

# IPBES and IPCC explained: Why and How to Engage as an Expert

## Overview of IPBES and IPCC

The **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)** and the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** provide policymakers with scientific assessments on biodiversity, ecosystem services, and climate change. While distinct, their work is complementary, informing global and national decision-making. Both are independent intergovernmental bodies that are administered under the United Nations system, with the IPBES Secretariat hosted by UNEP and the IPCC Secretariat hosted by WMO.

## Mission and Focus of IPBES and IPCC

Established in 2012, IPBES strengthens the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services. It assesses biodiversity and ecosystem services globally, identifies policy-relevant knowledge gaps, supports policy formulation and implementation, and promotes capacity-building. It conducts global, regional and thematic assessments producing reports such as the **Global Assessment (2019)**, **Transformative Change and Nexus Assessments (2024)**, which inform the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** and other MEAs. Key audiences include policymakers, researchers, conservation practitioners, and stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Founded in 1988, the IPCC assesses climate change science, including physical science, impacts, adaptation and vulnerability as well as mitigation approaches and strategies. It synthesises knowledge through reports such as the **Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)**, and **special thematic and methodological reports**, which inform climate negotiations under the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, and other MEAs. Key audiences include national governments, UNFCCC, climate scientists and the public.

# Key Differences and Similarities Between IPBES and IPCC

Feature	IPBES	IPCC
<b>Scientific Focus</b>	Biodiversity & ecosystem services	Climate change
<b>Knowledge Systems</b>	Draws on scientific peer-reviewed and grey literatures, as well as Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK)	Primarily scientific peer-reviewed literature but grey literature can also be considered. Currently examining the IPBES ILK approach and lessons learned
<b>Scenario Modeling</b>	Context-specific and participatory approaches-including the Nature Futures Framework (NFF)	Assesses global climate models results across a variety of future scenarios such as Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs) and Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs)
<b>Policy Engagement</b>	Identifies policy options with explicit policy support function	Presents policy relevant science without being policy prescriptive
<b>Assessment duration</b>	2–4 years	2–7 years
<b>Expert Training</b>	Offers early career fellowships & implements a work plan focusing on capacity-building	No formal training, but supports early-career researchers and scientists from developing countries through fellowships

## Complementary Roles of IPBES and IPCC

Biodiversity loss and climate change are interconnected crises. The two organisations work together or complement each other to address these challenges:

- **Collaborations** – A 2021 **IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop** emphasised integrated climate-biodiversity policies, and there is regular sharing of information between the two organisations<sup>1</sup>. At its ninth plenary in 2022, IPBES invited national focal points (NFPs) to collaborate with their IPCC counterparts. The Plenary also encouraged IPBES members, stakeholders

and research institutions to advance knowledge and research on biodiversity-climate interlinkages.

- **Understanding Feedback Loops** – The assessments of how biodiversity loss contributes to climate change, and of climate-induced biodiversity loss, are covered to various degrees by the work of both organisations.
- **Cross-Sectoral Insights** – IPCC assesses climate change impacts and projections, while IPBES focuses on observed trends in biodiversity and ecosystem services.

## Why Get Involved?

Getting involved in IPBES or IPCC assessments and their work programmes offers a strategic opportunity to develop and advance professional networks and strengthen the policy impact of your research expertise.

IPBES Fellows become part of the Fellowship Alumni network.

**As an institution supporting experts' engagement:**

### Benefits of Expert Engagement

**As an expert:**

- **Contributions to governance and influence** – Contributions shape international climate and biodiversity governance.
- **Professional growth and networking** – Collaboration with leading experts enhances career prospects.
- **Capacity Building** – Training and networking opportunities expand expertise.
- **Visibility & Recognition** – Experts are credited in the assessment reports and high impact publications.

- **Reputation and prestige** – Enhances institutional prestige and international standing in climate and biodiversity science.
- **Identify research frontiers** – Gain early insights into critical knowledge gaps, guiding future research priorities and securing funding opportunities.
- **Boost capacity & skills** – Develop cutting-edge expertise in complex global assessments, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and enriching teaching.
- **Direct policy influence** – Ensure your research directly informs international policy, increasing its real-world impact and relevance.

<sup>1</sup>[IPCC-LXI/INF. 10](#)

# IPBES and IPCC Assessment Processes and Opportunities for Expert Engagement



# How Experts can Engage in IPBES and IPCC

Both platforms rely on voluntary expert contributions for their assessments and other parts of their work programme. Organisations employing experts that are nominated to contribute to IPBES or IPCC will need to enable experts to dedicate sufficient time to their contributions, as below.

