



## **Report on end-user workshops**

### **Deliverable D6.8/ WP6**

30<sup>th</sup> May 2017

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**From concepts to real-world applications**  
[www.openness-project.eu](http://www.openness-project.eu)

Prepared under contract from the European Commission

Contract n° 308428

Collaborative project

FP7 Environment

Project acronym: OpenNESS  
 Project full title: Operationalisation of natural capital and ecosystem services: from concepts to real-world applications  
 Start of the project: 01 December 2012  
 Duration: 54 months  
 Project coordinator: Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)  
 Project website: <http://www.openness-project.eu>

Deliverable title: Report on end-user workshops  
 Deliverable n°: D6.8  
 Nature of the deliverable: Report  
 Dissemination level: Public

WP responsible: WP6  
 Lead beneficiary: Alterra

Citation: EU FP7 OpenNESS Project Deliverable 6.8, Saarikoski, H., Vikström, S., Pérez-Soba, M., Tersteeg, J., Antunes, P., Santos, R., Delbaere, B. & Wolters, R. Report on end-user workshops. Deliverable D6.8. European Commission FP7, 2017.

Due date of deliverable: Month 47  
 Actual submission date: Month 54

Deliverable status:

Version	Status	Date	Reviewed by	Author(s)
1.0	Final	33 May 2017	Name	Eeva Furman
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## Executive Summary

Oppla is a new international knowledge platform where the latest thinking on ecosystem services, natural capital and nature-based solutions is brought together. Oppla is underpinned by a community of practice including academic/research organisations and businesses. It has been developed jointly by the OpenNESS (<http://www.openness-project.eu>) and OPERAs (<http://www.operas-project.eu>) projects. This report summarises the end-user feedback on Oppla, collected throughout the OpenNESS project, and used to co-develop the platform and its functionalities. It pulls together the results from three national end-user workshops that were organised in Finland, Portugal and the Netherlands in 2016-2017 to complement the feedback from the OPERAs project User Board, which focused on EU level actors. The report also documents the SME and academic community feedback on Oppla and their ideas to make Oppla successful.

Overall, the consultations resulted in a very positive view on Oppla as a knowledge hub, which could reach multiple stakeholders. The general message from the national workshops was that Oppla was perceived helpful in providing a 'one-stop-shop', which collates all relevant information on ecosystem services, and provides a community of interest for actors who want to share experiences and good practices in putting the concept of ecosystem services in practice. The main challenges relate to tailor-made translations of the content of Oppla for different user groups, including information in national languages. It would also be important to have more information of different policy sectors as well as more encouraging real-life examples of ecosystem services implementation. It is also essential to ensure the quality control of the contents, and and improve the user experience of Oppla. From the business perspective, the Oppla community needs to reach a critical mass before it has real potential for profiling businesses, products and services through the Oppla marketplace. Academic community members appreciated the fact that Oppla can facilitate continuous learning and capacity building by sharing knowledge on recent advances in concepts, tools, methods and case study experiences. Oppla could also help scientists to find potential research partners, developing new collaborative projects and ensuring the perennity of projects' research findings. Future EU funded projects as well as national level research projects will have a major role in keeping Oppla alive and sharing the latest ideas and research findings via it. In a similar way, close interaction with other relevant initiatives such as ESP, IPBES, and science-policy-society mechanisms developed in EKLIPSE project, are needed to make Oppla 'the' Ecosystem Services and nature based solutions hub.

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# 1. Introduction

Oppla is a new international knowledge platform where the latest thinking on ecosystem services, natural capital and nature-based solutions is brought together. Oppla is underpinned by a community of practice including academic/research organisations and businesses. It has been developed jointly by the OpenNESS (<http://www.openness-project.eu>) and OPERAs (<http://www.operas-project.eu>) projects (for more information see D6.1-6.9)

This report summarises the end-user feedback on Oppla, collected throughout the OpenNESS project, and used to co-develop the platform and its functionalities. It pulls together the results from three national end-user workshops that were organised in Finland, Portugal and the Netherlands in 2016-2017 to complement the feedback from the OPERAs project User Board, which focused on EU level actors. The report also documents the SME and academic community feedback on Oppla and their ideas to make Oppla successful.

The information in this report is delivered to the Oppla non-profit entity European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), which was established on 20 September 2016 to manage Oppla after the life-time of the two projects and to further develop it.

## 2. National end-user workshops

Three national workshops were organised with potential end-users of Oppla in 2016-2017 to complement the end-user feedback by OPERAs project User Board. The User Board consisted of EU level actors, such as DG Environment, DG Agri, EEA, IUCN, and Code REDD, while the national workshops targeted potential user groups at national, regional and/or local level. The first national end-user workshop was organised in Helsinki, Finland, on 20 January 2016, to gain feedback on the planned contents (wireframes) of Oppla from regional and municipal land use planners, consultants and municipal environmental authorities. The second workshop was organised in Lisbon, Portugal, on 2 March 2017, to test the functional on-line version of Oppla (Oppla 2.0) with municipal and regional land-use planners, consultants and academics. The third workshop was organised in Wageningen, the Netherlands, on 4 April 2017, at the point when the first version of Ecosystem Service Assessment Support Tool (ESAST) was available for testing. The participants to the workshop included national level policy actors as well as consultants and academic community members. The reports from each workshop are respectively included as Appendixes 1-3.

