



**Co-operation for the Convention on Biological Diversity**

**Consolidated list of thematic expert groups, with regular revisions to adjust to CBD bodies' agendas and evolutions within expert networks**

**Deliverable 2.1**

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### **Authorship**

Fiona Nevzati  
*Alternet*

Constance Laureau  
*Foundation for Research on Biodiversity (FRB)*

Camille Guibal  
*Foundation for Research on Biodiversity (FRB)*

Kinga Öllerer  
*HUN-REN Centre for Ecological Research (HUN-REN CER)*

Pierre Spielwoy  
*National Museum of Natural History (MNHN)*

Isabella Livertout  
*National Museum of Natural History (MNHN)*

Jorge L. Ventocilla  
*Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS)*



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## Preface

This deliverable presents the first consolidated version of the CO-OP4CBD expert database under Task 2.1. It documents the structure, methodology, and current state of the database at the time of reporting. The database is a living resource and will continue to evolve throughout the project. Some elements described in this report (e.g. governance arrangements, public-facing views, long-term hosting) are under discussion and will be refined in subsequent project phases.

## Summary

Deliverable 2.1 presents the first consolidated list of thematic expert groups developed under CO-OP4CBD. The list brings together experts identified through WP1 mapping activities, open registration, direct invitations, and partner nominations. It provides an initial, structured overview of expertise relevant to the CBD, organised around its Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1), and associated stakeholder groups (Annex 2). The report describes how the expert database has taken shape to date: early data collection, standardisation, validation of core categories, and the first steps towards grouping expertise thematically. It also outlines the areas where further refinement is needed, particularly in strengthening regional balance, stakeholder diversity, and consistency of information across entries.

Task 2.1 has additionally examined how the expert database can remain adaptable and interoperable with related EU biodiversity initiatives, including potential links with systems such as the SSBD under the BioAgora project, as well as broader alignment with EU efforts to map expertise in support of biodiversity policy processes.

## List of abbreviations

EU	European Union
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CO-OP4CBD	Cooperation for the Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable
FRB	French Foundation for Biodiversity Research
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HUN-REN CER	HUN-REN Centre for Ecological Research
KM-GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
MNHN	National Museum of Natural History

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SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SBI	Subsidiary Body on Implementation
SB8J	Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) - Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices
SPIs	Science-Policy Interfaces
TSC	European Subregional Technical and Scientific Cooperation Support Centre
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
AHTEG	Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group
IAG	Informal Advisory Group
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans


## 1 Introduction

The expert database follows a two-step consent system to ensure transparency and compliance with GDPR. Experts first decide whether to join the internal database, and separately whether they wish a minimal set of non-sensitive information to appear publicly on the CO-OP4CBD website. Only name, country, and broad thematic areas of expertise may be displayed, and only when optional consent is given. All other personal data remain internal to the project and are accessible only to authorised staff.

### 1.1 Background

The CBD unites countries in their efforts to protect and restore the planet's natural systems. Its objectives are carried out through national biodiversity strategies and action plans, guided by the KM-GBF. CO-OP4CBD supports this process by improving access to expertise and enhancing connections between science and policy, helping negotiators and policy teams draw on relevant knowledge when needed.

Within this work, WP2 focuses on identifying, organising, and engaging experts relevant to CBD processes. Task 2.1 (set-up of communities of experts) produces a consolidated and regularly updated list of thematic expert groups aligned with the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1). The task builds on the expert mapping carried out under WP1 and provides the structure needed to connect experts across regions, disciplines, and knowledge systems.



The creation of SB8J highlights the growing relevance of IPLCs in CBD processes. Task 2.1 reflects this by ensuring that IPLC-related expertise can be captured within the database, both through the stakeholder categories and in thematic areas linked to traditional knowledge.

## 1.2 Objectives

Deliverable 2.1 compiles a consolidated list of thematic expert groups and documents how experts were identified, classified, and validated. It outlines the initial structure of these groups; and explains how the information will be maintained and updated throughout the project.

The overarching goal is to keep expert information organized and consistent, making it easier to connect people across themes and regions, strengthen capacity-building efforts, and support meaningful participations in CBD-related work and policy dialogues.

## 1.3 Relevance to the CBD and the Science-Policy Interface

The expert groups developed under Task 2.1 aims to strengthen the support system available to CBD processes by organising expertise in a way that reflects the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1). This structure helps ensure that scientific and technical input can be more easily located when needed for discussions under SBSTTA, SBI, SB8J, and national focal point consultations.

The database supports the practical functioning of SPIs by making expertise easier to find, connect, and mobilise when appropriate. Its primary role is preparatory: it provides a reliable and structured pool of experts that can be drawn upon by CO-OP4CBD work packages when support is needed.

Experts included in the database may also benefit from related projects activities such as training sessions, workshops, and guidance materials – which can help strengthen their ability to engage in CBD processes in the future.

A well-structured expert base improves the potential for timely, balanced, and relevant contributions to upcoming CBD topics and technical assessments, without implying that experts are formally appointed, endorsed, or validated by CO-OP4CBD.

## 1.4 Relation to other Work Packages

Task 2.1 builds directly on the expert and network mapping carried out in WP1. The expert database produced under WP1 served as the starting point for this deliverable, and the early work in WP2 involved cleaning, and restructuring those entries using the shared metadata system. WP1 also informed decisions about thematic categories, geographic coverage, and priority areas for outreach.

WP2's work is linked with other packages in several practical ways:

- **WP1 – Mapping of experts and networks**  
Provided the initial dataset and methodological foundation for building the consolidated expert database. The work under Task 1.2 supplied the first version of the expert database and informed the classification used in Task 2.1.
- **WP3 – Monitoring and Review**

Some of the experts included in the database work on monitoring, indicators, or national reporting. While WP3 conducts its functions independently, both WPs may interact with overlapping expert communities. WP2's role remains limited to organising information; it does not evaluate or select experts for WP3 activities.