## Roles of Experts in the assessments

Role	Description	Estimated time commitments	
		IPBES over 2–4 years	IPCC over 2–7 years
IPBES Assessment Co-chairs	Lead the overall assessment process and coordinate expert teams	At least 30%	**Varies depending on type of report:
IPCC Working Group Co-chairs	Co-lead the overall assessment for their specific Working Group and coordinate expert teams for that assessment	NA	Special Reports – partial time commitment over approx. 2 years
Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs)	Lead specific chapters, coordinate writing and ensure coherence	At least 20%	Working Group Reports – partial time commitment over approx. 3 years
Lead Authors (LAs)	Draft key sections of reports and synthesize knowledge	Approximately 15%	
Review Editors (REs)	Ensure that reviewer comments are addressed and incorporated	Approximately 10%	
Contributing Authors (CAs)	Provide specialised input on specific topics	Approximately 10%	
Expert Reviewers	Submit comments on draft reports to evaluate scientific rigor during external review process	A few days to a few weeks, depending on scope of review	
Early-Career Engagement	IPBES Fellows contribute to developing sections or parts of the chapters	Approximately 15% for IPBES Fellows	
	IPCC Chapter Scientists assist in the technical aspects of the assessments		

**\*\*Further details on the time commitment for IPCC experts are discussed in a dedicated open-hour webinar when the IPCC issues its periodic call for author nominations.**



# Becoming an Expert

## IPBES

- IPBES issues a public call for experts, for the role of co-chairs, CLAs, LAs and REs and fellows to contribute to the full assessments. Candidate applications need to be supported by their home institution, government, or an appropriate organisation. For experts and fellows' calls, check the [Notification section](#) on the IPBES website homepage.
- Interested candidates must complete an online application form and submit their curriculum vitae (CV) through the IPBES web portal. To access the web portal, nominees will need to register on the IPBES website at <https://ipbes.net/user/register>.
- The assessment's Management Committee reviews nominations. Selection is based on the candidate's merit, academic qualifications, and individual expertise and how co-chairs see complementarity and abilities of selected experts across the assessment team. Diversity in geographical distribution, disciplinary background and gender are guiding principles.
- All nominated candidates are informed of the selection outcome, typically within a few months after the application deadline.
- Selected experts and fellows are expected to attend author meetings and training workshops to structure the assessment and define responsibilities. Fellows receive additional training to gain an in-depth understanding of IPBES assessment processes and the science-policy interface.
- Those who are not nominated by Governments or stakeholders may still contribute as **Contributing Authors** (CAs) if requested by the selected experts (CLAs) based on their expertise, or as Expert Reviewers.

## Become an Expert Reviewer

- Log in or register on the IPBES website.
- Apply to become an external reviewer.
- Attend the online dialogue on the assessments for additional information.
- Access the assessment documents and review them.
- Submit your comments online.

## IPCC

- The IPCC Working Group co-chairs are elected by IPCC member governments during a plenary session at the start of each assessment cycle, following nominations by member governments.
- IPCC issues a call for authors' nominations for CLAs, LAs and REs for each of its three Working Groups. Governments of IPCC member countries, observer organisations and the Bureau nominate experts. For expert calls, check the [News section](#) on the IPCC website homepage.
- Experts may also be identified based on their publications and contributions to the field. Nominations include a detailed CV outlining expertise and qualifications.
- The IPCC Working Group or Task Force Bureau reviews nominations. Selection is based on scientific expertise relevant to the assessment topics.
- Efforts are made to ensure regional diversity, gender balance, and a mix of experienced and new authors. Experts from developed and developing countries, industry, and non-profit organisations may be included.
- Experts not selected as authors may participate as **Expert Reviewers**, providing feedback on draft reports.

## Become an Expert Reviewer

- Expert Reviewers must register via a dedicated IPCC web portal to participate in the review process.
- Registration is generally open to all qualified individuals who can demonstrate relevant expertise.
- The IPCC Working Group or Task Force Bureau may also invite specific experts based on their specialised knowledge.

For more details, experts can visit the respective IPBES and IPCC websites or contact their national focal points (NFPs) to explore participation opportunities.