The overall message from all workshops was that Oppla was perceived helpful in providing a **‘one-stop-shop’**, which collates all relevant information on ecosystem services, and provides a **community of interest** for actors who want to share experiences and good practices in putting the concept of ecosystem services in practice. Currently information is dispersed, and relevant pieces of information are difficult to find, especially given the time constraints of practitioners such as land use planners or water management authorities, who do not have the time or resources for systematic searches of information. Oppla has a real potential of becoming ‘the’ hub for ecosystem services and nature based solutions, assuming that relevant actors find it and actively use it for searching and sharing information. Future EU funded projects, in particular, will have a major role in keeping Oppla alive and sharing the latest ideas and research findings

via it. In the Dutch workshop, it was also observed that Oppla may benefit from the inclusion of new micro-communities and networks (e.g. for the agri-food sector). The Dutch ministry of Economic Affairs is currently creating these communities, which they want to link to the Natural Capital Coalition.

The participants to the Dutch workshop appreciated the fact that Oppla creates an **international platform**, which helps actors to look further than the Dutch setting, and to search for transitions towards sustainable economy in the broader European and global context. However, some actors also pointed out that English **language** and especially the scientific jargon might create a barrier to some potential users. The language issue was brought up also in the Finnish workshop, especially by the actors working at a municipal level, who emphasised the need to for national Oppla sites. They called for information in Finnish and case examples that are relevant in the Finnish institutional context. In the future, it is possible that different countries could develop their own national Oppla sites that are linked to the general Oppla site. Meanwhile, it would be very important that the information in Oppla is very clear and easily accessible for non-native English speakers, and non-scientists, and the difficult terminology is translated in a way that is understandable for practitioners and stakeholders. One option is to develop different entry-points for different types of users, or indicate the elements, which are easier to access, and elements, which are of interest to scientists and other people who are keen to learn about new methodologies or access new data. Another option, suggested by the participants to the Dutch workshop, is to try not to reach for too broad audience but to target practitioners like land use planners, who need the information in their daily work, and who can share their hands-on experiences. Researchers are another important user group because they are both information users and providers, contributing to Oppla their latest research findings.

The availability of a diverse set of **real-world case study examples**, which can be accessed via the Case Study Finder, was regarded very helpful by the participants to all three workshops. The land use planners and consultants especially in the Finnish workshop also appreciated the fact that Oppla can provide information of the **state-of-the-art methods** in ecosystem service mapping, assessment and valuation. However, at that point, only Oppla wireframes were available. The on-line version with over 100 method fact sheets (situation in Spring 2017) is far more difficult to navigate. This was observed by the participants to the Portuguese workshop who felt that it was difficult to access the information in Oppla: “If we did not have had help from the CENCE team it would have been more difficult for us to find things in the site”. They emphasised the need for search functions to improve the usability of Oppla. The information needs identified in the Finnish and Portuguese workshop were used to develop the **Ecosystem Service Assessment Support Tool (ESAST)** and the first on-line version was available in the last workshop in the Netherlands. It was received very well by the workshop participants who felt that ESAST can help practitioners to navigate amid the information in Oppla and to structure their assessment process. The major challenge with the ESAST is to keep it updated and interlinked to the accumulative contents of Oppla.

The ‘**Ask Oppla**’ functionality was found useful by most of the participants to the workshops. It was seen to give an easy access to top experts, and has the potential to work in a similar way as LinkedIn. In this way, Ask Oppla might answer the user needs identified in the Portuguese workshop, namely to create directories of teams or expertise, which would help users to find the relevant knowledge they need in different countries. This recommendation resonated well with the end-users from the academic community. Yet another option is that Ask Oppla could be developed into a knowledge brokerage mechanism; the need for

such mechanism was identified in the Dutch workshop where participants pointed out that local and regional authorities in the Netherlands do not communicate much among themselves, even though they would have an interest in sharing experiences. However, some end-users were also a bit sceptical about the capacity of Ask Oppla service to provide tailored answers to their knowledge needs.

Given the diversity of the actors participating in the workshops, **the user needs and recommendations** to develop Oppla further varied. Practitioners such as land use planners and authorities tended to emphasise the case study finder, while academic users and also consultants found the information on methods in the Market place, as well as method selection guidance tools, helpful. The need for **quality control** was raised by the participants to the Portuguese and Dutch workshop, who suggested a user rating system for methods and tools available in Oppla. They also called for a **validation system** before products are uploaded to the Market Place. The participants to the Portuguese workshop, in particular, made some very detailed and concrete suggestions to improve **the user experience of Oppla**, including additional filters and making the submission system more user-friendly (see Attachment 3). They also suggested that Oppla would contain an **entry point related to different types of policies and regulatory frameworks**—an issue that was discussed in the Oppla team but not implemented in the current version. This entry point would be particularly useful for authorities interested in certain policy sectors such as water and coastal management or agricultural or forest policies. Furthermore, the participants to all workshops called for **more encouraging real-life examples of ecosystem services implementation**, and even action plans to mainstream ecosystem services into decision-making. There was some mismatch between the expectations of practitioners, especially at the municipal level, for concrete solutions and the needs for academic actors and consultants, and land use planners, to find case study examples and methods that are fit for purpose. The participants to all workshops also pointed out that to make Oppla ‘the’ Ecosystem Services hub, it should **link to the contents of current main sources of information** such as Ecosystem Service Partnership (ESP) and also European Environmental Agency. For example, the information of relevant conferences and other events in the ESP webpages should automatically appear in Oppla. In a similar way, the case study information in Oppla and ESP site could be harmonised. Finally, the Portuguese workshop participants pointed out that the **current design of Oppla is not very appealing**; having more pictures and illustrations would make the users to find the platform more interesting.

