

14/10/2025

Version 1.0



## MS3 Completion of in person workshops with collaborators

Author(s): Tami Wooldridge

Contributor(s): Wojciech Mroz, Eva Alonso Vizcaino, Monica Vidal, Niels Raes, Marina Skunca, Peter Hollingsworth



Co-funded by  
the European Union

### Project funded by



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,  
Education and Research EAER  
**State Secretariat for Education,  
Research and Innovation SERI**

BMD (Biodiversity Meets Data) receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme and the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) (ID No 101181294). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, the European Research Executive Agency (REA) or SERI. The EU, REA and SERI cannot be held responsible for them.



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### Prepared under contract from the European Commission

Grant agreement No. 101181294

EU Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Action

Project acronym:	<b>BMD</b>
Project full title:	<b>Biodiversity Meets Data</b>
Project duration:	01.03.2025 – 28.02.2029 (48 months)
Project coordinator:	Stichting Naturalis Biodiversity Center (Naturalis)
Call:	HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-01
Milestone title:	Completion of in person workshops with collaborators
Milestone n°:	MS3
Means of verification:	Report, Data files
Work package:	WP1
Nature of the milestone:	Report
Contribution to deliverable n°:	D1.1
Licence of use:	N/A
Lead beneficiary:	Eurosite
Recommended citation:	Wooldridge, T. (2025). <b><i>Completion of in person workshops with collaborators</i></b> . BMD project deliverable MS3
Due date of milestone:	Month 8
Actual submission date:	Month 8
Quality review:	Yes

#### Milestone status:

Version	Status	Date	Author(s)	Actions
0.1	Draft	09 October 2025	Tami Wooldridge, RBGE	Sent for review
0.2	Draft	10 October 2025	Emma Bush, RBGE Christopher Ellis, RBGE	Reviewed
1.0	Final	14 October 2025	Tami Wooldridge, RBGE	Finalised, with incorporation of feedback from reviewers
1.0	Final	22 October 2025	Niels Raes, Naturalis	Submitted to PCT for Verification





## 1. Table of contents

1. Table of contents	3
2. Summary	4
3. List of abbreviations	4
4. Introduction	5
5. Methods	6
5.1. User Story Workshop	6
5.2. Plug-and-Play Devices Discussion Forum	6
5.3. BMD Showcasing & Feedback Booth	7
6. Early Insights	8
6.1. Participant Representation	8
6.1.1. Lithuania Workshop Participant Representation	8
6.1.2. Sweden Workshop Participant Representation	8
6.2. Emerging Findings	9
6.2.1 User Story Workshops	10
6.2.1.1 How do you use biodiversity information (data, analyses) in your work?	10
6.2.1.2 Are there any areas in which biodiversity information could be improved to better support biodiversity monitoring and conservation practices?	10
6.2.1.3 How would improved biodiversity information impact your work?	11
6.2.2	11
7. Reflections & Evaluation	13
7.1 Stakeholder Evaluation	13
7.2 BMD Team Evaluation	14
8. Next Steps	14
9. References	15
10. Appendix	15

### List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: User story workshop participant representation across countries, roles, domains, realms and scales (Lithuania workshop)

Table 2: User story workshop participant representation across countries, roles, domains, realms and scales (Sweden workshop)

Table 3: Stakeholder Votes on Alternative Terminology for the VREs

Figure 1: Participant self-assessment of relevance, influence and impact (Sweden Workshop)





## 2. Summary

This report outlines the approach, early insights and next steps relating to the mapping of stakeholder data and analytical priorities. A series of co-design activities will be delivered throughout the duration of the project to enable active stakeholder participation in the design and delivery of the Single Access Point (SAP) and underpinning Virtual Research Environments (VREs). The first of these co-design activities, two in person “User Story” workshops, were implemented in September 2025. Additional co-design activities (discussion forums and interactive feedback opportunities) are also reported briefly here, as these activities were implemented in combination with the user story workshops. This report provides a brief overview of the rationale for implementing user story workshops to explore stakeholder needs and priorities. This is followed by a description of the methods applied to facilitate and gather stakeholder contributions to the Biodiversity Meets Data (BMD) project. Early insights are then presented, covering themes and topics that have emerged from an initial review of the workshop data prior to structured analysis that will be completed in support of Deliverable 1.1. Finally, reflections and evaluation of the co-design activities are shared and directly inform the next steps for the ongoing stakeholder engagement and co-design work.

