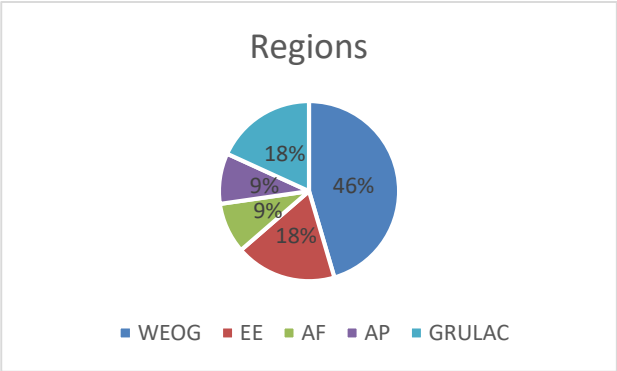

Figure 11: Responses indicating the regions where NFPs have reported not participating in any capacity-building activities

Out of the 34 respondents, 23 National Focal Points (NFPs) have **participated in capacity-building activities** (see figure 10). This group includes mainly IPBES NFPs (18), 3 IPCC NFPs, and 2 who serve as NFPs for both IPBES and IPCC. This means that out of all the IPBES NFPs who responded to the survey, 74% reported having participated in capacity-building activities, compared to 45% of IPCC NFP respondents. IPCC does not have a dedicated capacity-building function, unlike IPBES, so it makes sense that the number is higher for IPBES NFPs.

Meanwhile, 11 NFPs reported having **no prior experience with capacity-building initiatives**. As you can see on figure 11, these are mainly coming from the WEOG region (46%), the Eastern European group and the GRULAC group (both 18%), and finally from the African group and Asian Pacific group (both 9%).

Among these respondents, 7 are IPBES NFPs (26% of the IPBES NFPs respondents, coming from all regional groups), and 6 are IPCC NFPs (54% of the IPCC NFPs respondents, coming from WEOG countries, GRULAC and the Eastern European Group). It is not surprising that, proportionally, IPCC NFPs have less experience with capacity-building activities, given that IPBES has a dedicated capacity-building function, which likely addresses capacity-building needs of IPBES NFPs more effectively. On the other hand, IPCC has been operational 25 years before IPBES and more present in the media. We can assume that IPCC needs less

capacity-building activities to engage climate experts as they are more likely to know about the platform already. Moreover, IPCC experts are “easier to find”. IPCC author teams in past assessment cycles were dominated by scientists from the Global North whereas IPBES has been from the start more inclusive [9] of diverse knowledge systems, requiring more work to reach experts outside the Global North research community. [10]

The respondents were also asked to **cite the organization** who provided the capacity-building workshop. Various institutions where cited, including the IPBES Capacity-building Technical Support Unit (both in-person and online), CABES[11], the German Environment Agency, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (particularly for the Eastern European region), the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as training sessions focused on preparing IPBES national assessments. Again, unlike IPBES, IPCC currently does not offer any formal capacity-building activities to support expert engagement or strengthen the role of National Focal Points, so it makes sense that IPCC is not mentioned here. [12]

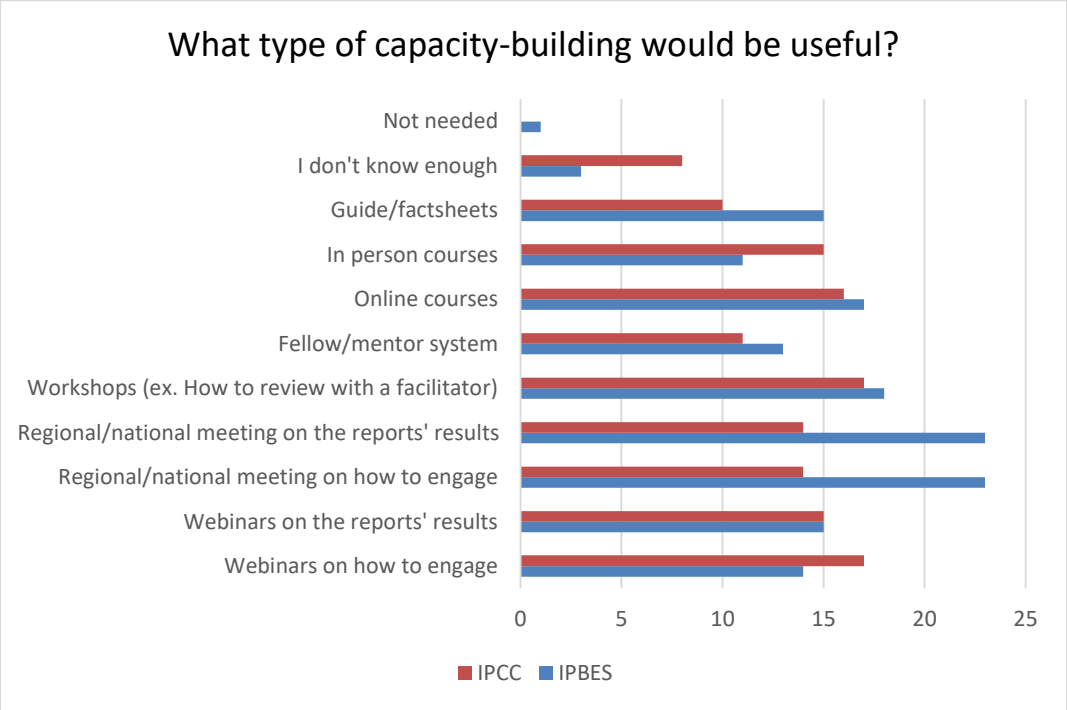

Figure 12: Responses indicating which type of capacity building would be useful (multiple options possible, N=34).

Based on responses from 34 participants, many National Focal Points expressed a strong interest in enhanced capacity-building activities (see figure 12). For **IPBES**, 23 NFPs highlighted the need for regional or national meetings focused on practical guidance—such as how to review an assessment or become an author. They also emphasized the value of

[9] McElwee, P. A tale of two panels: learning and coordinating across IPCC, IPBES, and other science-policy interfaces. Climatic Change 178, 45 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-025-03869-9
[10] Danner, M.-C., Jata, D., Elst, N., Morata N., Laureau, C. (2025). Analysis of barriers, incentives and capacity building activities for knowledge holders to engage with IPBES and IPCC in target countries and regions. Deliverable D1.1, EU Horizon Europe RESPIN Project, Grant agreement No 101135490
[11] CABES – Capacity Development for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Experts aims to develop and strengthen the capacity of professionals in biodiversity-related fields in West, Central, and East Africa to engage in the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.
[12] Klinsky, S., Sagar, A. Missing in action: capacity and capacity building in the IPCC’s AR 6. Climatic Change 177, 133 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-024-03746-x

meetings dedicated to discussing the findings of IPBES reports. Workshops, for example on how to review, were also considered interesting, as well as the use of guides/factsheets. In-person courses and fellow/mentorship programs were less popular. When comparing the need of the different regions, following results came up:

African countries show the highest overall interest in capacity-building support, particularly through regional and national meetings, workshops, in-person and online courses, and webinars focused on report results. Eastern European countries also express a strong need for support, especially in the form of regional and national meetings, webinars on how to engage, workshops, and access to guides and factsheets. In Latin America and the Caribbean—primarily represented by Colombia—there is notable interest in guides and factsheets, alongside an interest across most other types of support activities. The Asia-Pacific region, represented only by Indonesia, shows interest specifically in regional and national meetings related to report results. Finally, countries in Western Europe tend to prioritize coordination and networking activities, with particular interest in regional and national meetings. Additional data would help refine regional priorities.