### 3. Business community feedback

An event targeting the SME community was organised by OpenNESS on 28 October 2015 in Brussels (Appendix 4). During this one-day event, a session was devoted to a presentation and discussion on Oppla. At that point in time Oppla was very much in a development and proposal stage, with no real product to be presented. The session started with an introduction to the progress in developing Oppla, with special attention to how SMEs can benefit from using the platform. This was followed by an interactive session during which participants identified potential clients, how they would reach them and how Oppla could help in this process. The feedback from this session mainly was in terms of curiosity of the participants on what Oppla potentially could deliver, a healthy scepticism over what it would add to other existing platform, and intrigue in terms of business potential. With regard to the latter component, key elements coming out of the group concerned:

- Potential for profiling your business and products/services through the Oppla marketplace;

- Potential for first-hand information about business opportunities (funding, calls, partners);
- Once the Oppla community would reach a critical mass, potential for sponsoring Oppla or selling products/services through Oppla.

Oppla was also present with a poster in the third EU business and biodiversity annual meeting in The Hague, 23 November 2016 (Appendix 4). The OpenNESS work on natural capital and ecosystem services were welcomed by those participants visiting the OpenNESS poster at the event. Especially the role of Oppla in sharing best practices and offering an existing community and marketplace received much attention. Tiago Freitas of the EC DG Research & Innovation gave a talk in the event and said in his speech: 'Oppla is a readily available tool that can support SMEs and other businesses in engaging in further innovation through nature-based solutions'.

## 4. Academic community feedback

Academic community feedback on Oppla prototypes and guidance tools has been collected throughout the project, in designated Oppla sessions in OpenNESS Annual Meetings in Budapest, March 2014, in Barcelona, April 2015 and in Leipzig, March 2016, as well as in cross work package workshops in Loch Leven in October 2013 and Leuven in October 2015. The feedback has been essential in developing the Oppla prototype as well as the Guidance Tools in Oppla. In general, researchers are keen to share their work via Oppla to increase its effectiveness, and also to gain academic merits and make their work widely known. They are also interested in the opportunity of networking via Oppla and finding information about relevant events like conferences and training opportunities.

A last Oppla feedback session was organised in the 4th Annual Meeting on 21st March 2017. At this point, the latest on-line version of Oppla was available and could be demonstrated to the consortium members. The overall goal of the session was to stimulate the uptake of Oppla by the OpenNESS community, specifically by 1) providing an overview of the current status of Oppla, 2) collecting feedback on Oppla, especially on the range of guidance tools developed by OpenNESS, and 3) looking for opportunities to use and promote the knowledge platform to support policy, management and academic research. Through discussion and a feedback questionnaire, participants brought out their experiences and visions of using Oppla in their academic work and suggested ways to develop it. Furthermore, they underlined perceived overall strengths and challenges of Oppla platform.

The most important feature of Oppla for participants was its role as a knowledge sharing platform. Scientific knowledge, concepts, tools, methods and approaches as well as case studies shared through Oppla were found useful by the researchers in their pursuit of continuous learning and capacity building. Especially the case study library was stated to be helpful gathering new examples and results of projects related to ecosystem services, natural capital and nature-based solutions. Oppla could also help scientists to find potential research partners and developing new collaborative projects. Other identified existing and potential features to support researchers' work in the future were:

- 1) hosting of EU (funded) project websites;



- 2) helping users to select appropriate tools and methods through a pathway in relation to identified challenges and needs, or through more dynamic ways of showing the tools, for example via videos; and
- 3) facilitating networking and consortium building, for example, through directory of methodological expertise, or expertise in certain policy field.

Participants to the feedback session expressed interest in providing input for Oppla also in the future. They could use Oppla as a dissemination tool for their research – sharing new case study descriptions, projects, papers and other relevant information. Answering questions in Ask Oppla feature was also brought up, as well as assisting potential Oppla end-users in the use of the methods (e.g. BBN, MCDA, QuicScan) in which the researchers had expertise.

Oppla was seen working very well overall, but some **challenges and features to develop it further** were identified. First, the inclusion of Oppla in projects in the consortium and proposal building phase might sometimes be problematic. Thus, it would be good, if Oppla had a couple of 'ready' solutions or 'models' for consortia. Second, communication issues between different user types were observed. In particular, the direct communication between researchers and stakeholders and local people was sometimes found challenging. Therefore, the contents of Oppla should be 'translated' for lay audiences using non-technical, jargon-free language. The concept of ecosystem services itself would require translation (e.g. 'clean water' instead of 'ecosystems providing water purification functions'). Third, opportunities to develop the functionalities and technical features of Oppla were identified. Especially the guidance tools for methods selection were discussed. The participants found the tools helpful but suggested including multiple pathways for methods select because different approaches may work better for different user groups. They also suggested including a general instruction to the different guidance tools—at the moment the users might get confused because there are alternative guidance tools: the Decision Trees and the BBN tool. Fourth, some of the participants considered it a barrier that users need to sign up and define their expertise and interests to get access to the core information in Oppla. On the other hand, some participants emphasised more open platform and suggested that the questions posed to experts through Ask Oppla feature should not be anonymous, and that the answers should also be identified with an expert.

At the end, many **strengths of Oppla** were identified in the feedback session. First, the case study finder was mentioned as an opportunity to learn from various sources and experiences. It is an important resource also for future comparative case study analyses. Second, the Ecosystem Service Assessment Support Tool was seen useful to apply in an array of projects. However, it requires continuous updating as the information is currently drawing mainly on OpenNESS. Furthermore, some participants expressed a concern that the ESAST provides a too linear view of ecosystem service assessment process. The explicit link to the ONEX tool, designed for interactive and iterative problem formulation, might alleviate this concern. Oppla was seen to be attractive for practitioners and therefore it has potential to go beyond silo thinking and management. Overall, Oppla platform was seen as a timely initiative, and a valuable tool for increasing the level of understanding among—and interaction between—practitioners and academic community members. However, the participants underlined that Oppla is not only about understanding, but action – supporting decision making and implementation of policies.