- **WP4 - Supporting technical and scientific cooperation (Capacity Building)**  
Many experts indicate interest in training when registering, while others join the database after taking part in capacity-building activities. The expert groups therefore help match these interests with future training offers and ensure that needs identified through the database are followed up.
- **WP5 – Communication and dissemination**  
Supports visibility and outreach for the calls for experts, capacity-building events, and other activities that help maintain the expert network.
- **WP6 – Data management**  
Ensures that the database follows FAIR data principles and GDPR requirements, and that it remains compatible with the project's wider data infrastructure.
- **Cross-project links**  
The database structure is designed to be compatible with ongoing EU biodiversity initiatives that strengthen the SPIs for biodiversity, allowing potential future integration depending on governance decisions.

Overall, Task 2.1 provides shared infrastructure that enables other WPs to work more efficiently with external experts. It does not assess expertise but organises and maintains the underlying system that supports expert engagement across the project.

## 2 Methodology

This section describes how experts were identified, classified, and organised to build the CO-OP4CBD expert database and the first consolidated list of thematic expert groups. The approach combines information collected through previous mapping activities, open calls for experts, and direct input from project partners.

The process evolved over time, moving from an initial consolidation of existing expert lists towards a more structured and continuously updated system supported by an online registration form. All data collection and processing under Task 2.1 follow the EU GDPR (EU 2016/679). Consent and data-protection measures are described in detailed in Section 5.

### 2.1 Overview of the Expert Mapping Process

The development of the CO-OP4CBD expert database builds on the groundwork completed in WP1, which mapped the landscape of expertise relevant to the CBD (Deliverables D1.1 and D1.2). The work under T2.1 follows the data-handling and FAIR principles outlines in Deliverables D6.2 and D6.3.

Because information arrived in different formats and levels of detail, a manual cleaning and consolidation process followed. Duplicate entries were removed, terminology was harmonised, and a simplified classification system was developed jointly with project partners to improve consistency.

This consolidation was carried out in line with GDPR principles. Cleaning and harmonising were limited to organisational and structural adjustments (e.g. removal of duplicate records, flagging of inactive or non-functioning contact details, standardisation of category labels) and did not involve enrichment with new personal data. Only information already lawfully collected

under project activities was processed, and access was restricted to authorised consortium members for project purposes only.

At an early stage, experts were grouped using CBD SBSTTA-25 agenda items as a reference. This approach was later revised to improve long-term stability and interoperability. The updated structure is now based on the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1), which offer a more stable and consistent reference over time.

## 2.2 Data Sources and Collection

The expert database compiled under Task 2.1 draws on several complementary sources, each contributing different types of information that were later harmonised during validation and standardisation. The overall approach builds directly on the expert mapping activities carried out under WP1.

### WP1 mapping

WP1 provided the initial pool of experts identified through existing databases, project consortia, regional networks, and previous EU-funded initiatives. This material formed the baseline dataset that was subsequently cleaned, consolidated, and further developed under Task 2.1.

### Open calls for experts

Two open calls for experts were launched during the project and constituted the main source of new entries. The calls invited individuals and organisations active in biodiversity science, policy, or practice to register their expertise via online forms. Dissemination relied primarily on project partner networks, mailing lists, institutional channels, and targeted circulation within existing biodiversity and policy communities.

Experience from the first two open calls showed that one-off data collection was not sufficient to keep expert information up to date. This led to the introduction of a rolling registration approach (launched on October 30, 2024), allowing new experts to join at any time and previously listed experts to update their profiles as roles or affiliations change.

The call texts, dissemination channels, and timelines are documented in D1.2, which remains the main reference for the design and outreach strategy of the open calls.

### Partner contributions

Partners contributed by circulating the open calls within their networks and, in some cases, by nominating specific experts directly. In particular, HUN-REN CER played a stronger role in identifying and encouraging expert participation from Central and Eastern Europe, while other partners mainly supported dissemination and issued targeted invitations to selected experts, including CO-OP4CBD members.

### Public information

In some cases, experts already active in CBD processes or other intergovernmental panels were added using verified public sources. The main reference point here was the CBD website, especially the notifications on the composition of AHTEGs, IAGs, and other advisory bodies. Where relevant, this was complemented with information published by national focal points or other official international sources.

## 2.3 Classification and Standardisation

To ensure that expert information collected through different sources could be compared, updated, and reused across the project, Task 2.1 introduced a shared set of classification

fields. These fields describe who the experts are, the context in which they work, and how their expertise relates to CBD processes. The aim was not to evaluate expertise, but to organise information in a consistent and transparent way.

The classification framework builds on the material compiled under WP1 and responds to the need for greater consistency across entries that were originally collected using different formats, terminology, and levels of detail. It also supports continuity over time, allowing new entries to be added without reworking the underlying structure.

Each expert profile includes the following elements:

### **Basic information**

Experts are required to provide their name, organisation, job title, country of residence and work, languages spoken, and contact details. A link to a public professional profile (e.g. ORCID, institutional webpage, LinkedIn) is requested to support transparency and traceability. These links are used as supporting information but do not constitute formal verification of expertise.

### **Professional profile and CBD engagement**

This section captures the expert's professional background and how their work relates to biodiversity topics relevant to the CBD. Experts may indicate prior involvement in CBD-related processes (e.g. COPs, SBSTTA, national reporting) where applicable, but prior engagement with the CBD is not a requirement. The database is intended to include thematic experts who may contribute scientific, technical, or practical knowledge even if they are new to CBD processes. Experts can also express interest in future CO-OP4CBD training or capacity-building activities.