Similarly, for **IPCC**, 17 NFPs indicated that webinars on engagement—covering review processes and authorship—would be highly beneficial (figure 10). An equal number (17) supported the idea of guided workshops, where facilitators could walk participants through a collective review session. There is strong interest in both online and in-person courses, as well as in webinars focused on report results. National and regional meetings are also seen as valuable, though slightly less so compared to IPBES-related activities. On the other hand, fellowship and mentorship programs are among the less frequently requested forms of support. Similarly, guides and factsheets received relatively little interest, in contrast to their higher popularity under the IPBES activities.

The regional analysis of capacity-building needs for IPCC reveals that African countries demonstrate the highest overall demand, particularly for in-person courses, local meetings (for both engagement and report results), and online courses. WEOG countries show significant interest in webinars on how to engage, suggesting a preference for virtual, knowledge-sharing formats. However, their interest in in-person courses and local meetings is noticeably lower, indicating potentially greater existing capacity or alternative means of engagement. Eastern European countries display a balanced interest across most activities, especially in webinars on report results and workshops, pointing to a need for both technical updates and collaborative learning environments. Latin America and the Caribbean shows consistent demand across activities, with particular emphasis on webinars on report results, workshops, in-person courses, and the fellow/mentor system. Asia-Pacific, with only two countries represented, shows limited but consistent interest across multiple categories, except for guides/factsheets.

Overall, there were no major differences in the types of support preferred across the two platforms. Only one IPBES NFP from a WEOG country felt no additional capacity-building was needed, possibly due to already established national mechanisms.

4.2 PESC-RESPIN workshop (10/03-13/03)

In addition to the survey, we explored and analyzed the capacity-building needs of the National Focal Points during some of the workshop sessions at our PESC-RESPIN event, which took place in Brussels, from the 10th-13th of March 2025. At the same time, this event served as an early contribution to addressing the questions and barriers identified by NFPs, by providing a platform for discussion, sharing best practices and providing cross-learning opportunities.

The RESPIN project, together with the ECA Network[13] and Biodiversa+[14], co-organized the 8th Pan-European Stakeholder Consultation (PESC 8) for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The full event report can be downloaded on the RESPIN website.

It was the first time that the PESC (Pan-European Stakeholder Consultation for IPBES) meeting was co-organized with an EU-funded program like RESPIN, and hence the first time that both the biodiversity and climate communities were invited together at a PESC event.

This event brought together stakeholders, including National Focal Points of IPBES and IPCC, experts, and organizations working at the science-policy interface on biodiversity and climate change in Europe and Central Asia. 113 experts participated in the event.

It provided opportunities for:

- Networking and exchange on key topics related to engagement with IPBES and IPCC.
- Promoting stakeholders' engagement in IPBES and IPCC processes.
- Strengthening collaboration on biodiversity and climate research at the pan-European level.

A diverse range of sessions and interactive workshops took place, covering various topics of interest. These included sessions focused on the processes and opportunities available for IPCC and IPBES National Focal Points and experts, discussions on policy uptake and existing information processes, and presentations on recent or ongoing IPBES and IPCC assessments. Additionally, there were sessions dedicated to exploring the development of educational materials and other potential capacity-building activities. The event also featured presentations on related EU sister projects (COOP-4CBD[15], Biodiversa+ Knowledge Hub , BiodivClim[16], etc.), as well as panel discussions examining the interconnections between climate change and biodiversity.

Key outcomes included:

- Better understanding of IPBES and IPCC processes and opportunities.
- Shared experience and strategies on contributing to the IPBES and IPCC processes.
- Knowledge exchange regarding interlinkages of biodiversity and climate change and strengthening the connection between the biodiversity and climate research communities and facilitating the exchange of experiences.
- Information on capacity building opportunities for knowledge holders and forms of engagement.

The meeting also contributed indirectly to:

- Improving international processes of IPBES and IPCC, both in the preparation of reports by experts and in their adoption by decision-makers.

[13] The Europe and Central Asia network of organisations engaging in IPBES brings together the IPBES national focal points (NFP) and the national biodiversity platforms in Europe working at the science-policy interface in the biodiversity arena to connect the national scientific community, the administrative and political actors, and other stakeholders in these countries. https://www.eca-ipbesnetwork.org/

[14] Biodiversa+ is the European co-funded biodiversity partnership supporting excellent research on biodiversity with an impact for policy and society. https://www.biodiversa.eu/

[15] CO-OP4CBD enhances coordination within the European Union (EU) in advancing the implementation of the Convention of Biological Diversity by harnessing effectively the knowledge of EU experts. https://coop4cbd.eu/

[16] https://www.biodiversa.eu/engagement/biodivclim-knowledge-hub/

- Enhancing the content of IPBES and IPCC reports, particularly through better mutual integration of biodiversity and climate issues and improved dialogue between decision-makers' expectations and the reality of experts' work.
- Enhancing the processes for mobilizing experts and institutions to increase the engagement of the pan-European expert community within these platforms
- Improving stakeholder integration and considering local actors' knowledge in international expert assessments and decision-making processes.

15 National Focal Points from IPBES participated in the event, from the following countries: (Bosnia and Herzegovina, two representatives from the European Commission, North Macedonia, Portugal, Bulgaria, Republic of Moldova, Czech Republic, Belgium, Armenia, UK, Switzerland). Moreover, two representatives from the European Commission participated in their role as National Focal Points for the Commission. 9 IPCC National Focal Points were present, from Greece, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Ireland, Belgium, France, and Switzerland. One of these representatives served as an acting NFP for IPCC. Two participants participated in their double role as NFPs for biodiversity and climate.

In the following subchapter, the outcomes and key discussions from the PESC-RESPIN meeting held are presented. Particular focus is given to the parallel sessions that took place on Tuesday morning, as well as a dedicated session organized by the Function 4 group.

4.2.1 Workshop discussions and results

4.2.1.1 Workshop session on engaging with IPBES as a National Focal Point

This session series was named 'processes and opportunities for NFPs', and consisted of two parts: a first session in which various presentations were held, followed by a second workshop session. It was organized on the second day of the PESC-RESPIN event, in parallel with the other sessions for IPCC NFPs and for experts (see 4.2.1.2).

Part one

The first presentation session was facilitated by Axel Paulsch (Institute for Biodiversity Network, RESPIN coordination team at UfZ) and was attended by around 25 participants. The session began with a series of presentations by three speakers, aimed at familiarizing participants with the fundamental processes of IPBES.

David Gonzalez (IPBES secretariat) introduced the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and its rolling work program up to 2030, highlighting opportunities for National Focal Points (NFPs) and experts. This was followed by **Diem Hong Tran**' presentation (IPBES Secretariat, Technical support unit on capacity-building) on the importance of stakeholder engagement and capacity building, particularly through the IPBES Technical Support Unit (TSU) for capacity building. **Helena Freitas** (University of Coimbra) then discussed the impact of IPBES and IPCC on environmental policies in Portugal, and explored potential actions to promote collaboration between IPCC and IPBES in Portugal.

The discussion that followed covered a broad range of perspectives on the relevance of IPBES assessments. There was a general understanding that these assessments inform government decisions, academic research, local communities, scientific media, and the private sector. It was highlighted that IPBES is transforming scientific production itself, by fostering interdisciplinary approaches, leading to greater integration of non-biodiversity sectors like health and agriculture. Moreover, it plays a key role in identifying and addressing knowledge gaps. The importance of translating IPBES knowledge for broader audiences, including schools and financial institutions, was underscored as well. The discussion ended with some

concerns about (the lack of) private-sector involvement in global biodiversity policy discussions and the financial constraints to make real change.

Part two

The following fishbowl discussion, which was attended by around 25 participants, focused on capacity building needs, cooperation between experts and National Focal Points and engaging stakeholders. The following potential topics for discussion were identified in advance, but participants were allowed to raise other discussion points as well.