## 5. OPERAs User Board feedback

During the final user board meeting of the OPERAs project lots of useful feedback was given on Oppla (Appendix 5). A substantial proportion of the two-day meeting was devoted to the platform, which was recognized as a key synthesis product of OPERAs and OpenNESS. Key features and functionality of the beta version of Oppla was presented and a preview was given into development plans in the near future. After the presentations, 15 user board members with representatives from national and international NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, European institutions, local authorities, and business, tested Oppla and then provided feedback.

The participants provided several concrete suggestions for improvement which are now taken into account in the most recent versions of Oppla. These included shortening the list of key words, adding product details, integrating the case study finder, etc. They also provided helpful ideas to clarify the different functionalities like the Marketplace and Community (an organisation would go under the community, whereas services provided by an organisation should be under marketplace) and to add a brief introduction of ‘what is Oppla’ on the landing page, or at least before users register to the site. Most participants were interested in submitting a product to the marketplace. The reasons for that included the opportunity to promote commercial services and to increase outreach of products, to increase the use of existing databases, to stimulate knowledge transferability, to advertise work and products, and to use and be part of the community. The reasons for not using Oppla were mainly language constraints (‘all our products are in national language only’). The concrete recommendations to improve the contents of Oppla included the following:

- A glossary of terms as separate section (e.g. on front page), not only as product in the marketplace.
- Integration of datasets of other organisations.
- Include the level of experience in the profile of community members.
- Allow providers to add other fields to the marketplace template.
- Search results to be short, clear and succinct, to prevent too much scrolling.
- Get the private sector more involved.
- Tailor-made content, access for specific communities.
- Overview of funding opportunities.
- If the marketplace grows in number of records, ensure that search remains easy and focused.
- FAQ
- Add ‘coming up next’ as a teaser for users to return to the platform.
- Date stamp of last update

## 6. Conclusions

It seems that there is a clear niche for an international platform as Oppla. Overall, the consultations resulted in a very positive view on Oppla as a knowledge hub, which could reach multiple stakeholders. The general message from the national workshops was that Oppla was perceived helpful in providing a ‘one-stop-shop’, which collates all relevant information on ecosystem services, and provides a community of interest for actors who want to share experiences and good practices in putting the concept of ecosystem services in practice. The main challenges relate to tailor-made translations of the content of Oppla for different user groups, including information in national languages. It would also be important to have more information of different policy sectors as well as more encouraging real-life examples of ecosystem services implementation. It is also essential to ensure the quality control of the contents of Oppla, and improve the user experience, which was still found partly lacking. From the business perspective, the Oppla community needs to reach a critical mass before it has real potential for profiling businesses and products/services through the Oppla marketplace. Academic community members appreciated the fact that Oppla can facilitate continuous learning and capacity building by sharing knowledge on recent advances in concepts, tools, methods and case study experiences. Oppla could also help scientists to find potential research partners, developing new collaborative projects and ensuring the perennity of projects’ research findings. Future EU funded projects as well as national level research projects will have a major role in keeping Oppla alive and sharing the latest ideas and research findings via it. In a similar way, close interaction with other relevant initiatives such as ESP, IPBES, and science-policy-society mechanisms developed in EKLIPSE project, are needed to make Oppla ‘the’ Ecosystem Services and nature based solutions hub.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the valuable feedback by the stakeholders participating in the national workshops and SME workshops, the OpenNESS community and also the OPERAs User Board.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Report on the Oppla workshop in SYKE, Finland, January 2016

#### Oppla workshop: Feedback on Oppla from practitioners

**Time:** January 20, 2016 at 9:00-12:00

**Place:** SYKE meeting room Tervapääsky

**Participants:** Elina Holmberg (Varsinais-Suomen liitto), Jarmo Honkanen (Vantaa), Marjatta Hytönen (LUKE), Paula Kuusisto-Hjort (Espoo), Varpu Mikola (Aalto University), Anne Mäkynen (Pirkanmaan liitto), Timo Perätie (Kuopio), Maria Silvasi (Lahti), Suvi Silvennoinen (Uudenmaanliitto), Sanna Suokas (Lahti), Ilpo Tammi (Pirkanmaan liitto), Tuija Sievänen (LUKE), Daniela Rosqvist (wspgroup)

The 13 participants invited to the workshop represented environmental authorities (4), municipal and regional land use planners (5), consultants (1) and researchers at the Natural Resources Institute Finland (2) and Aalto University (1)

The workshop started with three short presentations: Overview of OpenNESS project by Eeva Furman, Sibbesborg case study by Leena Kopperoinen and the contents of Oppla platform by Heli Saarikoski. Next, the participants were divided in two groups with 6 and 7 people, facilitated by Eeva Furman and Leena Kopperoinen. Heli Saarikoski and Suvi Vikström reported the discussions. The groups addressed four questions.

- What kind of knowledge needs do you have in relation to ecosystem services?
- Where do you usually search for information on ecosystem services?
- What Oppla functionalities would you use in your own work?
- How should the contents and/or structure of Oppla be developed so that it would be more helpful for your work?

**The general feedback** on Oppla was very positive. The participants welcomed the new portal and said that they would be likely to use it if it is made available. Several people pointed out that they had ended up in the web pages of ended projects, which were not available anymore (the information you requested is not available ..) which is frustrating. Information in old web pages is also not reliable anymore; it would be great if Oppla would become a one-stop-shop which would include all relevant and recent information on ES, including new and on-going projects. All Oppla functionalities were mentioned as useful, including the Case Study Finder, Smart Search, Assessment Support Tool and Ask Oppla. The main message was that the basic information should also be in Finnish so that it could be used in dissemination purposes. Authorities and land use planners in particular emphasized the need for information in Finnish. However, it is not a problem that the method descriptions and case study descriptions used by researchers and consultants are in English.