## 3. List of abbreviations

BAT	Biodiversity Analysis Tool
BMD	Biodiversity Meets Data
EU	European Union
MS	Milestone
SAP	Single Access Point
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
VRE	Virtual Research Environment
WP	Work Package





## 4. Introduction

The Biodiversity Meets Data (BMD) project is committed to incorporating stakeholder participation in the design and delivery of the Single Access Point (SAP) and underpinning Virtual Research Environments (VREs). The BMD project has adopted an approach to stakeholder engagement rooted in principles relating to design thinking, adaptive management, ethical social research methods and dialogue facilitation (see Wooldridge et al. 2025a). A participatory, or “co-design”, approach to stakeholder engagement has been integrated into the project structure, with stakeholder contributions feeding into every work package (WP) throughout the project’s lifecycle and legacy (see SEP). Prior to engaging with stakeholders, the WP1 team carried out deliberative, systematic and iterative stakeholder mapping to identify a longlist of potential stakeholders to collaborate with in the project, and to create a bespoke stakeholder typology that reflects the appropriate level of participation envisioned for different stakeholder groups (see Wooldridge et al. 2025a and 2025b). A project-wide Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) was also produced. The SEP outlined good practice principles for stakeholder engagement, provided an overview of the co-design activities scheduled throughout the course of the project, and identified the related WPs that these activities feed into (see Wooldridge et al. 2025a).

The first of these co-design activities were implemented in September 2025 in the format of in-person user-story workshops. The user story workshops were designed to enable the participatory exploration of stakeholder data and analytic needs and priorities, through a series of interactive discussions and activities. These workshops resulted in both rich qualitative data and short structured user stories produced by participating stakeholders. The first two user story workshops are the focus of this report, which provides evidence to support the fulfilment of Milestone 3 (MS3) and Task 1.1.3 (T1.1.3). The findings from these initial workshops in combination with the results from the upcoming online workshop and survey (T1.1.4 & MS4) feed into Deliverable 1.1 “D1.1 List of 10-15 user stories” (due 31/12/2025) which informs the thematic direction of the VREs based on stakeholder needs and priorities.

This report describes the methods applied in the user story workshops (section 5), highlights the early insights that have emerged from an initial review of the data prior to detailed analysis (section 6), and reflects on and evaluates the co-design activities to inform the ongoing stakeholder engagement process (section 7). As the BMD project maintains an iterative approach to stakeholder engagement and co-design, these findings and reflections will inform the design and implementation of future co-design activities (section 8).





## 5. Methods

While there are various modes of engagement that are suitable for different contexts and participants (see Wooldridge et al. 2025a, p18), in person workshops were conducted for the first two co-design activities focusing on the creation of stakeholder-led user stories and the exploration of stakeholder biodiversity data and analytic needs and priorities. These workshops were conducted in collaboration with Eurosite and integrated into events that were targeted towards Eurosite's network of natural resource managers and practitioners. Workshop 1 was conducted at the Eurosite Annual Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2025. Workshop 2 was conducted at Eurosite's 6<sup>th</sup> Natura 2000 Monitoring Workshop in Umea, Sweden on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2025. This was an opportunity for the BMD project to showcase the early design stages of the project and engage with relevant parties that are actively involved in biodiversity protection, restoration and management across Europe. Within these events several different opportunities for engagement in different aspects of the BMD project were facilitated. While the user story workshops are the primary focus of this milestone report, a brief description of the discussion forum and feedback booth are included to provide context on the full scope of facilitated engagement.

### 5.1. User Story Workshop

A "User Story Workshop" is a 2-hour long interactive workshop in which participants are invited to explore their biodiversity data, biodiversity monitoring and biodiversity analysis needs via a series of activities and facilitated discussions.

Informed consent was given by all participants prior to commencing the workshop. Participants worked together in pairs to produce their own user story that reflected a particular biodiversity protection question relating to their work. User stories are short question-driven narratives that illustrate a specific need, priority and/or task to be addressed by a new tool or technology. Small group discussions were facilitated by the BMD team to encourage participants to further reflect on how improved biodiversity information (data, monitoring and analyses) might support or enable their biodiversity conservation efforts. Participant contributions were gathered via MentiMeter, facilitator notes and printed activity sheets. The workshop protocol designed by the WP1 team was reproduced at both workshops with moderate adaptations to the facilitation techniques based on stakeholder feedback. The questions included in the workshop protocol were designed to gather data on the context and scale at which participants collect, analyse and use biodiversity data as well as the specific biodiversity monitoring questions that participants would like answered to support their conservation and restoration work (see Appendix for the full list of questions). These questions were designed to guide stakeholders to write their own user stories which, following analysis and synthesis, will be used to inform the design of the Virtual Research Environments in order to meet the needs of BMD's stakeholder community.