- IPBES Nexus Assessment
- Capacity building needs for the Eastern European countries
- Cooperation with Academia
- Survey suggestions: how to engage the local communities with the process

First of all, **Mihaela Antofie** (Member of the MEP Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Romania), highlighted the urgent need for enhanced capacity-building structures across Europe and Central Asia, emphasizing the importance of bottom-up approaches to complement traditional top-down strategies, where solutions originate from the regions. She underscored the challenges posed by Romania's complex governance structure and advocated for directives to support IPBES and its capacity-building efforts. **Hristina Prodanova** (Scientific IPBES NFP, Bulgaria), addressed barriers such as frequent government changes and outdated curricula, emphasizing the role of scientific expertise and knowledge-sharing platforms like the Esmeralda[17] and Selina projects [18](two Horizon Europe projects). She stressed the importance of education as a crucial element for capacity-building, as well as non-formal education initiatives, such as the development of field study methodologies with modern apps to bridge knowledge gaps. She also raised the idea of establishing two focal points: one political and one scientific, to bridge expertise in ministries and scientific communities.

Anna Heck (IPBES NFP, Belgium) showcased the benefits of national platforms in bridging biodiversity research and policy. The science-policy interface in Belgium connects different regions and research communities. The national platform supports the NFP and fosters biodiversity policy beyond isolated scientific communities. Another way to integrate different sectors is to utilize the recent Nexus and Transformative Change Assessments[19], and facilitate the uptake of these findings in different sectors. The week following the PESC-RESPIN event, on March 19th, the Belgian National Focal Point organized an event called Belgian IPBES Day[20]. The purpose of this event was to facilitate discussions on the IPBES assessments and explore ways to integrate their recommendations into participants' work. Experts from the climate change, health, and food sectors were also invited, aiming to foster cross-sector collaboration.

[17] The ESMERALDA project (Enhancing ecoSysteM sERvices mApping for poLicy and Decision mAking) was a Horizon 2020-funded initiative aimed at supporting EU Member States in implementing Action 5 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. Its primary goal was to develop a flexible and integrated methodology for Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services (MAES), facilitating sustainable decision-making across various policy areas such as planning, agriculture, climate, water, and nature conservation. http://www.esmeralda-project.eu/showpage.php?storyid=11754

[18] The SELINA project (Science for Evidence-based and sustainabLe decIsions about NAtural capital) is a five-year initiative (July 2022 – June 2027) funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme. https://project-selina.eu/

[19] IPBES 2024. Nexus assessment and Transformative Change Assessment. https://www.ipbes.net/nexus-assessment and https://www.ipbes.net/transformative-change-assessment

[20] https://www.biodiversity.be/6084

Marie-Hélèn Schwoob (Deputy of IPCC focal point, France) detailed the IPCC's involvement in national IPBES knowledge exchange initiatives in France. She also stressed the importance of the Knowledge Generation Catalysis TSU's work on identifying and addressing knowledge gaps highlighted by IPBES. **Gilles Doignon** (leader of biodiversity team in RTD, representative from European Commission) highlighted geopolitical challenges and the necessity for pragmatic biodiversity actions, urging greater European coordination in global biodiversity efforts.

The discussion reinforced the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, evidence-based policy, and integration of biodiversity and climate considerations across sectors, with **national platforms** playing a pivotal role in achieving these goals. This session primarily focused on providing concrete ideas for how a National Focal Point can organize him/herself at the national level through platforms, addressing the challenges posed by complex governance structures. It also explored how the NFP can facilitate collaboration between the climate and biodiversity research communities and decision-makers.

4.2.1.2 Workshop session on engaging with IPCC as a National Focal Point

Part one

Facilitated by Nathalie Morata (FRB), this session was attended by 17 participants. It began with a series of presentations from three speakers, designed to introduce participants to the key processes of the IPCC.

Philippe Tulkens (European Commission) presented the IPCC process and opportunities for National Focal Points. He presented the special role of EU as an "observer" who can vote, and be a provider of knowledge in an IPCC report. He gave an overview of the key responsibilities of the EU NFPs working in the EU commission, then summarized key opportunities, the benefits and challenges. Some of the benefits of the EU participating in IPCC are maximizing the impact of EU science, increasing the relevance of EU R&I programming, and acknowledgment of EU leadership, whereas the challenges are for example the difficulties to reform the governance in IPCC and IPBES, increased politization and the difficult integration of Social Sciences and Humanities. Finally, he presented a slide on how RESPIN can help the National Focal Points. Some of the key suggestions included:

- Scientific and technical support to the EU delegation and Member States (MS) if they are interested
- Suggestions regarding better IPCC-IPBES cooperation (ahead of IPCC P-63 and beyond)
- Informing the MS not present in the Plenaries (if they are interested) on key issues
- Proposals on how to improve the governance of IPCC and IPBES respectively
- Training sessions in the EC and MS administration to prepare the representatives for IPCC and IPBES meetings
- Training sessions to scientists involved in IPCC and IPBES meetings on how to work in science-policy interfaces

Gerrit Hansen (IPCC WGI Technical Support Unit) presented the topic of Stakeholder engagement and capacity building in IPCC, noting that IPCC does not have an official mandate to provide capacity-building as such. She gave an overview of what IPCC does have to do to improve the readability and accessibility of the material that they have, such as the "outreach materials" made by the IPCC secretariat (factsheets, flyers), their office for climate education, stakeholder webinars etc. Moreover, she noted that the Secretariat organizes

introductory sessions for newly appointed NFPs. Finally, she emphasized the value of hosting IPCC events to build capacity as a National Focal Point and to attract media attention.

Finally, the third speaker, **Sebastian Koenig (NFP Switzerland),** presented a case study on Switzerland's engagement with the IPCC and the role of governments. As a National Focal Point, it is essential to understand the general procedures within the UN and key transversal governance issues. The IPCC Panel operates by consensus to decide on the organization's budget, work programme, and matters related to its principles, procedures, elections, and the structure and mandate of its Working Groups and Task Forces. He also presented the interplay at national level, and shared an example on how Switzerland uses IPCC at national level for climate scenarios.

Part two

Next, a fishbowl discussion was held, with 17 participants, focusing on capacity-building needs, cooperation between experts and National Focal Points, and exploring how to integrate different types of knowledge. Following topics of discussions were shared in advanced, but participants were free to raise other points as well:

- Coordination with research and education centres, cooperation with academia
- Climate communication
- Shaping climate policy in your country
- Survey suggestions: How to incorporate other types of knowledge, more transparency on the dissemination of information from NFP to experts

The discussion first revolved around the challenges of integrating climate and biodiversity science into national and subnational policymaking, a challenge that is frequently mentioned by National Focal Points. One participant highlighted the importance of shaping IPCC products to target specific audiences, noting the difficulty of translating global scientific assessments into national contexts. Another participant emphasized the challenge of making important findings relevant at the national level, and stressed that subnational levels often lack meaningful data. A National Focal Point shared his experience organizing a national uptake event on the Nexus assessment. Despite inviting climate scientists, attendance was low, likely due to the perceived lack of relevance to their own work. It appears that the biodiversity community often engages the same audience, with little clarity on how to effectively involve the climate community. Informal platforms that bring together both IPCC and IPBES NFPs on a national level were viewed as a promising initiative to foster greater collaboration.

Participants also highlighted the challenges of engaging social scientists in contributing to IPCC assessments. To involve more experts, it was suggested that outreach efforts be made to universities through letters, as this would be a cost-effective and straightforward approach. Regarding NGOs, NFPs see their eagerness to contribute, but also pointed out the challenges that they face regarding generating academic-level products that meet the standards for IPCC. The barriers to using grey literature are a lot greater in IPCC compared to IPBES, as authors need to really showcase why they want to use a certain non-academic source. Several participants emphasized the importance of effective communication with NGOs at the national level and their inclusion in decision-making processes.