### **Thematic areas**

Experts select thematic areas that best match their expertise, using the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1) as the reference framework. This replaces the earlier use of meeting agenda items, which change from one session to another. The updated structure provides a more stable and recognisable basis for organising expertise over time, without implying any assessment or endorsement of individual competence by CO-OP4CBD.

The shift from using SBSTTA agenda items to the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues was a deliberate methodological choice. Agenda items change from meeting to meeting and reflect short-term procedural needs, whereas Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues are stable institutional reference points adopted by the Parties.

Using this structure provides greater consistency over time and makes the database easier to maintain as CBD priorities evolve. It also offers a clearer reference for experts, many of whom are familiar with these frameworks through national reporting, research, or policy work, even if they are not directly involved in specific SBSTTA sessions.

### **Stakeholder category**

Experts self-identify one or more stakeholder categories commonly used in CBD-related work, including scientific and technical communities, government and government agencies, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, civil society organisations, private sector, intergovernmental organisations, youth, women and gender organisations, science–policy–society interfaces, donors, or other (Annex 2). Multiple selections are allowed to reflect the diversity of professional roles.

### **Geographic scope**

Geographic information records both the country of residence and the main geographic scope of professional activity. UN regional groupings and ISO country codes are used to support consistency and to help identify geographic imbalances in representation. Issues related to

overseas territories and special administrative arrangements are noted but not fully resolved at this stage.

### **Job Title / Professional Role**

Academic roles are classified using the EURAXESS R1–R4 research career stages, while non-academic roles are grouped using broad ESCO or ISCO-based categories. This approach supports comparability across career stages and sectors without imposing a strict hierarchy of expertise.

Together, these fields provide enough structure to maintain coherence across the database while remaining flexible enough to accommodate updates as the project evolves.

Access is limited to authorised members of the consortium, mainly those working in WP1, WP2, WP4, and WP6, since these teams handle expert mapping, outreach, training and communication. Information about the database and its updates has been shared during internal T2.1 and WP2 meetings, and partners can request access when their tasks require it. This approach keeps the system functional and secure while ensuring that all relevant WPs can work with the information needed.

## **2.4 Data Collection Instrument – Registration Form**

The registration form, built in LimeSurvey (<https://coop4cbd-expert-database.limesurvey.net/236295?lang=en&newtest=Y>) is the main entry point for collecting and updating expert information under Task 2.1. It supports a continuous registration approach, allowing new experts to join at any time and enabling previously registered experts to update their profiles as roles, affiliations, or thematic areas of expertise change.

The updated version of the registration form is scheduled for public launch in early 2026. Dissemination will take place through CO-OP4CBD communication channels, partner networks, targeted outreach by consortium members, and project-related events. Outreach efforts will pay particular attention to thematic and regional gaps identified during earlier mapping and validation phases.

The form mirrors the structure of the expert database, which facilitates consistent data entry, smoother integration into the master dataset, and more efficient quality checks. All information collected through the form is stored in the internal CO-OP4CBD expert database and is accessible only to authorised consortium members for project purposes. Data are not publicly visible by default, and any public display is strictly limited to non-sensitive information for which experts have given explicit optional consent, in line with GDPR requirements.

The registration form is organised into four main sections:

### **Basic information**

This section collects essential personal and professional details, including name, affiliation, job title, stakeholder category, country of residence and country of expertise, languages spoken, and contact information. A link to a public professional profile (e.g. ORCID, institutional webpage, or LinkedIn) is required to support basic verification and transparency. Providing personal and institutional details such as e-mail, name, affiliation, position, job title, stakeholder group, country of residence and country of expertise, and languages, ensures every entry can be traced back to a real person or organisation.

### **Professional profile, expertise, and CBD engagement**

Experts describe their main thematic areas of expertise and how their work relates to CBD-relevant topics, including experience with biodiversity science, policy, or practice. This section also captures prior engagement with CBD processes where relevant (e.g. NBSAPs, COPs,

SBSTTA), while recognising that many experts may be new to the CBD and contribute primarily through their thematic or technical knowledge.

### **Training opportunities and invitation consent**

Respondents can indicate interest in future CO-OP4CBD training or capacity-building activities linked to their expertise. This information helps connect expert profiles with project activities under WP4 but does not imply any obligation to participate.

### **Consent and data protection**

The form includes a clear, layered consent structure. Two mandatory checkboxes cover inclusion in the internal CO-OP4CBD expert database and acceptance of the project's Privacy Policy. Two optional checkboxes allow experts to (i) agree to share their contact details with trusted partners such as TSCs or CBD National Focal Points, and (ii) allow a minimal set of basic information (name, country, main thematic areas of expertise) to appear on a public-facing expert list on the CO-OP4CBD website. No contact details or institutional affiliations are ever made public.

The form design supports consistent data handling and reuse within the project and aligns with FAIR principles as far as possible within GDPR constraints. The current version of the registration form is publicly accessible via the project website and LimeSurvey.

## **2.5 Validation Process and Quality Control**

Validation under Task 2.1 combined structured manual checks with automated controls introduced through the online registration form. The objective was to ensure that entries in the expert database are coherent, traceable, and relevant to CBD-related topics, while respecting GDPR constraints and the project's mandate.

The process builds directly on the expert lists developed under WP1 and the two open calls for experts (first call launched on 30 May 2023; second call launched on 15 January 2024). Because these inputs were collected through different channels and for different purposes, they varied in format, level of detail, and classification. A first validation round therefore focused on consolidation: removing duplicate entries, harmonising terminology, and aligning stakeholder, geographic, and thematic fields with a shared classification framework agreed across partners.

Once this structure was stabilised, a series of internal review rounds were carried out within WP2 to test the clarity and usability of categories, identify gaps, and adjust field definitions. Feedback from these reviews informed refinements to the database structure and the design of the updated registration form.