### 5.2. Plug-and-Play Devices Discussion Forum

A 1.5-hour presentation and discussion forum focusing on the use of new technologies in conservation, particularly addressing plug-and-play devices (camera traps, audio-moths, eDNA sampling and AI identification). Participants were invited to share their experience with and interest in the plug-and-play





devices by responding to 3 multiple choice questions (via MentiMeter). This was followed by a short presentation demonstrating potential use-cases for the plug-and-play devices followed by a Q&A session. Additionally, at the discussion forum in Sweden 9 camera traps were given to participants by the end of the event in contribution to activities under WP2. Those participants agreed to provide feedback to the BMD team about their experiences deploying the camera traps and uploading the related data to open-access data repositories.

### 5.3. BMD Showcasing & Feedback Booth

The BMD team hosted a booth during breaks between sessions. Event participants were invited to learn more about the BMD project and provide feedback and initial impressions on the following: an example of a Virtual Research Environment (in this case, a Species Distribution Model prototype), preferred and suggested alternatives to the term “Virtual Research Environment”, preferred layout of the Single Access Point landing page based on 3 different designs.





## 6. Early Insights

An initial review of the data gathered at the user story workshops was carried out to provide an overview of participant representation and to highlight the emerging themes from the stakeholder contributions. A more detailed analysis of the data in combination with the findings from the upcoming online workshop and survey (T1.1.4 and MS4) will be conducted to feed into D1.1, the ongoing stakeholder engagement work and to determine which VREs should be designed and delivered by BMD based on the priorities outlined by stakeholders. The early insights presented below highlight some potential gaps in participant representation to be monitored and addressed as future co-design activities are implemented. The emerging findings illustrate the themes covered by participants in the breakout discussion portion of the user story workshop. The breakout discussion was facilitated following the completion of the scoping questions (via Menti) and the creation of user stories (via user story activity sheets) and so enabled participants to discuss in more detail the biodiversity monitoring priorities and needs that were highlighted in the earlier portions of the workshop.

### 6.1. Participant Representation

#### 6.1.1. Lithuania Workshop Participant Representation

There were 15 participants in the user story workshop facilitated during the Eurosite Annual Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania. Twelve participants agreed to participate fully in the workshop and contribute their questions, experiences and knowledge to shape the ongoing work of the BMD project. Participants that did not wish to have their contributions recorded were invited to remain in the workshop and contribute only to the discussion portions if they felt comfortable doing so. The 12 participants that agreed to participate fully in the workshop represented the following countries, roles, domains, realms and scales (see Table 1):

**Table 1: User story workshop participant representation across countries, roles, domains, realms and scales (Lithuania workshop)**

Country	Role	Domain	Realm	Scale of implementation*
Belgium Czech Republic Denmark Germany Latvia Lithuania The Netherlands	Site managers (5) Consultants (3) Policymakers (2) Researchers (2) <b>Data Suppliers (0)</b>	Governmental (5) NGO (5) Private Business (1) Other (1 - "Public Business") <b>Research / Institute (0)</b>	Terrestrial (6) Freshwater (1) Terrestrial & Freshwater (5) <b>Marine (0)</b>	Plot (3) Reserve (4) Regional (5) National (8) Transboundary (7)

*\*Many participants worked across multiple scales and selected all that applied to their work. Some participants selected all scales listed on the activity sheet, other participants selected a range of scales such as plot-reserve-regional or regional-national-transboundary.*

#### 6.1.2. Sweden Workshop Participant Representation

There were 37 participants in the workshop, facilitated at the 6<sup>th</sup> Natura 2000 Monitoring Workshop in Umeå Sweden, all of whom consented to participate fully and contribute their questions, experiences,







knowledge and user stories to shape the ongoing work of the BMD project. One participant did not return their user story activity sheet but participated in the discussions and responded to the MentiMeter questions throughout the workshop. One participant completed their consent form and user story activity sheet separately later in the event as they could not attend the facilitated workshop but wished to contribute to the project. The 37 participants that completed the user story activity sheet represented the following countries, roles, domains, realms and scales:

**Table 2: user story workshop participant representation across countries, roles, domains, realms and scales (Sweden workshop)**