Participants shared their national initiatives and best practices, including the creation of a youth board initiative by UNICEF to engage young people in climate discussions. Another participant also highlighted the development of interactive tools and assessments designed to integrate local and national contexts into the IPCC's global framework. One participant shared how their country's National Ecosystem Assessment utilized infographics to raise awareness and engage diverse stakeholders.

A representative from IPBES suggested sharing best practices among National Focal Points to ease the workload and encourage more widespread engagement, such as by creating templates for invitations or policy briefs. A participant praised IPBES for its use of factsheets for policy, which he/she felt could serve as an example for the IPCC to improve its communication. Another participant suggested that doctoral schools and universities could be key in disseminating IPBES and IPCC findings, as they often include compulsory courses on climate change and biodiversity.

Discussions about using AI to streamline access to reports were also brought up. While AI could facilitate easier extraction and analysis of information, some participants, including a representative from the European Commission, raised concerns about the accuracy and verification of AI-generated data, especially when it comes to nuanced and complex scientific language. Despite these challenges, AI was seen as a potential tool to assist in integrating climate data and improving accessibility, particularly for non-English-speaking regions.

4.2.1.3 Workshop session on raising awareness of IPBES and IPCC processes as National Focal Point

This session was facilitated by the Function 4 leads of the RESPIN project, namely **Jennifer Hauck** (CoKnow) and **Claire Brown** (UNEP-WCMC). The session was attended by 14 participants.

Following details about the session were shared in advance:

- Introduce and present a factsheet that answers the critical question: “How do I engage as an expert with IPBES/IPCC?”
- Highlight the complementary online courses that will provide deeper, structured learning aligned with the factsheet content. Actively gather participant priorities to shape the course content.
- Discussion on the questions “How to find experts for IPBES/IPCC” and “How to motivate experts to get/stay engaged”/”What are the benefits of getting engaged in IPBES/IPCC?”

The discussion centred around how **RESPIN can engage with the IPBES and IPCC processes**, focusing on how to showcase their work and support expert involvement. The goal of this session was to refine the content based on participant input to make the materials more useful for potential contributors, especially National Focal Points and experts.

RESPIN is developing **factsheets** and **online courses** to help experts engage with these processes. There will be 4 factsheets in total, namely:

- IPBES and IPCC assessments explained – how do I engage as an expert?
- Key IPBES and IPCC messages for private-sector decision-makers
- Shared strategies for climate and biodiversity protection
- Closing the gaps: how the RESPIN Project unites IPBES and IPCC experts

In terms of online courses, RESPIN is developing three self-paced courses on **‘linking climate change and biodiversity communities’** hosted on the Learning for Nature platform[21]: one introducing IPBES and IPCC, another on the interlinkages between climate change and biodiversity, and a third on how to use the assessments from both organizations. The courses will be free, long-term, and available to anyone, with an emphasis on high-quality

[21] https://www.learningfornature.org/en/

content that integrates multiple learning elements. Participants were encouraged to brainstorm ways to enhance these courses for maximum impact.

The conversation also addressed the challenges of identifying and motivating experts, particularly in developed vs. developing countries. Strategies that were suggested include using social media, leveraging National Platforms, and engaging NGOs to identify potential contributors. NFPs can contact institutions directly to identify experts and provide draft letters and practical advice to encourage their involvement. Motivating experts involves showcasing the impact of their contributions, providing testimonials from previous contributors, and ensuring transparency about the time commitment.

Managing expectations around the nomination and selection process was discussed as a crucial element to maintaining transparency and engagement. One approach could be to accompany letters of non-selection with a list of alternative opportunities for involvement, ensuring that nominees remain engaged and encouraged to contribute in other ways. This could include roles in expert workshops, review processes, or outreach/uptake activities, providing meaningful avenues for participation beyond the initial selection. By offering clear guidance on other ways to engage, the process can feel more inclusive and constructive, fostering continued interest and collaboration within the scientific and policy communities.

There was another suggestion to include training for experts on the political meaning of some sensitive terms, to know how to navigate certain discussions in plenary.

Marketing and communication strategies were discussed, noting that many researchers are unaware of IPBES and IPCC, and more targeted outreach is needed. The upcoming second Global Assessment and the 7th Assessment Cycle were identified as good opportunities to explain the importance of IPBES and IPCC and attract expert participation. Finally, it was emphasized that understanding the IPBES process, including its conceptual framework and timeline, as well as the IPCC process, is essential for experts. The courses and materials should clarify these aspects to ensure potential contributors are prepared for the commitment involved.

4.3 Conclusion

The survey highlights concrete capacity-building tools and activities needed by NFPs to better engage with IPBES and IPCC, with a focus on training, guidance, and awareness-raising.

The PESC-RESPIN event builds on this by emphasizing systemic and structural challenges, such as weak cross-sector collaboration, lack of national platforms, difficulties around engaging experts and governance complexity. It also points to broader opportunities, such as bridging biodiversity and climate communities and localizing outputs to ensure relevance.

Both sources underscore the value of regional cooperation, but the event brings a more systemic lens, highlighting institutional and policy-level enablers for the NFPs effectiveness.

5 GENERAL RECOMMANDATIONS AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT FOR THE NFPs

As the role of the National Focal Point continues to evolve in a rapidly changing policy and operational landscape, it's important to assess how the NFPs can enhance effectiveness and impact. This involves examining not only the core tasks and responsibilities of the NFPs—such as coordination, communication, and implementation—but also the key challenges faced in carrying them out. By identifying areas for improvement, understanding the obstacles

encountered, and exploring best practices, RESPIN can develop **actionable recommendations** to support NFPs in fulfilling their roles more efficiently and strategically.

Below is a list of **general recommendations and key areas for improvement** identified by RESPIN, based on the survey results as well as on the questions, concerns, insights and best practices shared by participants throughout the discussion during the event. These recommendations should be considered alongside Chapter 3.1, which provides insights into the role and tasks of NFPs. The list below provides practical guidance on how to effectively perform certain tasks and increase overall impact as an NFP.

Stakeholder engagement and communication

- Clearly **communicate the relevance and policy impact** of IPBES/IPCC assessments to national ministries, institutions, and policymakers, to increase the profile of IPBES and IPCC within these organisations.
- Target **doctoral schools and universities** by sending standard outreach letters to university management or relevant faculties, for them to learn about IPBES and IPCC and the value of having their experts contribute to the process.
- Showcase the **impact** of expert contributions, offer **testimonials**, and ensure **transparency** around time commitments. This can be done through various channels, such as webinars, events, social media and mailing lists.
- Disseminate calls for expert nominations and updates through **social media** and institutional mailing lists, and review and support expert nominations in time. NFPs are responsible for disseminating information through various channels—including notifications, websites, mailing lists, webinars, and social media—to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.
- Proactively engage **underrepresented experts** (e.g., urban planners, engineers, private sector actors, social scientists) by tailoring communication, leveraging existing networks, organizing inclusive consultations and highlighting practical relevance.
- Promptly communicate with applicants post-nomination to **explain** the assessment process and manage expectations.
- Accompany **letters of non-selection** with a list of alternative opportunities for involvement, ensuring that nominees remain engaged and encouraged to contribute in other ways. This could include roles in expert workshops, review processes, or outreach/uptake activities, providing meaningful avenues for participation beyond the initial selection.
- Provide experts with an understanding of the **political significance** of certain terms to help them navigate discussions in plenary more effectively. This includes training on politically sensitive topics for both NFPs and experts, such as agreed (UNFCCC and CBD) convention language which can carry political sensitivities. This could be supported by RESPIN, which may develop customized materials or online courses on the topic.
- Organize **translation** of key IPBES/IPCC documents into national languages where resources allow, as the secretariats of these bodies have no resources to do translation into languages beyond the six UN languages.