General comments:

- "It seems to be quite useful".
- "Very helpful to find all information from the same source, nowadays finding relevant information requires a lot of googling".
- "There hasn't been anything similar".
- "I would be interested in following recent ES related news via Oppla"
- "The case study finder is great!"

After the session, one person already sent a Ask Oppla question "What is the difference between ecosystem approach and ecosystem service approach"?

**What kind of knowledge needs do you have in relation to ecosystem services?**

Concise and understandable material about ecosystem services that can be used for awareness raising and dissemination purposes: What are ecosystem services and why they are important for me? The material should be both in Finnish and Swedish, which is the second official language in Finland.

A practical model of integrating ecosystem services into decision-making at a municipal level.

Good case study examples are always valuable, especially if they are very concrete (which ecosystem services were addressed, how, which models and valuation methodologies were used, what were the results, and practical implications)

Information that could be used in value transfer studies, particularly monetary valuation studies in Scandinavian countries because monetary value information from Europe or USA might not be applicable in Finnish contexts.

Models and parameters for mathematical modelling; it is difficult to find models for forest growth, or carbon sequestration; the models should be in a form that it is possible to insert one's own data, like surface area of forest land, or farmland.

We are preparing regional master plan which covers natural values and recreational areas (i.e. indicated the sites with most important natural areas to be used in zoning). Tools for identifying these areas would be helpful.

We would need ES information at the level of town planning: what kind of restrictions do preserving urban ES give on building new residential areas and making cities more compact? How wide should green belts be so that they can preserve biodiversity and ensure connectivity? What are the areas that people really use for recreation? We would also need methods for spatial valuation, as well as methods to analyze the supply of recreational opportunities, and the demand for recreation.

Indicators for sustainable use of the environment, and ecosystem services; integrating these indicators in land use planning.

It is not possible to go through scientific publications and distil the information from these when producing maps and assessments of local/regional ecosystem service assessments; instead, it would be very useful to have datasets, and meta-data, that can be used directly.

Further knowledge needs were related to

- Identification and valuating of ecosystem services, in particular.
- Basic information on ecosystem services (to help land use planners in explaining to lay people why they are important)
- Glossary of the concepts
- Information on various projects which can be used as point of reference
- Tools and methods for practical use: (to justify their use to other planners (municipal/regional level))
  - Mapping ES and visualising them on the map
  - Criteria e.g. on minimum area for functional ES
  - Monetising

#### **Where do you usually search for information on ecosystem services?**

- I have been trying to plough through reports and scientific articles; concise summaries would be useful
- What is available is more conceptual information than practically usable information
- Reports in Finnish (like SYKE research reports) reports for comparison of different methods and analyses
- Via discussions and cooperation with researchers
- I produce information myself
- I am familiar with ESP though don't look at the pages often
- From colleagues
- Portals by authorities', Swedish Naturvårdsvärket ones are particularly useful; they have prepared nice guides on ES
- from research organizations like SYKE and Natural Resources Institute Finland
- I just google with key words
- The recreational use data that we produce used to be available via a portal by the Ministry of the Environment but the link is now removed, and can only be found if you know what you are looking for; the datasets (in Finnish) could well be linked to Oppla Finnish pages
- There is hardly any information on ES in the web pages of cities and municipalities

#### **What Oppla functionalities would you use in your own work?**

- Information on methods and publications related to them, I could both use them and offer them to Oppla (land use planner)
- I would like to learn from the case study descriptions (land use planner, researcher)
- I could share regional studies and reports on ES related to zoning processes (land use planners)

- I found the Assessment Support Tool useful (a consultant), it could contain links to reports related to each step
- Tools and methods as well as the training opportunities on methodologies (a researcher)
- Nearby cases are more useful in land use planning – the ones in central Europe are distant and also the practices might differ (For example in Kuopio urban and natural environments are highly close to each other – in central Europe or in Helsinki the discussions on urban environment are therefore different)
- Consultant: networking and offering information on services
- Teacher: exercises/thesis material for students
- Max. 1-2 pages of basic information for politicians?
- Search tool must be functional
- Overall picture of the methods and tools → Method pages should include links to examples
- Grass roots level information in addition to expert information; National and regional level are essential
- Oppla seems to fulfill quite many of the needs that came up
- Information on Finnish sites would increase the usability of Oppla
- Ask Oppla is the least useful feature
- Decision trees were considered moderately helpful, “Well, there is not harm in them ..”..

### How should Oppla be developed?

- Oppla as a part of the everyday life
  - Social media links to current aspects – facebook and twitter activity so that Oppla reminds of itself on a daily basis instead of gradually becoming forgotten
  - Discussing face to face, interaction not only via Ask Oppla but in real time? – morning coffee-sessions, social media interactive discussions on selected topics; building a community, not only between institutions, but between actors, internationally, but even more importantly, on national-local level
  - Sharing news and links
  - Up-to-date – no dead links!
- Tools
  - for marketing the necessity to win the ES “to sceptics” – different interest groups
  - for decision making
- Popularised information
  - Dictionary of concepts
  - Instructions: this is how to communicate on ES, also in national languages
- Short briefs on tools – no resources to profound studying
- The key words should be good; google search with key words should lead to Oppla
- Each county should have its own Oppla pages
- Some participants suggested that instead of decision trees we would need action plans to mainstream ES into decision-making