Country	Role	Domain	Realm	Scale of implementation*
Belgium	Site managers (5)	Governmental (12)	Terrestrial (19)	Plot (4)
Croatia	Policymakers (3)	Research / Institute (14)	Marine (2)	Reserve (11)
Czech Republic	Researchers (20)	NGO (5)	Terrestrial & Freshwater (10)	Regional (16)
Finland	Consultants (7)	Private Business (6)	Terrestrial & Marine (1)	National (26)
Germany	Data Suppliers (2)	Other (0)	Terrestrial, Freshwater & Marine (5)	Transboundary (15)
Greece				
Latvia				
Netherlands				
Slovakia				
Slovenia				
Spain				
Sweden				
Switzerland				
United Kingdom				

*\*Many participants worked across multiple scales and selected all that applied to their work. Some participants selected all scales listed on the activity sheet, other participants selected a range of scales such as plot-reserve-regional or regional-national-transboundary.*

## 6.2. Emerging Findings

The BMD team will carry out detailed thematic analysis and synthesis of the user story data to provide a clear indication of which VREs should be taken forward based on stakeholder contributions. A long list of user stories resulting from the in person and online co-design activities will be produced followed by a consolidated list of user stories to inform the VRE design decisions. However, an initial review of the qualitative data collected across the co-design activities implemented by the BMD team in September provides some early insights into the priorities, experiences and needs of BMD's stakeholder community. The sections below provide an overview of the areas in which stakeholders felt biodiversity information could be improved and how this might influence their work. These contributions are crucial for understanding how stakeholders use biodiversity information and in turn what aspects of biodiversity information are important for improvement to support the biodiversity conservation efforts of BMD's stakeholder community. The contributions listed below give important context to the specific biodiversity monitoring questions and themes that are illustrated in the user stories and give an indication of which elements of data governance and characterisation are important to the stakeholders that have engaged in the project so far.





The contributions recorded in the additional co-design activities are also reflected briefly in the following sections.

## 6.2.1 User Story Workshops

### 6.2.1.1 How do you use biodiversity information (data, analyses) in your work?

#### Workshop 1 (Lithuania)

- Monitoring biodiversity (changes over time, protected species, species distribution)
- Engagement and education
- Informing and assessing land management decisions
- Assessing economic viability of activities
- Communicating impact to local and governmental stakeholders

#### Workshop 2 (Sweden)

- Monitoring land use changes and trends
- Monitoring species and habitat responses to climate change and land use projects
- The creation of management plans and the fulfilment of national reporting and operational obligations
- Assessing the efficacy and certainty of conservation measures
- Research (e.g. species distribution, assessing conservation status, assessing condition of sites)

### 6.2.1.2 Are there any areas in which biodiversity information could be improved to better support biodiversity monitoring and conservation practices?

#### Workshop 1 (Lithuania)

- Consistency and long-term monitoring
- Transparency, traceability and specificity
- Aggregation of data
- Visualizations
- Clear governance and ownership of data

#### Workshop 2 (Sweden)

- Improving biodiversity data quality, availability and readability via: harmonization, better data sharing, standardized data collection methodologies, better presentation of data, separation of citizen science data from scientific data
- More contextual and metadata is required for biodiversity information to be useful (e.g. habitat data, data on non-protected areas, information on data collection and analysis methods)
- More information to assist with understanding drivers of change (e.g. pollution, pesticides, management changes like abandonment of farmland)

### 6.2.1.3 How would improved biodiversity information impact your work?





### Workshop 1 (Lithuania)

- Planning, monitoring and implementation of land management
- Access to cost-effective, standardized and centralized data (data harmonization)
- Knowledge sharing, capacity building and best practice

### Workshop 2 (Sweden)

- Improved decision making and better understanding of efficacy in decision making, policies and/or measures implemented
- Improved level of confidence in management approaches
  - o Data validity, credibility and objectivity
  - o Informing decision making and recommendations for management actions
  - o Calibration and ground-truthing
- Assisting with the prioritisation of areas that management will be most effective (e.g. balancing targets and trade-offs, using biodiversity information to assess in which areas management will be most effective and assigning resources/efforts accordingly)

## 6.2.2 BMD Showcasing & Feedback Booth

### 6.2.2.1 Single Access Point Designs

An interactive website was shared with stakeholders at both the Lithuania and Sweden workshops. During the Lithuania workshop, only one SAP mockup was made available and stakeholders were invited to explore and comment on the SAP mockup. During the Sweden workshop, three alternative SAP mockups were available for exploration and feedback. Votes for the preferred SAP layout and related comments were input directly into the interactive website form, with some comments also noted on paper by the BMD team. Stakeholders at the Lithuania and Sweden workshops indicated a preference for an SAP design that limits the amount of scrolling necessary to view all the modules available and isn't overly complex. Some suggestions were made by participants relating to what tools should be made available via the SAP such as: drone data and footage, thematic GIS mapping, uncertainty modelling, information on the underpinning biases present in AI models used by the tools available via the SAP, information on the terms and conditions of the use of open source data.