Institutional support

- NFPs could engage **directly with institutions** to encourage the participation of experts, offering draft letters and guidance to facilitate institutional support.
- Emphasize the **benefits** of participation to institutions (e.g., insights brought back, strategic positioning and enhanced national visibility) and showcase the **policy impact** of IPBES and IPCC assessments.
- Conduct outreach to **young and first-time applicants**, especially those without existing IPBES/IPCC connections.
- Encourage **practitioners** from sectors such as finance and the private industry to apply for IPBES and IPCC nominations.

Governance

- **National platforms** can support NFPs in nominations, expert coordination, policy outreach, and logistics (e.g., help with organizing the worktime of selected experts, refunding travel expenses if feasible).[22]
- These platforms should include **both scientists and policymakers** to better mainstream IPBES/IPCC outputs nationally.
- Consider appointing both **a political and a scientific NFP** to strengthen coordination between the policy and scientific communities. Alternatively, designating **a single NFP** to represent both IPBES and IPCC can also offer substantial advantages by improving coordination, ensuring coherence, and increasing the efficiency of national engagement with these global science-policy platforms.
- Host **IPCC or IPBES events** to increase visibility, build capacity nationally and encourage the use of assessment findings in policy and planning.

Interdisciplinary collaboration

- Encourage **collaboration between the IPBES and IPCC NFPs** through:
    - National IPBES/IPCC days
    - Joint events and scientific seminars on cross-cutting issues (e.g., nature-based solutions, climate resilience)
    - Shared communication platforms and informal networks. For example, a joint IPCC-IPBES communication platform can make reports and recommendations accessible to decision-makers and the public
- Facilitate **government-wide briefings** involving various ministries (e.g., ecology, climate, planning) to present integrated science-policy insights.
- Develop and disseminate **educational materials** highlighting climate-biodiversity interlinkages, with the support of RESPIN or other related initiatives.
- Target **key audiences** such as schools, farmers, and local communities through awareness campaigns.

Uptake

[22] IPBES is already promoting the establishment of national and/or (sub)regional platforms and equipping them with technical tools, building institutional and individual capacity and fostering peer exchange. https://www.ipbes.net/national-regional-platforms-networks

- Organize **briefings** to facilitate that policymakers read the assessments and tailor presentations to national and regional priorities. Instead of repeatedly inviting the same audience, expand the reach by incorporating experts from other fields.

- Work with stakeholders to identify how assessments can inform strategies (e.g., NBSAPs) and how to make important findings relevant at the national or regional level. [23] Foster regional dialogues to adapt assessment findings.

- Use tools like the RESPIN practical guide developed by Function 2 on how to organize subnational workshops and engagement efforts.[24]

6 ACTION POINTS FOR RESPIN TO SUPPORT THE NFPS

Based on the survey responses, PESC-RESPIN discussions, and emerging stakeholder needs, the following action points are proposed for RESPIN to support NFPs in the next phase of the project. RESPIN can build upon existing initiatives and upcoming plans, while also addressing gaps in capacity-building materials—such as developing additional factsheets and organizing more local meetings.

In terms of capacity building materials, RESPIN can:

- Create a **webinar on institutional support**, complemented by additional interviews to collect best practices and incentives for experts (from various disciplines) to engage. Moreover, RESPIN can help with writing draft letters to institutions or create factsheets for institutions on the added value of contributing to IPBES/IPCC. A webinar was already organized the 5th of June 2025 (see chapter 7.3).

- Support with **communicating the findings of the IPBES/IPCC assessments** to a wider audience, for example by creating an easy-to-read '**summary for citizens'** based on approved IPBES and IPCC assessments. As stated in McElwee (2025): "Increased targeted communication, such as a "Summary for Youth" or "Summary for Farmers" have been suggested to "further amplify IPCC findings to these communities" (IPCC 2023, p. 19).[25] This could be explored as part of RESPIN Work Package 9, which includes the development of a range of educational products and materials—such as documents, videos, audio content, fact sheets, and podcasts—focused on the newly approved assessments of IPBES and IPCC.

- Develop additional **webinars or materials** focused on expert engagement, including topics like review processes and authorship. Moreover, design **online courses and factsheets** to engage more NFPs, institutions, and experts, and inform them about processes, uptake of assessment outcomes, and the interconnections between climate and biodiversity. RESPIN is already developing factsheets and online courses to help experts engage with these processes. There will be 4 factsheets in total, namely: "IPBES and IPCC assessments explained – how do I engage as an expert?"; "Key IPBES and IPCC messages for private-sector decision-makers"; "Shared

[23] An example of such an uptake dialogue can be found in the **report of the dialogue meeting with IPBES national focal points,** in which participants were invited to brainstorm in different discussion groups on how they could find ways to promote the uptake of the Invasive Alien Species Assessment in their own countries and respective regions. https://www.ipbes.net/events/dialogue-meeting-ipbes-national-focal-points

[24] A *RESPIN Framework for effective workshops: a practical guide*, is developed by Function 2 group of the project and will be shared soon on the RESPIN website.

[25] McElwee, P. A tale of two panels: learning and coordinating across IPCC, IPBES, and other science-policy interfaces. Climatic Change 178, 45 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-025-03869-9

strategies for climate and biodiversity protection"; "Closing the gaps: how the RESPIN Project unites IPBES and IPCC experts". In terms of online courses, RESPIN is developing three self-paced courses namely "linking climate change and biodiversity communities", hosted on the Learning for Nature platform: one introducing IPBES and IPCC, another on the interlinkages between climate change and biodiversity, and a third on how to use the assessments from both organizations.

In terms of capacity building events, RESPIN can:

- Organize **face-to-face regional meetings** to support bottom-up approaches, focusing on practical guidance (e.g., reviewing assessments, becoming an author) and discussions on the findings of recent reports. Moreover, guided workshops, where facilitators could walk participants through a collective review session would also be useful. RESPIN will organize at the end of 2025 and first half of 2026 a series of regional meetings aimed at fostering interaction among national platforms and focal points in areas currently underrepresented in IPBES and IPCC. These meetings will take place in Togo (for Africa), Colombia (for Latin America), and North Macedonia (to be confirmed - for Central Asia)

- Facilitate opportunities for sharing **best practices among NFPs** to ease workloads and increase engagement.

- Organize joint **IPCC-IPBES NFP meetings** to promote knowledge exchange between climate and biodiversity experts. Belgium together with Switzerland, and with the support of France and the European Commission, has already started a virtual group. RESPIN can further build upon or collaborate with this initiative.

- Collect and share best practices for **reaching sub-national levels** and support NFPs with templates for invitations or policy briefs.[26] Function 2 of RESPIN will, in the next funding phase, collect best practices for the uptake of IPCC and IPBES knowledge at national level and will organize national workshops on the uptake of IPBES and IPCC outputs.

- **Training sessions** for National Focal points/scientists, on how to work in science-policy interfaces and explain the sensitivities of political terms related to the UNFCCC and CBD conventions. This could be made available as an online course in the next funding phase (T9.1).

In terms of general stakeholder engagement and communication, RESPIN can:

- Improve the **visibility of author/reviewer calls**, especially in underrepresented regions, through targeted social media campaigns.

- Provide **testimonials** from past contributors to highlight benefits and ensure transparency about the time commitment involved. In the next funding phase, RESPIN will do a deep-dive into knowledge holder experiences with the help of interviews and will report on: (1) success stories and failures of capacity building activities at different scales; (2) experience engaging with IPBES and IPCC process, with a focus on the added value that such engagement has on people's network and career as well as suggestions for incentives to foster an engagement of diverse knowledge holders. Experiences between IPBES and IPCC experts will be contrasted, and individual testimonies will be showcased on the website

[26] A *RESPIN Framework for effective workshops: a practical guide*, is developed by Function 2 group of the project and will be shared soon on the RESPIN website.