## Other Ways to Engage

- Participate in expert task forces or working groups on themes like data, indigenous knowledge, or communication.
- Participate in the IPBES Stakeholder Day held before each plenary.
- Participate in workshops and expert meetings on specific topics, methodologies and cross-cutting issues.
- Address knowledge gaps highlighted in the IPBES and IPCC reports by conducting research and publishing findings accessible to authors.
- Apply to be nominated as an expert to participate in scoping meetings to shape the content of the assessments.
- Both platforms strongly emphasise stakeholder engagement:
  - Register as an IPBES stakeholder to receive regular information and opportunities to get involved;
  - Become an accredited observer organisation to participate in plenary meetings and influence the process;
  - Engage with national and/ or sub-regional platforms that coordinate input from national actors to amplify and supplement the work of focal points.

## Expert Financial Support

Experts selected for a role within an IPBES and IPCC assessment accept the relevant conditions, including that their time is committed to this work on a pro-bono basis.

**Experts from developing countries receive financial support** to attend author meetings and possibly other relevant meetings, covering travel costs and per diem for the meeting days. Selected experts from **developed countries must secure their own funding to cover the costs of participating** in meetings. Some funders, such as the EU's Horizon Europe, encourage researchers to engage in IPBES and IPCC and allow grant funds to cover related time and travel costs. Selected experts are expected to attend all author meetings (typically 2 or 3) and may be asked to participate in additional meetings and communication efforts.

The fellowship program is unpaid. However, expenses for attending meetings are covered for fellows from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Fellows from developed countries are expected to cover their own expenses and are encouraged to seek support from their home institutions.



# Barriers and Solutions to Participation

## Some barriers to participation and potential solutions

### BARRIERS

Lack of institutional recognition, support and integration of participation into career progression.

Time constraints and workload, which must be balanced with other professional responsibilities.

Limited financial support, particularly for experts from developed countries.

Language and inclusivity barriers - the dominance of English in assessment processes and reports can be a challenge for non-native English speakers. But may also enrich the author's team.

### SOLUTIONS

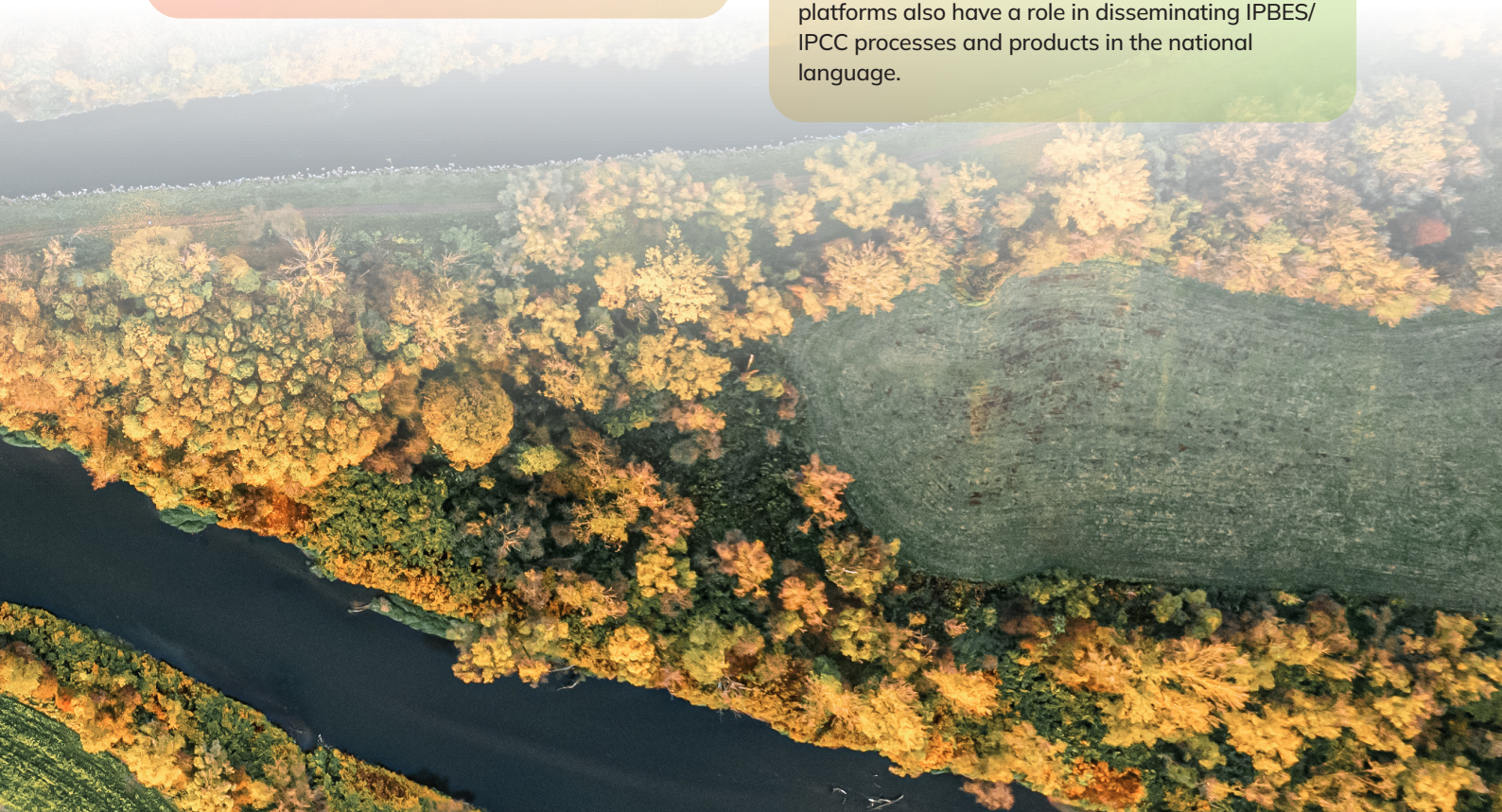
Formal recognition, monetary support & incentives to experts. NFPs and national platforms can also help experts by communicating the relevance and policy impact of IPBES/IPCC processes to institutions.