## Appendix 2: Report on the Oppla workshop in CENSE, Portugal, March 2017

### Oppla workshop: Feedback on Oppla from practitioners

**Time:** March 2, 2017 at 14:00-17:00

**Place:** FCT-UNL seminars room, Campus de Caparica, Portugal

**Participants:** Diogo Real (QTEL), José Carlos Ferreira (FCT-UNL), Paula Rito Araújo (ICNF), Rita Nicolau (DGT), Alexandra Fonseca (DGT), Ana Luísa Gomes (DGT), Telmo Guedes (FCT-UNL), Nuno Videira (FCT-UNL), Tomás B. Ramos (FCT-UNL), Rita Lopes (FCT-UNL), Nuno F. Matos (Matos, Fonseca e Assoc.), Margarida Fonseca (Matos, Fonseca e Assoc.), Catarina Freitas (CM Almada), Cristina Garret (DGT), Cristina Marta Pedroso (IST-UL), Lúcia Vaz de Figueiredo (FA-UL) (see attached attendance list).

The 16 participants attending the workshop represented environmental authorities (Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests - 1), municipal and regional land use planners (General Directorate for Territory - 4 and Municipality of Almada - 1), consultants (3) and researchers/university (7, of which 3 external to FCT-UNL).

The workshop started with two presentations: Overview of OpenNESS project by Rui Santos, and Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina Case Study by Paula Antunes. Two practitioners (Cristina Garret, from General Directorate of the Territory that has the responsibility for coordinating the on-going revision of the National Land Use Policy Plan and Catarina Freitas that is the Director of the Environment Division of the Municipality of Almada) were invited to share the main challenges and information needs that they face in the operationalization of the ecosystem services concept in their activities. This was followed by a presentation of the contents of Oppla platform by Pedro Clemente.

Next, the participants were divided in three groups with 5 and 6 people, facilitated by Diogo Ferraz, João Fernandes and Mécia Miguel from CENSE research team. The group work included collective discussions to address four questions:

1. What kind of knowledge needs do you have in relation to ecosystem services?
2. Where do you usually search for information on ecosystem services?
3. How should the contents and/or structure of Oppla be developed so that it would be more helpful for your work?
4. What Oppla functionalities would you use in your own work?

At the same time, a hands-on exercise was prepared, where groups were asked to simulate in a computer the use of Oppla to obtain information about methods, case studies and people for a specific purpose, such as preparation of a land use plan, a climate adaptation project or an environmental impact assessment that they selected according to their interests. They were also asked to explore the functionality of submitting new products and case studies in Oppla. Questions 1 and 2 should be answered before the hands-on



exercise with Oppla, and questions 3 and 4 after that. A workbook was prepared for each group, with a description of the tasks to be performed and forms for collecting replies to the questions.

### General comments

- In general participants thought that Oppla can be very useful, specially for practitioners.
- The availability of a diversified set of case studies in a unique platform was particularly appreciated by participants.
- The idea of have a 'supermarket' of knowledge where you can be both a provider and a receiver of ideas and information was considered very interesting.
- Participants also said that it is an advantage to have an integrated platform that allows saving time in searches in dispersed sources.
- Quality control and reliability of the information provided were important aspects stressed by participants. The implementation of a rating system of products, cases studies etc by users, according to their usefulness and other criteria, was suggested. Participants want to be assured that the platform is reliable when they are using it. It is important to demonstrate credibility and who is responsible for what.
- It is important to have a face and coordinates of who is responsible for input of a particular information.
- How does Oppla stand out from what is already available? How can we be sure that it will not disappear once the projects are finished?
- It should be more transparent to the users.
- Search functionalities could be improved (see comments below).
- Participants found that it is somewhat difficult to navigate the site (one participant said: *'if we did not have had help from the CENSE team it would have been much more difficult for us to find things in the site'*).
- The design of the website was described as a bit 'grey'/dull.
- Participants showed high expectations for the future development and growth in the contents of the platform.

### 1. What kind of knowledge needs do you have in relation to ecosystem services?

- A clear definition of concepts – what are ecosystem services? Classification systems of ES. Description and lists of descriptors/indicators that can be used.
- Info about methods for mapping and valuation of ES and assessment of ecosystems conditions.
- What are the methods available and what are the most commonly used?
- Methods/tools for specific purposes and at different scales, e.g. environmental impact assessment, municipal planning, national level land use planning, climate change adaptation plans,...
- Framework policies regarding ES at different scales/regions (e.g. EU) – suggestion for a possible new tab in Oppla.

- Information about and for integration of ES in territorial planning and management instruments.
- Good case studies/examples with clear information about methods, data, issues, ES addressed, location,....
- Updated information about ES indicators, parameters for models, values etc. For instance, participants need time series data updated on a continuous basis.
- Directory of teams with expertise in the different subjects.
- Online courses/webinars.
- Tools for participation – in particular how to implement a participatory process about ES in land use planning at the national level. What is the experience in this issue?

## **2. Where do you usually search for information on ecosystem services?**

- Social networks (experiences, other case studies).
- Scientific papers. Web of Science.
- Congresses, seminars, workshops.
- University professors, scientists.
- European projects (e.g. ValuES).
- EC reports. MAES.
- Internet, google.
- Talk with people (locals).
- Baseline information: DGT (General Directorate for Territory), INE (National Statistics Institute), APA (Portuguese Environment Agency), ICNF (Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests).
- European Environment Agency.