The launch of the online registration form added automated quality-control features, including mandatory fields, controlled vocabularies (drop-down menus), and basic consistency checks. These mechanisms reduce errors at the point of entry and ensure that new submissions follow the agreed structure. Experts are also required to provide a link to a public professional profile (e.g. ORCID, institutional webpage, LinkedIn), which supports transparency and traceability without constituting a formal assessment of expertise.

Quality control under Task 2.1 focuses on data integrity rather than evaluation of expertise. Checks are limited to verifying that entries are complete, that mandatory fields are filled correctly, and that submissions correspond to identifiable individuals or organisations. The level or quality of expertise is not assessed or certified by CO-OP4CBD and remains self-declared by experts, in line with GDPR obligations and the project's scope.

During the project, these checks are carried out by the WP2 team responsible for managing the expert database. Cases where information is unclear or incomplete may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, primarily to ensure consistency rather than to judge content. More formal validation mechanisms may be considered in the future, depending on governance decisions and project needs, but they are not part of the current workflow.

Experts who were included in earlier versions of the database—prior to the revised registration form—will be invited to re-register. This step ensures that their profiles are up to date, include the current quality-control elements, and follow the revised structure.

## 2.6 Metadata and Documentation

To ensure consistency, traceability, and reuse within the project, the expert database is supported by internal metadata and documentation describing its structure, fields, and classification logic.

Each data field used in the database (e.g. stakeholder category, thematic area, geographic scope, job role) is accompanied by an internal description outlining its purpose, format, and allowed values. These metadata records document how information is collected through the registration form, how it is standardised during cleaning, and how it is interpreted for internal use within CO-OP4CBD.

The metadata framework follows the principles set out in the project's Data Management Plan (Deliverables D6.2 and D6.3), with a focus on clarity, version control, and internal interoperability. Updates to the registration form or database structure are documented when changes are introduced, allowing partners to track revisions over time and ensuring continuity across project phases.

Metadata and technical documentation are maintained as internal working documents and are accessible to authorised consortium members involved in WP1, WP2, WP4, and WP6. This information is not published publicly, as it may contain details on internal logic, workflows, or data-handling practices that are not relevant outside the project context.

This approach supports coordinated use of the database across work packages, while keeping the system manageable and compliant with GDPR and project governance requirements.

## 2.7 Governance and Sustainability Model

At this stage of the project, the long-term governance and sustainability arrangements for the CO-OP4CBD expert database are still under discussion. The database has been developed and operated within the framework of the project, and its current governance reflects internal agreements among consortium partners under Task 2.1.

During the project, responsibility for maintaining, updating, and using the expert database rests with the CO-OP4CBD consortium, primarily through WP2 in coordination with WP6 for data management and compliance. Access to the database is limited to authorised project partners, and use of the information is restricted to activities defined within the project's scope.

Several possible options for post-project governance and hosting have been identified and are being explored internally and with relevant initiatives. These include, for example:

- integration into a broader EU biodiversity or science–policy support platform,

- continued limited maintenance by one or more consortium partners for a defined period, or
- secured archiving of the database with controlled access for trusted partners.

No decision has been taken on these options. Any future governance model will need to comply with GDPR requirements, clarify data-controller responsibilities, define access rules, and ensure that expert consent remains valid for any continued use beyond the project's lifetime.

Because of these constraints, the database has been designed with a pragmatic and modular structure. This allows it to function effectively during the project while keeping open the possibility of future continuity, without committing the consortium to specific long-term arrangements at this stage.

Further clarification of governance, hosting responsibilities, and update procedures will be developed later in the project.

### 3 Thematic Expert Groups

In this deliverable, the term 'expert database' refers to the internal project resource, while 'public-facing expert list' refers to the limited, consent-based information displayed on the CO-OP4CBD website.

#### 3.1 Grouping logic

The thematic expert groups follow the structure of the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1). This provides a stable and internationally recognised framework that reflects how the CBD organises its work and discussions. Because these programme elements evolve relatively slowly and are well established institutionally, they offer a structure that can remain relevant beyond the lifetime of the project.

Experts are grouped according to the themes they select in the registration form. Multiple selections are allowed and expected, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of biodiversity-related work. The purpose of these groupings is purely organisational: to structure the database in a way that mirrors the CBD framework and makes it easier to identify relevant profiles when needed.

All classifications are based on self-declared information provided by experts. The thematic groups do not assess, verify, rank, or endorse expertise, nor do they imply any judgement on competence or authority. They serve solely as a practical way to organise information within the database.

#### 3.2 Thematic areas of Expertise

The thematic areas used in the CO-OP4CBD expert database are aligned with the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1), as defined on the CBD website (<https://www.cbd.int/programmes>). This approach replaces the earlier use of SBSTTA-25 meeting-specific agenda items, which tend to change from one session to another, and provides a more consistent and long-term structure.

Examples of thematic areas covered include:

- Agricultural Biodiversity
- Climate Change and Biodiversity
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Invasive Alien Species
- Protected Areas
- Sustainable Wildlife Management
- Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices – Article 8(j)

The full list of thematic areas used in the database is provided in (Annex 1).

Several themes regularly discussed in SBSTTA are not yet formally established as CBD Programmes of Work or Cross-Cutting Issues. These are usually areas still under negotiation or linked to ongoing scientific developments before they reach COP for formal adoption. Examples include synthetic biology, gene-driven management, or emerging digital and modelling approaches. Because these topics fall outside the CBD's stable thematic structure, they are tracked internally and addressed through targeted outreach or dedicated calls for experts when relevant to specific CBD discussions.