- Conduct **outreach to social scientists, economists, Indigenous Peoples, and Local Communities** to encourage their involvement in IPCC and IPBES assessments, by tailoring communication, leveraging existing networks and sending targeted invitations to those experts, for our regional, national and other workshops and events. [27]

- Assist NFPs in identifying experts from **other sectors** and engage with civil society and the private sector to enhance the diversity of perspectives. To increase **private sector** actors' engagement with IPBES and IPCC, RESPIN will conduct a workshop with key stakeholders such as forerunner companies and private sector interest groups in a selected value chain (such as food, mining or forestry) and bring them together with IPBES/IPCC representatives, assessment authors, and other key EU SPIs in order to find synergies and best practises for knowledge uptake. Based on the input from the workshop, we will develop best practice recommendations to strengthen the uptake of how IPBES and IPCC products. A factsheet will be made available on "Key IPBES and IPCC messages for private-sector decision-makers".

In terms of engagement with the IPCC and IPBES platforms, RESPIN can:

- Provide **scientific and technical** support to EU delegations and Member States interested in IPCC/IPBES issues. RESPIN will continue providing support to EU delegations in IPBES and IPCC plenaries in the next funding phase.

- Offer suggestions to improve **IPCC-IPBES cooperation**, especially ahead of IPCC P-63 and beyond.

- Keep Member States informed of **key issues** discussed in Plenaries, especially if they are not present.

- Propose recommendations to **improve the governance** of IPCC and IPBES (see chapter 3.5)

7. ONGOING CAPACITY-BUILDING EFFORTS

In the first 18 months of the project, RESPIN has already initiated or co-organized several capacity-building activities, including the PESC-RESPIN event held in Brussels from March 10-13, 2025, side-events during CBD COP16, an event organized by the FRB for IPCC and IPBES stakeholders and a webinar on the topic of institutional support. These events serve as early contributions to addressing the barriers identified by NFPs and other stakeholders and are listed here.

[27] IPBES has significant experience in engaging with Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), integrating their knowledge systems into assessments and processes. In contrast, the IPCC has had less direct engagement with IPLCs to date. However, there is growing attention to this area, as reflected in the AR7 chapter outlines, which include references to diverse knowledge systems. To build on this, the IPCC is organizing a "Workshop on Engaging Diverse Knowledge Systems" in 2025, as outlined in document IPCC-LXII/Doc. 7 Rev.1. This workshop, already approved under Decision IPCC-LXII-4, aims to learn from the experiences of IPBES and enhance the IPCC's inclusivity and knowledge integration going forward. In any case, IPCC needs to strengthen its recognition of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) as key knowledge holders and stakeholders in climate assessments.

7.1 FRB meeting IPCC-IPBES - 26 September 2024

This event was organized in partnership with the International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (Ipos)[28], the Commissariat général au développement durable of the French Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion (MTECT-CGDD) and the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), the French IPBES and IPCC focal points and with the **RESPIN project**.

The workshop brought together researchers, public and private decision-makers and various stakeholders to strengthen collaboration between the biodiversity and climate research communities, improve the process of the two intergovernmental platforms and pool recommendations to guide political decisions. Another key objective was to mobilize more experts and involve more stakeholders, taking into account their concerns and knowledge. There was a particular emphasis on recommendations concerning the ocean.

Five interactive workshops were held, each focusing on a key area of collaboration and policy relevance. The first workshop addressed improving the legitimacy and inclusiveness of platforms and panels, with an emphasis on enhancing stakeholder involvement. The second explored the convergence of biodiversity and climate issues, highlighting the need for integrated approaches. The third focused on fostering involvement and commitment within the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The fourth examined how recommendations from IPBES and IPCC are considered by political decision-makers, while the fifth concentrated specifically on the recommendations related to oceans provided by these two bodies.

Concrete **recommendations** emerged across the different topics discussed. For this deliverable (D1.2), the most relevant aspect is the exploration of proposed solutions and areas for improving expert engagement with the platforms. Several key suggestions were identified, including strengthening institutional recognition of contributors, providing operational support for authors, improving the transparency and quality of the review process, and enhancing the dissemination of calls for contributions. Additional recommendations include increasing the inclusion of civil society and the private sector, as well as offering training and mentorship opportunities for new contributors.

7.2 Side-events at CBD COP16

Foster Science-Policy Interfaces around biodiversity and climate change, [29](Yves Zinngrebe, Axel Paulsch)

This side event, organized by UFZ, IAvH, and UNILU on 22th October 2024 at the COP16, focused on strengthening science-policy interfaces (SPIs) around biodiversity and climate change. Recognizing the overlapping relevance of IPBES and IPCC outputs, the event explored ways to enhance their impact on global and national biodiversity governance. It featured insights from the EU Horizon 2030-funded RESPIN project, which aims to develop new SPI formats, provide training and digital tools, and build action agendas with strategic partners. Early findings, such as a landscape analysis of engagement options and the needs of knowledge holders and users, where presented. The event included presentations and

[28] The International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS) is a global demand-driven platform linking Ocean knowledge, policy and society, and operating at national and regional scales to help States and groups of States to accelerate the fulfilment of their international Ocean commitments. https://ipos.earth/

[29] https://www.cbd.int/side-events/5743

panel discussions with participants from both the Global North and South, reflecting on past policy impacts and how to strengthen them moving forward.

CO-OP4CBD (first) side event: Discussion on the SPI landscape and The role of science-policy interface in supporting the implementation and monitoring of the GBF[30]

On October 25, 2024, a panel discussion was held at the EU Pavilion during COP16 in Colombia, focusing on the role of Science-Policy Interfaces (SPIs) in supporting the implementation and monitoring of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Organized by CO-OP4CBD in collaboration with Horizon Europe projects BioAgora, RESPIN, and Biodiversa+, the event highlighted how scientific research can better inform policy under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Key topics included the integration of scientific knowledge into policy-making in pursuit of the successful monitoring and implementation of the KM-GBF, the contribution of initiatives like BioAgora (2022–2027) in creating a science service within the European Commission's Knowledge Centre for Biodiversity (KCBD), and the need for stronger scientific representation in CBD discussions—particularly as many researchers express concerns over current biodiversity indicators. Speakers included Gilles Doignon (European Commission), Carlos Hernandez (Humboldt Institute, Colombia), and Lennart Kümper-Schlake (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation). The discussion emphasized the vital role of SPIs in bridging the gap between science and biodiversity policy.

CO-OP4CBD second side-event: SPI Contribution to Biodiversity, Health & Climate Change [31]

On October 31, 2024, at the EU Pavilion during COP16 in Colombia, CO-OP4CBD, in collaboration with Horizon Europe projects BioAgora, RESPIN, and Biodiversa+, hosted a side event discussing the role of Science-Policy Interfaces (SPIs) in addressing biodiversity, health, and climate change.

The session underscored the importance of aligning biodiversity, health, and climate change policies through well-functioning SPIs to enhance global environmental governance. Conversations took place on the contributions of targeted scientific research to effective policy-making in the domains of human and environmental health alike as an increasingly ambitious global climate agenda is being set.

Key topics included:

- **Biodiversity & Health:** Examining how SPIs function in setting priorities, funding research, and translating ecological evidence into health policies and vice-versa. The discussion also highlighted the differences between traditional health evidence, such as Randomized Controlled Trials, and ecological evidence.
- **Biodiversity & Climate Change:** Exploring the need for better integration of IPBES and IPCC findings into national policy and biodiversity and climate reports. Since the key stakeholders of IPCC and IPBES are the international conventions rather than national authorities, improved coordination is needed to ensure their findings inform global policy effectively.