## **3. How should Oppla be developed?**

- The process of registration as a new user is not working very well – some participants complained that they received the information for login in their email with a big delay and others did not receive it at all (at least in time for the workshop).
- Search according to ecosystem service type should be allowed in all functionalities (marketplace, community and case studies).
- Search of case studies according to specific objectives should be allowed – perhaps additional filters are needed.
- Search functions are not working very well, are not very intuitive and are not linked – for instance, we should be able to connect case studies to marketplace.
- In case studies, more filters would be welcome. (e.g. methods, ecosystems, ES)
- In the 'community' tab there is a repetition of buttons for search filters.
- A glossary was seen as something that could be useful to include in Oppla. The idea of having the glossary entries open to development by users was discussed, but quality assurance concerns were raised.

- Very different searches lead to the same results (it may be due to an aggressive dissemination strategy from the person that submitted the product/case study, selecting many terms to maximize chances of being seen).
- Submission of products should be easier and more clear (e.g. which fields are compulsory, information/examples of what is expected in each field,...). It could also be tailored according to the type of product that we are introducing.
- Regions could be geographical – the ones displayed now do not make much sense. Location is important.
- The platform is not very useful for one specific purpose (e.g. environmental impact assessment).
- Add courses contents/lectures about ecosystem services (e.g. MIT Open Course Ware).
- Products should not be available online before they are validated somehow.
- Links to reference sources (e.g. EC, EEA, EPBS, ESP...) should be added.
- Oppla does not come up when we google ecosystem services – visibility of Oppla should be improved.

#### **4. What Oppla functionalities would you use in your own work?**

- Search for case studies and information in general.
- Networking and contact with the Oppla community.
- Webinars, tutorials and training.
- Literature search.
- Similar experiences.
- Dissemination of results.

#### **ANNEX:**

Workshop Program

Photos from the session



2 de março de 2017

Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia,  
Universidade Nova de Lisboa  
Sala de seminários, Ed. VII

## WORKSHOP

### Apresentação da Plataforma OPPLA

**Oppla é uma nova plataforma de partilha de conhecimento; o sítio onde o conhecimento mais recente sobre serviços dos ecossistemas, capital natural e soluções baseadas na natureza é reunido e disponibilizado.**

[www.oppla.eu](http://www.oppla.eu)

#### PROGRAMA

- 14h00 – Boas vindas. Apresentação do workshop e do projeto OpenNESS, Paula Antunes, CENSE FCT-UNL
- 14h15 – Mapeamento e avaliação dos serviços dos ecossistemas no Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina, Rui Santos, CENSE FCT-UNL
- 14h45 – Operacionalização do conceito dos serviços dos ecossistemas no planeamento territorial – desafios e necessidades de informação  
Escala nacional – Cristina Garrett, Direção Geral do Território  
Escala local – Catarina Freitas, Câmara Municipal de Almada
- 15h15 – Pausa para café/chá
- 15h30 – Apresentação da plataforma OPPLA – Pedro Clemente, CENSE FCT-UNL
- 15h45 – *Hands-on* e discussão sobre a utilização da plataforma OPPLA
- 16h30 – Síntese e conclusões
- 17h00 – Encerramento











## Appendix 3: Report on the Oppla workshop in Wing, The Netherlands, April 2017



### Report Netherlands' end-user workshop

Discussing the potentials of Oppla with potential users

On April 4, 2017 Wing and Alterra organized an OpenNESS end-user workshop in the Netherlands on the practicalities and potentials of Oppla. Participants were drawn from a selection of Dutch policymakers, researchers and professionals who are involved on preparing the national Environment & Planning Act and managing natural resources. The meeting yielded a lively and positive discussion on the applicability of Oppla in the various fields of work, including a wishlist of improvements and additional functionalities. Also, Alterra was invited to present Oppla at the ministries of both Economic Affairs and Infrastructure & Environment.

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#### Workshop programme and participants

**Date:** April 4, 2017  
**Time:** 13.30 - 17.00  
**Venue:** Wing, Hollandseweg 7-E,  
 6706 KN Wageningen, the Netherlands

#### Background

During the past four years, Wageningen Environmental Research (i.e. Alterra) and Wing, together with 33 other research institutes, professional organizations and SME's from 14 European and 4 non-European countries, collaborated on developing and testing new tools and methodologies with regards to the operationalization of ecosystem services and natural capital. These activities were employed within the framework of the European FP7-programme called 'OpenNESS' (Operationalization of Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services).

One offspring of OpenNESS is the knowledge-sharing platform called Oppla. Meant to be an international marketplace of expertise on interdisciplinary approaches and stakeholder engagement in developing and managing nature-based solutions, Oppla aims to be a community of practice where working examples, best practices and quantifiable evidence are shared amongst researchers, policymakers and professionals in the field.

During the workshop of April 4, Alterra and Wing introduced the participants to the present capabilities of the Oppla platform, and invited them to reflect on its potentials with regards to working practices in the Netherlands.

## Appendix 4: Feedback from OpenNESS SME event on Oppla

### Feedback from OpenNESS SME event on Oppla

Brussels, 28 October 2015

During a one-day OpenNESS event targeted at the SME community, a session was devoted to a presentation and discussion on Oppla. At that point in time Oppla was very much in a development and proposal stage, with no real product to be presented. The session started with an introduction to the progress in developing Oppla, with special attention to how SMEs can benefit from using the platform. This was followed by an interactive session during which participants identified potential clients, how they would reach them and how Oppla could help in this process. The feedback from this session mainly was in terms of curiosity of the participants on what Oppla potentially could deliver, a healthy scepticism over what it would add to other existing platform, and intrigue in terms of business potential. With regard to the letter component, key elements coming out of the group concerned:

- Potential for profiling your business and products/services through the Oppla marketplace;
- Potential for first-hand information about business opportunities (funding, calls, partners);
- Once the Oppla community would reach a critical mass, potential for sponsoring Oppla or selling products/services through Oppla.