Alongside this, several CBD Cross-Cutting Issues remain highly relevant for expert mapping, such as Identification, Monitoring and Indicators, and Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices (Article 8(j)). These themes are already part of the terminology and classification used in the database and helps ensure consistency with the official CBD framework while keeping enough flexibility to accommodate future developments. Since the Aichi Targets have been replaced by the KM-GBF, this deliverable uses KM-GBF terminology throughout. The rest of the thematic categories remain unchanged and consistent with the current CBD framework.

### 3.3 Stakeholder categories represented

Stakeholder categories in the database reflect participation patterns commonly used across CBD processes, including COP, SBSTTA, SBI, and SB8J.

Every thematic area therefore brings together experts from different backgrounds such as researchers, government representatives, civil society actors, Indigenous representatives, and practitioners. Examples of stakeholder categories represented include:

- Scientific and Technical Communities (including Early Career Researchers)
- Civil Society Organizations (including NGOs)
- Government and Government Agencies (including local authorities)
- Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC)
- Private Sector
- Science-Policy-Society Interfaces (SPIs)

Additional categories and definitions are provided in Annex 2.

### 3.4 Online representation

A public version of the expert list will be visualised on the CO-OP4CBD website in early 2026, following the launch of the updated registration form and completion of the re-registration round. Only experts who provide explicit consent during registration will appear on the public-

facing list. The list will be searchable by name, country, and main thematic areas of expertise, in line with GDPR requirements.

To avoid any implications of endorsement or formal validation, the public list will include a clear disclaimer. All information shown is self-reported by experts through the registration form, and CO-OP4CBD does not assess or verify individual expertise. The purpose of the is to provide visibility to the range of topics and fields represented within the network but does not represent a judgement on the qualification, skills, or institutional mandates of the individual listed.

Experts may participate in the database either in a personal capacity or as part of their institution's interest in engaging with CBD-related science-policy work. This distinction is not publicly displayed, as it is not systematically collected or verifiable across all entries.

## **4 Snapshot of the Current Expert Network (December 2025)**

### **4.1 Number of experts and organisations**

As of December 2025, the CO-OP4CBD expert database includes approximately 370 registered experts affiliated with more than 200 organisations. These organisations span academia, government agencies, civil society organisations (including NGOs), international organisations, and research centres.

The experts are primarily based in EU Member States and associated countries, in line with project's mandate and outreach focus. Entries originate mainly from two open calls for experts, complemented by partners nominations and the initial mapping exercise conducted under WP1.

An updated and validated registration form (LimeSurvey) is now in place and will be launched in early 2026. It allows both new experts to register and previously listed experts to update their profiles by re-registering to the database. This supports the database as a living resource that can be maintained throughout the project and, subject to governance decisions, beyond its lifetime.

### **4.2 Field of expertise distribution**

Experts registered in the database cover a broad range of topics aligned with the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1). The most frequently selected thematic areas include Ecosystem Restoration, Climate Change and Biodiversity, Protected Areas, and Identification, Monitoring, Indicators and Assessments.

Other themes, such as Capacity Building, Communication, Education and Public Awareness, and Traditional Knowledge (Article 8(j)), are currently less represented. This reflects both the self-selection nature of the registration process and the thematic focus of earlier outreach activities, rather than a lack of relevance of these topics within the CBD framework.

Experts were able to select multiple thematic areas. Percentages therefore reflect how often each theme was selected across the database, rather than exclusive categories. This distribution provides an overview of thematic breadth rather than a measure of depth or priority.

### 4.3 Regional representations

Most experts in the database are based in Western European and Others Group, reflecting the project's primary geographic focus and the networks through which the initial mapping and calls were disseminated. Targeted efforts have increased participation from Central and Eastern European countries, with particularly strong representation from some countries (e.g. Romania, Hungary), while others remain less represented.

Experts from African, Asia–Pacific, and Latin American and Caribbean regions are present but account for a smaller share of the database. This reflects the scope and dissemination channels of the open calls, which primarily targeted EU Member States and Associated Countries. Global coverage was not an explicit objective of Task 2.1, although registrations from outside the core target regions were accepted whenever submitted. Figure 1 presents the geographic distribution of experts based on country of residence.

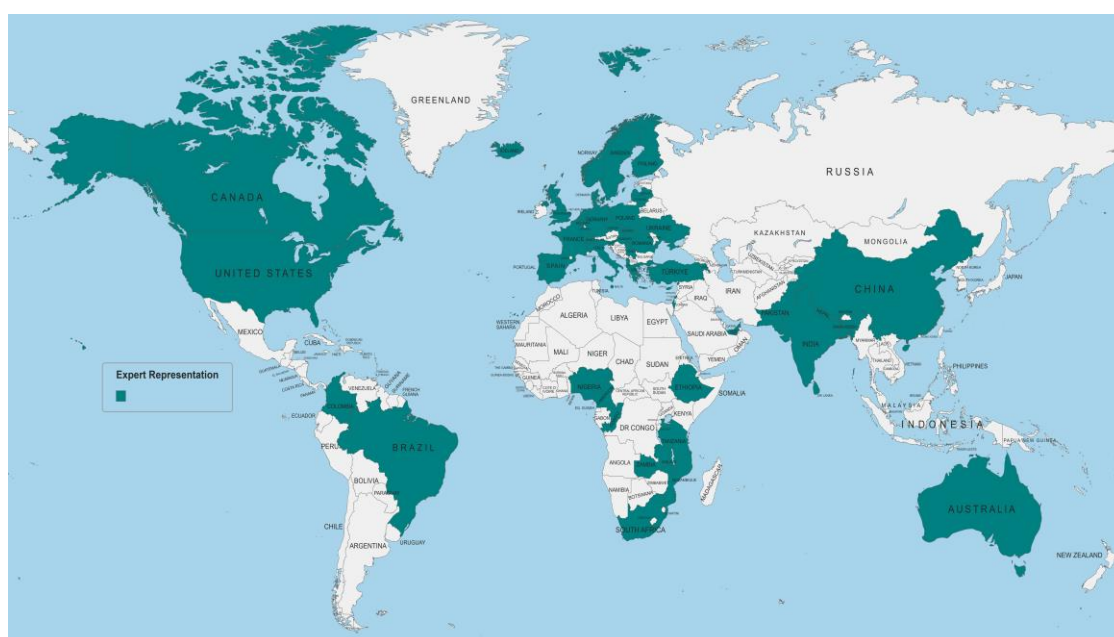


Figure 1 Geographic distribution of experts included in the CO-OP4CBD expert database