Encourage experts to **proactively integrate** IPCC/ IPBES commitments into their annual work plans and discuss them with department heads early on.

Establish or allocate specific institutional funds to cover travel, accommodation, and essential operational costs for experts.

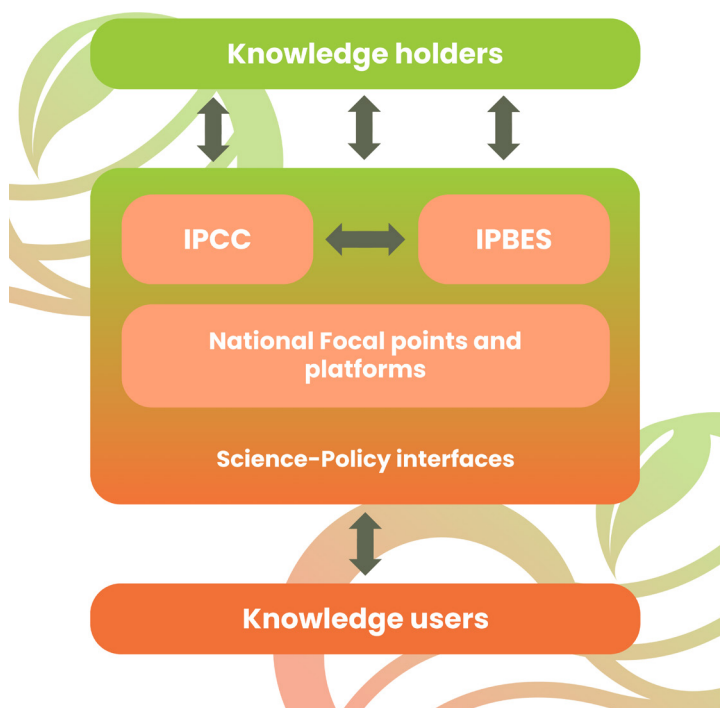
Explore partnerships with relevant industry, government agencies, or foundations to secure additional funding.

Actively seek out and nominate experts from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds with active moderation that would support and engage non-native English speakers. NFPs and national platforms also have a role in disseminating IPBES/ IPCC processes and products in the national language.



## Call to Action

IPBES and IPCC provide essential scientific assessments for biodiversity and climate -related policy. Experts from all disciplines are vital contributors to these processes. To further engage, experts are encouraged to contact their National Focal Points (NFPs), who coordinate national participation in IPBES and IPCC activities. A list of NFPs can be found in the IPBES<sup>2</sup> and IPCC<sup>3</sup> websites to explore opportunities to contribute to upcoming assessments, dialogues and capacity-building initiatives.



## The RESPIN Project and EU Support

The RESPIN project, supported by the European Union, strengthens IPCC-IPBES collaboration by fostering interdisciplinary research and expert engagement. Through initiatives like RESPIN, policymakers receive robust, science-based guidance on integrating climate and biodiversity strategies. For more information, read our factsheet 'Closing the gaps: how the RESPIN Project unites IPBES and IPCC experts'.

<sup>2</sup> [National Focal Points | IPBES secretariat](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/apps/contact/interface/focalpoints.php>



Funded by  
the European Union



[respin-project.eu](https://respin-project.eu)



RESPIN project



This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101135490. Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the EU nor the REA can be held responsible for them.