A total of 48 persons participated in the meeting, of which 19 represented the business community in some form (15 of which registered as SME and of these 4 were directly involved in OpenNESS or Oppla).

#### **Feedback from the third EU business and biodiversity annual meeting**

The Hague, 23 November 2016

The event was organised as part of the EU B@B platform ([http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/business/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/business/index_en.htm)) and was attended by some 150 representatives from business, finance institutions, government, NGOs and European Commission. It focused on two key objectives:

- To take stock of what has been achieved by the Platform and its members in 2016 and over the last three years; and
- To discuss the expectations of members for the future of the EU B@B Platform and to explore how the Platform should engage with businesses in the future.

Most of the programme consisted of plenary presentations by a range of speakers from the platform, from business, research and public authorities. One of these was by Tiago Freitas of the EC DG Research &





Innovation, who said in his speech: ‘Oppla is a readily available tool that can support SMEs and other businesses in engaging in further innovation through nature-based solutions’.

OpenNESS was present with a poster, which was on display during breaks (although no poster session was organized as such and therefore posters were not much visited). Our poster showcased the link with SMEs, the value of the OpenNESS case studies, and the services offered by Oppla.

The OpenNESS work on natural capital and ecosystem services, and the many experiences from our case studies were welcomed by those participants visiting the OpenNESS poster at the event. Especially the role of Oppla in sharing best practices and offering an existing community and marketplace received much attention.

## Appendix 5: Feedback from the OPERAs user board

### Feedback from the OPERAs user board

Palma de Mallorca, 18 November 2016

During the final user board meeting of the OPERAs project lots of useful feedback was given on Oppla. A substantial proportion of the two-day meeting was devoted to the platform, which was recognized as a key synthesis product of OPERAs and OpenNESS. Key features and functionality of the current beta version of Oppla was presented and a sneak preview was given into development plans in the near future. This offered an excellent basis for an interactive session during which the 15 user board members tested Oppla and then provided feedback.

The user board, with representatives from national and international NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, European institutions, local authorities, and business, provided great advice on possible improvements for the Oppla marketplace. Most of the feedback will be taken up in the finalization of the alpha version of Oppla, launched in early 2017. It was striking to note how keen the participants are to also submit products and services to the Oppla marketplace, hereby strengthening its potential to truly support the community on ecosystem services, natural capital and nature-based solutions.

During the interactive session the user board addressed four questions focusing on the Oppla marketplace, of which the feedback is presented below in random order:

1. What is your impression of the information displayed:
  - a. There’s more content than expected
  - b. Keywords list is too long – this will be amended in the next version to become an autofill version. It is recommended to consider GEMET as a standard thesaurus.



- c. How about QA/QC? A user feedback system would be advisable, allowing users to rate products.
  - d. The list of products is not intuitive or complete.
  - e. There are 'false' records, displayed in every search (e.g. the disaster management guy).
  - f. On the fact sheet of each product, add an indication of the transferability and time when the product was completed.
  - g. Make the image or title of a product in the search results clickable, not only the [MORE] button.
  - h. Make sure that the title of any product is meaningful.
  - i. There is some confusion over what goes into the marketplace and what in the community. Answer: an organisation would go under the community, whereas services provided by an organisation should be under marketplace.
  - j. The case study finder seems to be quite different than the rest of the platform, and not integrated. This will be changed in the next version.
  - k. Search results are presented in random order (to prevent favouritism). It is suggested to fix the result presentation at least during the same user session, to allow users to go find earlier results easily.
  - l. The general [search] field does not process Boolean searches.
  - m. It would be good if search results could be presented in bold (cf. Google).
  - n. A general remark on Oppla as a website: there is a need to show briefly 'what is Oppla' on the landing page, or at least before you need to register, otherwise the user has no clue what they should be registering for.
2. Would you submit a product to the marketplace?
- a. Yes, to get feedback on a product and to boost our profile.
  - b. Yes, because our product is the best and cannot be left out.
  - c. Yes, to share English-language products to a wider community than we currently do.
  - d. Yes, to promote commercial services.
  - e. Yes, to increase the use of existing databases.
  - f. Yes, to get feedback on work in progress.
  - g. Yes, to use as a repository of our own organisation's products so we can find it in one place.
  - h. Yes, to stimulate knowledge transferability.
  - i. Yes, to support Oppla development.
  - j. Yes, to increase outreach of products.
  - k. Possibly no, because all our products are in national language only.
  - l. Language is a constraint, our English-language products could be shared but only if we are convinced of their quality and relevance for international audiences.
  - m. Yes, to attract traffic to our own website.
  - n. Yes, to advertise work and products.
  - o. Yes, to use and be part of the community.
  - p. Yes, to upload very old documents that may otherwise disappear in cyberspace.
  - q. No, I would be a user rather than a provider.
  - r. Yes, to combine interested and to search for partners.

3. Would you be interested in having your own 'group' (sub-community) under Oppla? This question led to some general agreement and nodding, no specific comments.
4. What additionally should be put on Oppla?
  - a. A glossary of terms as separate section (e.g. on front page), not only as product in the marketplace.
  - b. Integration of datasets of other organisations.
  - c. Include the level of experience in the profile of community members.
  - d. Allow providers to add other fields to the marketplace template.
  - e. Search results to be short, clear and succinct, to prevent too much scrolling.
  - f. Get the private sector more involved.
  - g. Tailor-made content, access for specific communities.
  - h. Overview of funding opportunities.
  - i. If the marketplace grows in number of records, ensure that search remains easy and focused.
  - j. FAQ
  - k. Add 'coming up next' as a teaser for users to return to the platform.
  - l. Date stamp of last update.