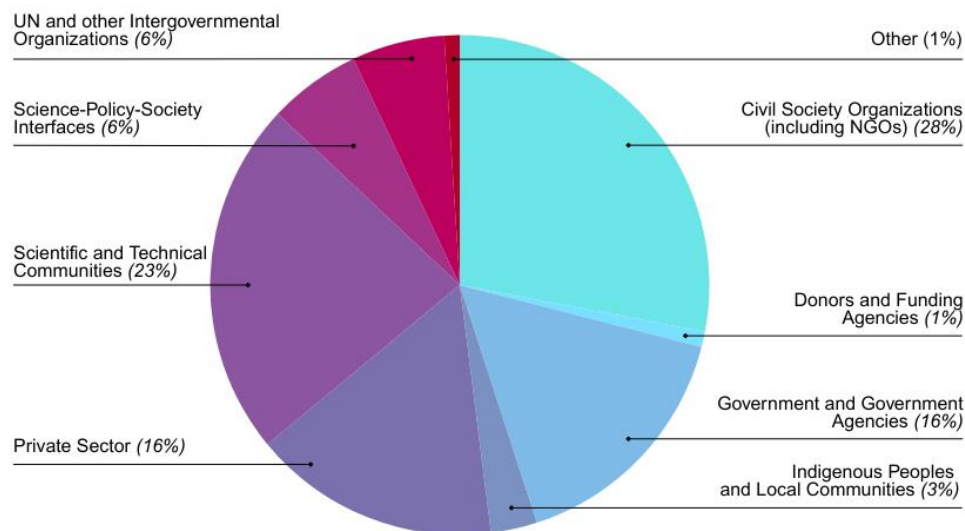
### 4.4 Stakeholder diversity

The database includes a wide range of stakeholder categories reflecting typical participation across CBD processes.

Civil Society Organisations (including NGOs) and Scientific and Technical Communities (including Early Career Researchers) together represent the largest share of the network. Government and Government Agencies and the Private Sector form a substantial second groups. Science-Policy-Society (SPSIs) interfaces and United Nations and other Intergovernmental Organisations are present but less numerous. Participations from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC), and Donors and Funding Agencies remains limited. A small residual “Other” category captures profiles that do not clearly align with the predefined stakeholder categories.

These proportions should be interpreted considering the project's scope and dissemination channels. The expert database was developed to support CBD-related processes, and the

distributions of stakeholder categories should not be interpreted as indicating relative importance or priority among stakeholder groups (Figure 2).



**Figure 2** Stakeholder categories of experts included in the CO-OP4CBD expert database (multiple selections allowed)

#### 4.5 Identified gaps

Some gaps are visible in the current composition of the expert database. These should be read considering the projects' scope and the way the expert calls were framed and disseminated. The open calls primarily targeted experts from EU Members States and Associated Countries, in line with the objectives of CO-OP4CBD and the approach taken under WP1 and WP2. Registrations from Central and Eastern EU, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin American and the Caribbean were nevertheless received, but broader global coverage was not explicit aim of this task.

Certain stakeholder groups, namely IPLCs, youth-led organisations, and gender-focused organisations are more difficult to reach through standard expert calls and professional networks. This partly stems from the wording of the call texts and the channels used, which tend to reach academic and policy communities more efficiently.

In addition, some contact details collected during earlier phases are no longer up to date. These entries have been flagged as part of the validation process. Experts who registered prior to the updated registration form (LimeSurvey) will be invited to re-register to confirm their interest, update their profiles, and complete the current quality-control fields.

## 5 Data Management and Sustainability

This chapter explains how the expert database is stored, maintained, and protected, and how its structure aligns with the principles set out in the project's Data Management Plan (D6.2 and D6.3) and the Grant Agreement. It also outlines the elements that will shape the long-term

sustainability of the database, including hosting, access rules, and potential links with other EU platforms. The long-term governance model is still under discussion and will be finalised later in the project.

## 5.1 Data Storage, Access and Consent

Data are stored on secure EU-based servers following the practices of the Data Management Plan. Access to the internal database is restricted to authorised consortium members who require the information for project tasks.

Where possible, the database structure follows FAIR principles within the limits set by GDPR. Metadata are documented internally and updated when fields or categories are revised. Version changes are tracked, and controlled vocabularies support basic interoperability with related EU biodiversity platforms.

Any information that may become publicly visible is deliberately limited to non-sensitive fields for which experts have provided explicit consent. All other details remain internal and are used only for project purposes.

CO-OP4CBD handles personal data in line with the ethical principles and legal requirements set out in the Grant Agreement, including the GDPR, FAIR principles (D6.2 and D6.3), and relevant national rules. Only information necessary for the expert database is collected, and it is stored in secure environments. Standard safeguards—explicit consent, controlled access, and limited retention—are applied to minimise risks and maintain transparency throughout the database lifecycle.

Because the database includes personal and professional information, the registration process is designed around clear consent and transparency. Experts are informed about what data are collected and why, how long they are stored, who can access them within the project, and how they can update or withdraw their data at any time.