7.3 Capacity-building pilot: webinar on institutional support

While RESPIN cannot add hours in the day or find money for all experts, it can help experts to get institutional support, or in other words, make the institutions give more time and money

[30] https://coop4cbd.eu/news/co-op4cbd-cop16-recordings-online
[31] https://coop4cbd.eu/news/co-op4cbd-cop16-recordings-online

for the experts to participate in both process. As this was early identified as a key challenge in knowledge holders' engagement, function 1 has already conducted a webinar, open to all, to explore how to better identify the added value for knowledge institutions to support experts' participation in both platforms. This webinar, titled *"Strengthening Institutional Support for IPCC/IPBES Engagement"*, took place on the 5th of June 2025 and was attended by approximately 75 participants. Invitations were sent out to our wider RESPIN network and the webinar was promoted on social media weeks in advance.The recording was made available on YouTube and will be published soon on the RESPIN website. This may also result in the production of other materials (online courses, factsheets) as part of Function 4, that experts can use to gain institutional support for their work with IPCC and IPBES.

The event featured **a panel discussion** with contributions from: Diem Hong Thi Tran (IPBES Secretariat), Carlos Hernandez (IPBES Focal Point, Colombia) and Orlando Vargas (IPBES TSU, Alexander von Humboldt Institute), François Gemenne (IPCC author, University of Liège), Zuzana V. Harmáčková (IPBES author, Czech Academy of Sciences), Alexandre Caron (IPBES author, CIRAD) and Jennifer Hauck (IPBES author, CoKnow Consulting). There was time for a Q&A after every presentation.

We explored practical guidance for securing institutional backing, highlighted the benefits of engagement for both institutions and individual researchers, and heard directly from experts who have successfully contributed to IPBES and IPCC thanks to institutional support.

When it comes to the **benefits for institutions**, speakers mentioned that institutions gain significant strategic, academic, and policy-related benefits by supporting expert participation in IPCC and IPBES. One key challenge is that many institutions remain unaware of the concrete policy value of IPBES assessments. While universities often emphasize societal impact, contributions to global policy platforms like IPBES and IPCC are rarely formally acknowledged, despite their importance.

Participation offers multiple advantages, according to multiple speakers. For one, institutions benefit from the credibility, clarity, and influence of IPBES products, which help inform public awareness, support national capacity-building, and engage stakeholders. By contributing to these platforms, institutions help shape these outputs and gain access to them early, strengthening their influence in policy circles.

Involvement also enhances the institution's visibility and strategic positioning at the global level. One speaker stated that it facilitates access to international research networks and consortia, funding opportunities, and high-impact publications. For example, institutions have reported that expert participation led to new research positions, project funding, and collaborative publications in leading journals. Furthermore, involvement allows researchers to contribute to IPBES capacity-building programs (such as the fellowship program) and bring those benefits back to their home institutions, enriching internal capacity and training programs.

Beyond immediate outcomes, institutions stand to gain long-term and often less-visible advantages. Having researchers at the frontier of science-policy processes allows institutions to anticipate trends, shape international discourse, and ensure relevance in global science-policy debates. One speaker advised that institutions should therefore strategically plan the extent and focus of their involvement—deciding how many researchers to support and in which areas.

Ultimately, contributing to IPBES and IPCC bolsters an institution's legitimacy and relevance in today's global science-policy landscape. While not sufficient on its own, this type of engagement is increasingly vital and offers both reputational and practical returns.

When it comes to the **added value for researchers** themselves, participation in IPBES and IPCC can be a transformative milestone in a researcher's career, offering significant professional exposure and new opportunities. Researchers often receive invitations to speak at high-level events, serve on advisory boards, and engage with the media on the topic of climate change, as one speaker testified. The visibility and recognition gained through authorship or involvement in these platforms can be life-changing, opening doors beyond traditional academic pathways.

For many, involvement in IPBES has led to entry into international research networks, positions in global institutions, and collaboration opportunities across disciplines and borders. The process also enriches both the upstream and downstream aspects of a researcher's work, one speaker explained. Upstream, it influences how researchers design and frame their studies—shaping the language, structure, and focus of their research to align with the needs of global assessments. Downstream, it ensures that research outcomes are informed by and contribute to the methodologies, concepts, and recommendations of IPBES and IPCC, making the work more impactful and policy-relevant.

Researchers also gain deeper insights into the science-policy interface, particularly during activities like negotiating the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) with government representatives. These experiences enhance understanding of how to communicate science effectively in politically charged settings. Additionally, participating researchers have the opportunity to address gaps in representation, particularly by amplifying the contributions of underrepresented regions such as the Global South, helping to bring more diverse perspectives into global evaluations.

The professional network built through IPBES and IPCC is extensive and influential. Researchers frequently form lasting collaborations and may even receive direct offers for research contracts. Participation becomes a "unique selling point" in competitive project proposals and enhances the likelihood of being included in high-profile, high-impact publications.

Overall, participating in IPBES or IPCC not only boosts a researcher's visibility and career prospects but also strengthens the quality, relevance, and global integration of their scientific work.

The following practical guidance for securing institutional backing was shared by the speakers:

1. **Role of National Focal Points:**

NFPs play a key role in supporting expert engagement with IPBES and IPCC. They can assist with expert nominations and help raise the profile of these platforms within research institutions. For instance, they can write official letters to institutions to validate and emphasize the importance of participation. NFPs also have the capacity to organize national events such as seminars and webinars, as well as translate key materials into national languages to broaden accessibility, if resources allow. Many good practices already exist in this area, and rather than reinventing the wheel, these practices should be showcased more widely. Overall, NFPs can serve as powerful advocates—it is often more effective for them to promote the work and impact of researchers than for individual researchers to do so on their own.

2. **Actions and responsibilities of authors:**

Authors can take early steps to engage their institutions by ensuring that relevant departments are aware of and understand the significance of IPBES and IPCC work. This can help secure institutional support from the outset. Moreover, researchers should not wait passively for recognition. Instead, they should be proactive in making their contributions visible and in advocating for the value of their involvement in these platforms. Ideally, institutions should

remunerate authors (e.g. travel costs) and provide leave to enable their participation, recognizing it as a valuable contribution to global science.

3. **Institutional engagement and support:**

Research institutions have a responsibility to communicate about their researchers' involvement in international policy processes and to actively support such participation. This includes building relationships with NFPs and helping to mobilize or catalyze financial support. Institutions need to be made more aware of the broader importance of supporting their researchers' time contributions to global science initiatives. Participation in IPBES or IPCC provides individual researchers with exposure, learning opportunities, and a platform for contributing knowledge, all of which benefit the institution. Furthermore, institutions should better articulate the impact of such participation in terms of knowledge production, policy influence, and access to funding. If they fail to see the larger value and purpose, they are less likely to commit resources. Even when financial support is unavailable, mechanisms could be introduced— IPBES could perhaps work towards a "credits" mechanism - for the individual and institution- that enables access to non-free resources, capacity building oriented participation fee waivers etc.

4. **Engagement by IPBES and IPCC:**

IPBES and IPCC themselves have a role to play in creating a more enabling environment for researcher participation. They should issue calls for authors on a more regular basis so that experts can better anticipate and prepare for the necessary time commitments. In addition, these platforms should actively encourage academic institutions to allocate time and recognize the value of policy-related engagement by their researchers. Although academia is largely merit-based, universities increasingly acknowledge societal impact as part of their mission—yet policy engagement often remains informally recognized. To address this gap, IPBES and IPCC could reach out directly to universities and research centres to emphasize the importance of sending experts if these institutions wish to have a voice in shaping policy, and introduce for example this so-called "credit" mechanism mentioned in the previous paragraph. The responsibility for increasing academic participation in policy processes should rest not just with individual researchers, but with institutions and larger frameworks such as the European Commission or collaborative initiatives like RESPIN.

5. **Contribution of broader initiatives (e.g., RESPIN):**

Projects such as RESPIN can play a vital supporting role by demonstrating the real-world impact of expert contributions to IPBES and IPCC. Through testimonials and transparent information about the time commitment required, these initiatives can help institutions better understand what is involved. RESPIN could also offer tailored workshops and training sessions aimed at informing institutions about how IPBES and IPCC function and what is expected of participating researchers. This targeted engagement can strengthen institutional understanding and support for involvement in global science-policy processes.