The consent model includes:

- **Mandatory consent:**  
Experts must agree to (1) join the CO-OP4CBD database and (2) have their data processed under the project's Privacy Policy.
- **Optional consent (1):**  
Experts may choose to allow their contact details to be shared with trusted partners such as the TSCs, CBD National Focal Points, or the SSBD. This is not required to join the database and can be withdrawn at any time.
- **Optional consent (2):**  
Experts may choose to have a minimal set of non-sensitive information (name, country, main thematic areas of expertise) appear publicly on the CO-OP4CBD website. This helps illustrate the breadth of fields represented in the network while ensuring that no contact details or institutional affiliations are made public.

For the public-facing expert list, only basic details—name, country, and main thematic areas of expertise—are displayed. This list is built entirely on self-declared expertise. CO-OP4CBD does not validate or certify the level of expertise of individuals, and a disclaimer will clearly state that the information is self-reported and not an endorsement by the project. All other personal data remain private unless the expert explicitly agrees otherwise.

Long-term hosting, access rights, and data-ownership arrangements will be defined once the governance model has been agreed.

## 5.2 Integration with external platforms and long-term use

Keeping metadata aligned with external standards helps maintain basic compatibility with platforms such as SSBD, the CO-OP4CBD website, and other EU biodiversity expert databases. Because the future governance model is still being defined, no automatic integration is currently in place. Any future connection would depend on consented data, technical feasibility and agreed hosting arrangements.

## 5.3 Outlook on Sustainability

The long-term management of the expert database is still under discussion. Options under consideration include integration into a wider EU biodiversity knowledge framework or continuation through an appropriate host institution after the project ends. Any future arrangement must remain technically feasible, GDPR compliant, and realistic in terms of maintenance.

Decisions on hosting, update cycles, and access procedures will be finalised once the governance model is agreed. Until then, the database will continue to operate under current arrangements, with updates carried out through controlled project workflows and periodic expert re-registration rounds.

# 6 Mobilisation and Use of Experts

## 6.1 General mobilisation approach

Mobilisation so far has been gradual and mostly organic, reflecting the different ways in which experts have interacted with the project. Entries in the expert database come from WP1 mapping, partner networks, two open calls, and direct nominations. The updated registration form introduces a more coherent structure for outreach, but Task 2.1 remains focused on consolidating and organising the expert pool.

At this stage, the objective has been to assemble a reliable and well-structured group of experts relevant to CBD processes. These groups are not yet formally activated; rather, they offer a clear reference base that CO-OP4CBD can draw on when support is required for project tasks, capacity-building activities, or preparation for CBD meetings. This establishes the foundation for more targeted mobilisation as the project advances.

## 6.2 Use of expert groups in CO-OP4CBD (T2.2, T2.3)

Within task 2.2 on technical outputs for CBD meetings, the project team has reached out to CBD National Focal Points to get insights on their respective needs in terms of content for upcoming CBD meetings, based on meeting agendas.

So far, concept notes are produced to help identify suitable and preferred topics on which to work and prepare technical issue briefs on SBSTTA and SBI agenda items:

- Monitoring framework (SBSTTA-28)
- Article 8j (SBSTTA-27 and SB8j-1)
- Scientific and technical needs (SBSTTA-27)
- Sustainable wildlife management (SBSTTA-28)
- Marine and coastal biodiversity (SBSTTA-28)

- Plant conservation
- Synthetic biology (SBSTTA-28)

Once the identification of suitable topics to move ahead has been completed, experts from the expert database are mobilized or a call is launched should there not be experts for that topic, before they are put to work together to produce technical issue briefs for policymakers, answering policy questions with scientific and other forms of knowledge.

### **6.3 Engagement and Communication**

Engagement with experts has been maintained through project updates, direct partner communication, and the ongoing registration process. The launch of the updated registration form will include renewed outreach, including a re-registration round for experts whose profiles predate the new validation framework.

Training tools developed under WP4—such as the CBD Guide for Experts and the upcoming MOOC—will be available for experts wishing to strengthen their understanding of CBD processes. These tools are optional and complement the project's mobilisation efforts.

### **6.4 Future Mobilisation**

A request is currently in the making, to explore how biodiversity data and indicators from the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs/ORs) are used in national reporting, with a view to produce a technical brief on the matter. The results of this work will help identify under-represented expertise and stakeholders, while helping to close remaining geographic gaps in the expert database.

Future mobilisation will depend largely on project needs, such as upcoming CBD meetings or thematic priorities. Outreach may involve targeted emails, dissemination through partner networks, or topic-specific invitations based on the thematic areas of expertise that experts have self-reported in the registration form. All participation is voluntary.

## **7 Outlook and Next Steps**

### **7.1 Summary of Progress**

The project has assembled the first consolidated version of the expert database, drawing on entries from WP1 mapping, project networks, two open calls, partner nominations, and the new registration form. Early issues—duplicates, inconsistent terminology, and uneven levels of detail—were resolved through a complete cleaning and standardisation process.

The database now follows a shared structure based on the CBD's Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues (Annex 1), aiming for a stable foundation for future development and to support next steps, including improving regional representation and strengthening links with capacity-building activities. The updated registration form has been validated and tested internally, with clearer consent options and enhanced quality-control elements. Core categories—stakeholder groups, thematic expertise, geographic scope, and job titles—have been reviewed and agreed across partners.

## 7.2 Limitations

Although progress has been made in regional coverage, gaps remain. Some Central and Eastern European countries (e.g. Hungary, Romania) are well represented, while others still have few or no entries. Representation from African, Asia–Pacific, and Latin American & Caribbean regions is also limited. This reflects the project’s primary focus on supporting EU and neighbouring countries within CBD processes; global coverage was not an explicit objective of this task, though experts from other regions were included when they registered or were nominated.

Some stakeholder groups are consistently harder to reach through standard channels, especially IPLCs, youth, gender-focused organisations, and practitioners working outside academic or policy institutions. This partly stems from the phrasing of the original call text and the networks through which it circulated, which tended to reach academic and policy communities more easily.

The database relies on self-declared expertise, which naturally varies in specificity and depth. This can result in profiles that are broad or uneven. The updated registration form helps address this through additional quality-control elements (e.g. profile verification link, CBD engagement questions), but expertise levels are not externally assessed, in line with the project’s mandate and GDPR obligations.

The long-term governance plan for the database is still being developed, leaving questions about ownership, update cycles, and post-project hosting open for now.

## 7.3 Next Steps

Post-project hosting, update frequency, and rules for data access and maintenance will be determined under the governance model to be agreed. The intention is to maintain the expert database beyond 2026, with a view to potential integration into a broader EU biodiversity knowledge system (e.g. emerging science–policy support structures such as the SSBD) or other EU-level biodiversity knowledge platforms.

Near-term priorities include completing the re-registration round, improving representation among under-represented regions and stakeholder groups, linking expert profiles more closely with capacity-building activities, and finalising the governance framework.

Before the public launch of the updated registration form (early 2026), a brief internal technical check will confirm that the form loads correctly, fields behave as expected, and data export works smoothly. All substantive validation of categories and structure was completed earlier in 2025, so this final step is purely functional.

## 8 Acknowledgements

The authors thank the CO-OP4CBD consortium partners for their input and feedback during the development of the expert database under Task 2.1.

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## 10 Annex

### ANNEX 1: Thematic areas used in the CO-OP4CBD expert database

#### Thematic Programmes and Cross-Cutting Issues

This annex lists the thematic areas used to structure expertise within the CO-OP4CBD expert database. The thematic framework follows the CBD Programmes of Work and Cross-Cutting Issues, as defined on the CBD website (<https://www.cbd.int/programmes>), and reflects the terminology currently used by the Convention

The thematic areas are used solely for organisational purposes within the database. They are based on self-declared expertise and do not represent an assessment, validation, or endorsement of individual experts by CO-OP4CBD.

#### Thematic Programmes

- Agricultural Biodiversity
- Dry and Sub-humid Lands Biodiversity
- Forest Biodiversity
- Inland Waters Biodiversity
- Island Biodiversity
- Marine and Coastal Biodiversity
- Mountain Biodiversity

#### Cross-Cutting Issues

- Aichi Biodiversity Targets
- Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing
- Biological and Cultural Diversity
- Biodiversity for Development
- Capacity Building
- Climate Change and Biodiversity
- Communication, Education and Public Awareness
- Digital sequence information on genetic resources
- Economics, Trade and Incentive Measures
- Ecosystem Approach
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Gender and Biodiversity
- Global Strategy for Plant Conservation
- Global Taxonomy Initiative
- Health & Biodiversity
- Impact Assessment
- Identification, Monitoring, Indicators and Assessments
- Invasive Alien Species
- Liability and Redress - Art. 14(2)
- New & Emerging Issues
- Peace and Biodiversity Dialogue Initiative
- Protected Areas
- Sustainable Use of Biodiversity

- Sustainable Wildlife Management
- Technical and Scientific Cooperation
- Technology Transfer
- Tourism and Biodiversity
- Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices - Article 8(j)

Since the adoption of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), references to the former Aichi Biodiversity Targets have been replaced accordingly. The thematic structure otherwise remains unchanged.

Emerging topics discussed at SBSTTA level but not yet formalised as Programmes of Work (e.g. synthetic biology, gene drives, advanced modelling approaches) are tracked internally and addressed through targeted expert outreach when relevant.

## **ANNEX 2: Stakeholder categories and short definitions**

This annex describes the stakeholder categories used in the CO-OP4CBD expert database. Categories are based on commonly used groupings across CBD processes (COP, SBSTTA, SBI, SB8J) and allow experts to self-identify under one or multiple categories. The categorisation supports analysis and outreach and does not imply formal representation or mandate.

### **1. Civil Society Organizations (including NGOs)**

- Environmental NGOs, advocacy groups, think tanks, and associations working on biodiversity issues.

### **2. Donors and Funding Agencies**

- Organisations providing financial support for biodiversity research, conservation, capacity building, or science-policy work.

### **3. Government and Government Agencies (including local authorities)**

- CBD NFPs, environment ministries, national biodiversity units, public authorities, regulatory bodies.

### **4. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC)**

- Individuals or representatives linked to Indigenous or local communities with traditional knowledge or community-based environmental roles.

### **5. Private Sector**

- Companies, consultancies, business alliances, and private-sector experts working on nature-related topics.

### **6. Scientific and Technical Communities (including Early Career Researchers)**

- Researchers, academics, technical experts, and Early Career Researchers working in biodiversity-related fields.

### **7. Science-Policy-Society Interfaces (SPSIs)**

- Platforms and mechanisms linking research, policy, and society (e.g., BES-Net, IPBES, biodiversity hubs).

### **8. United Nations and other Intergovernmental Organizations**

- UN agencies, EU bodies, regional organisations, and international science-policy mechanisms.

#### **9. Women and Gender Organizations**

- Groups promoting gender equality or representing women's perspectives in biodiversity science, policy, and conservation.

#### **10. Youth (youth networks/associations not otherwise covered)**

- Youth-led networks, associations, or organisation active in biodiversity or environmental issues.

#### **11. Other (unspecified):**

- Used when a profile does not neatly fit into the categories above.

Experts may select more than one category to reflect hybrid roles or multiple affiliations.