8. CONCLUSION

In this report, we have seen that there is a clear and continuing need for strengthened **in-person and online** capacity-building efforts, particularly at the regional and national levels, to enhance knowledge exchange and ensure that local contexts and priorities are adequately reflected in global IPBES and IPCC processes. Where such needs fall outside the mandates of IPBES or IPCC, they should be addressed by complementary initiatives such as RESPIN.

The **RESPIN survey** highlights concrete capacity-building tools and activities needed by NFPs to better engage with IPBES and IPCC, with a focus on training, guidance, and awareness-raising. Across both platforms, there is strong demand for **practical training and guidance**, particularly through **regional and national meetings, (guided) workshops, webinars, and online or in-person courses**. Overall, there were no major differences in the types of support preferred across the two platforms. Fellowship and mentorship programs were among the less frequently requested forms of support. Guides and factsheets received relatively little interest for IPCC, in contrast to their higher popularity under the IPBES activities.

Regionally, African countries show the highest overall demand for support activities across both platforms. Eastern Europe consistently indicates a need for collaborative formats like webinars and workshops. Latin America and the Caribbean express broad interest, with notable attention to guides (IPBES) and webinars (IPCC). Asia-Pacific countries (with only two countries represented) show consistent, though limited, demand, and Western Europe tends to prioritize coordination and networking formats for IPBES, whereas under IPCC, they show a strong preference for webinars on engagement. Additional data would help refine regional priorities. Importantly, capacity-building should not be limited to developing countries; respondents emphasized that developed countries also require support, particularly in engaging local experts and institutions.

The outcomes of the **PESC-RESPIN event** expanded on these findings, with participants highlighting the systemic and structural barriers they face in their work. These include the absence of national platforms, challenges in mobilizing experts, complex governance structures, and limited cross-sector collaboration. At the same time, the event underscored **broader opportunities** for engagement with IPBES and IPCC—such as increasing awareness of the platforms' roles, processes, and timelines; fostering connections between the biodiversity and climate communities; and adapting outputs to better align with local contexts and needs.

The discussions in the workshops emphasized the importance of broadening the impact of IPBES outcomes by **reaching out to other sectors**, such as finance and education, and ensuring the knowledge is accessible and applicable in various contexts. Participants highlighted the **critical role of NFPs in identifying and addressing knowledge gaps** and and emphasized the importance of **translating scientific findings into national languages**—where resources permit—and **making them more accessible and readable** for broader audiences, such as schools and financial institutions. Participants pointed to the **importance of knowledge-sharing platforms** to enhance collaboration and learning. There was also a clear call for **regional capacity-building** efforts and **bottom-up approaches** that reflect regional needs and contexts.

Discussions included **best practices for NFPs to bridge climate and biodiversity research communities with policymakers**, and the need for a stronger understanding of **UN procedures and IPCC/IPBES governance mechanisms** to navigate global processes more effectively. Additional challenges discussed included the **integration of climate and biodiversity science into national and subnational policymaking**, making scientific findings more relevant and actionable at these levels and extracting policy-relevant messages.

Lastly, NFPs expressed a need for more **support in engaging the climate community** to foster cross-sectoral dialogue and action.

National and regional workshops, such as the PESC-RESPIN event, should in the future focus on practical topics, such as engaging a broader range of experts, facilitating the uptake of assessment findings at national and subnational levels, and improving collaboration between biodiversity and climate communities. A major area of focus is **supporting NFPs in their core functions**—communication, expert engagement, and knowledge sharing—and in their ability to translate scientific findings into (sub-)national strategies and policy frameworks. There is a high demand **for practical tools and guidance** to help NFPs effectively carry out their responsibilities.

National Focal Points were also highlighted as one of the key enablers of **institutional support** during the capacity-building pilot webinar held on June 5, 2025, titled "*Strengthening Institutional Support for IPCC/IPBES Engagement.*" NFPs play an important role in raising awareness within institutions about the value of expert engagement in IPBES and IPCC, supporting nominations, validating participation through formal letters, and organizing national-level outreach activities. Despite their impact, there remains a continued need for broader institutional backing to enable experts to contribute effectively to global science-policy processes. The webinar addressed this ongoing challenge, with panelists sharing practical strategies to help institutions recognize and support expert participation. Speakers emphasized the strategic, academic, and policy-related benefits that such involvement offers to both individuals and institutions—ranging from increased visibility and access to funding, to enhanced credibility and influence in international policy circles. While many institutions still lack awareness of these advantages, the session stressed the need for more proactive engagement by researchers, institutions, and the platforms themselves. RESPIN plans to build on these discussions by developing targeted resources such as factsheets, online courses, and institutional guidance in the next funding phase, aimed at strengthening support frameworks for expert participation.

As was already mentioned in the introduction, it is important to note that the data collected for this study was limited and not representative of the full NFP community, as the survey was not specifically designed to capture their experiences in depth. Nevertheless, the responses highlight several areas that warrant **further exploration**, such as potential correlations between gender, age, and the professional roles of NFPs; the relationship between the hosting institution and region; and how these factors influence engagement with knowledge holders. Additionally, NFPs' perspectives on barriers to cross-platform collaboration—such as issues of timing, relevance, and terminology—as well as their broader experiences, including perceptions of politicization within the process and engagement with institutions, merit closer examination. These themes will be explored in greater detail in the next work package 6, which will focus more directly on the roles and experiences of NFPs.

The **next steps of the project** focus on strengthening capacity for knowledge holders and enhancing collaboration between national focal points (NFPs) of IPBES and IPCC, particularly in underrepresented regions. Under Task 6.1, the project will conduct a deep dive into knowledge holder experiences through interviews conducted in French, English, and Spanish. These interviews will explore both the successes and challenges of previous capacity-building initiatives at national and regional levels—especially in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Africa. They will also examine the benefits of engaging with IPBES and IPCC processes, such as how these experiences have influenced participants' professional networks and career trajectories. The findings will include suggestions for improving inclusivity and incentives for engagement and will be shared publicly via the project's website in collaboration with Work Package 9.

As part of Task 6.2, the project will organize a series of regional meetings aimed at fostering interaction among national platforms and focal points in areas currently underrepresented in

IPBES and IPCC. These meetings will take place in Togo (for Africa), Colombia (for Latin America), and North Macedonia (to be confirmed - for Central Asia). They are designed to facilitate peer exchange, build partnerships among NFPs and platforms in these regions, and connect them with colleagues from the EU. During these meetings, ongoing project findings and capacity-building efforts (linked to Tasks 6.3 and 7.1) will be presented and discussed. Participants will also share and analyze experiences with national platforms, engage in panel discussions on barriers to participation and knowledge uptake, and explore ways to improve engagement processes. Notably, the North Macedonia meeting will be held alongside the Pan-European Stakeholder Consultation to strengthen continuity within the broader European network.

Task 6.3 will build on the outcomes of previous capacity-building activities (T1.3) by delivering a second series of workshops aimed at expanding the network of knowledge holders. Drawing on lessons from France, the workshops will emphasize collaboration between IPBES and IPCC processes and bring together experts from both scientific and traditional knowledge communities. These workshops will address how to improve engagement practices and strengthen processes that support knowledge holders. National platforms and focal points will also participate, benefiting from networking opportunities and skills development. To ensure inclusivity, participants from outside Western Europe and underrepresented groups will receive travel and accommodation support where possible. The workshops will be coordinated with the regional meetings (T6.2) and national workshops on knowledge uptake (T7.2), maximizing synergy and reducing logistical burdens. Additional online formats will be made available to ensure continuity of support and broader access.

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