The SAP mockup viewer continues to gather feedback from stakeholders and has been made available online and disseminated via relevant networks with the support of WP7.

### 6.2.2.2 Alternative Terminology for VREs

Across both the Lithuania and Sweden workshops, stakeholders were invited to reflect on and vote for their preferred terminology to describe the Virtual Research Environments. Table X illustrates the votes made by stakeholders across the workshops. Following these initial votes, the BMD team will use the term Biodiversity Analysis Tool(s) (BATs) in place of Virtual Research Environments, and will carry out further polling with stakeholders before coming to a final conclusion.



**Table 3: Stakeholder Votes on Alternative Terminology for the VREs**

Terminology	Total Votes	N. Votes (Lithuania)	N. Votes (Sweden)
Biodiversity Information System	5	3	2
Virtual Research Environment	6	4	2
Biodiversity Query & Modelling Tool	2	0	2
Biodiversity Data and Modelling Environment	8	1	7
Analysis Toolkit	2	1	1
Biodiversity Analysis Tool(s)	20	4	16
Biodiversity Explorer*	9	0	9
<b>Total Votes</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>39</b>

\*Term suggested by stakeholder. All other terms were proposed by the BMD team.





## 7. Reflections & Evaluation

### 7.1 Stakeholder Evaluation

Stakeholders were invited to reflect on the session and provide feedback to the BMD team about their experience participating in the workshop. Anonymous feedback was captured via MentiMeter. The reflection and evaluation portion of the workshops were optional, and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback if they wished to do so. Stakeholders that provided feedback generally responded positively to participating in the workshop and suggested that the workshops were ‘interesting’, ‘inspiring’, ‘informative’ and ‘interactive’. Some stakeholders in both workshops highlighted that the workshop was ‘challenging’ or ‘difficult’ or ‘busy’. The second feedback question was an opportunity for stakeholders to self-assess the relevance of the project to their work, the level of influence participants felt they had over project activities and outcomes, and the level of impact the project might have on the work of participants (see Figure 1 for responses from workshop 2).

Mentimeter

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

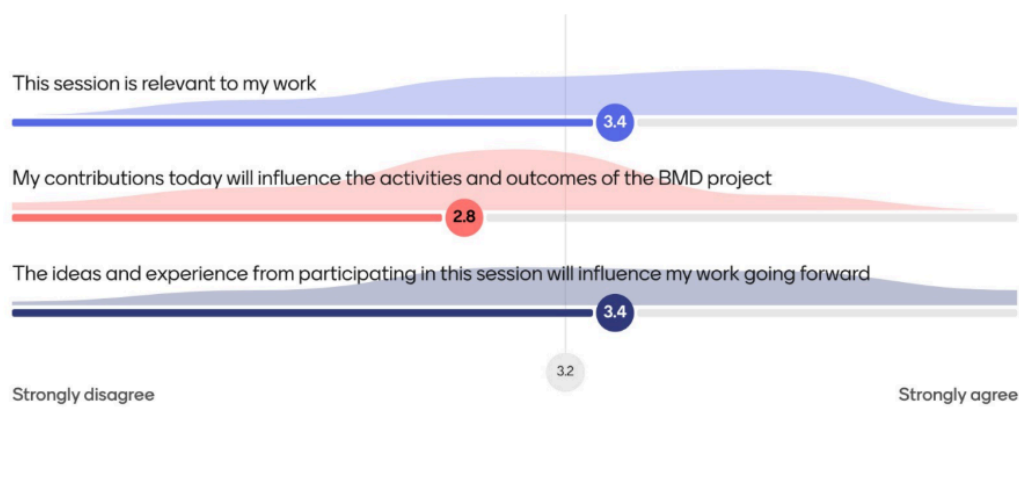


Figure 1: Participant self-assessment of relevance, influence and impact (Sweden Workshop)





## 7.2 BMD Team Evaluation

The BMD project seeks to minimise stakeholder fatigue while maximising participation and benefits for the stakeholders. With this in mind, the BMD team shared and recorded some reflections on the implementation of the workshops to improve the participation experience for stakeholders in future co-design activities. Some of the key reflections are noted below:

- The provision of feedback via MentiMeter appears on screen for all participants to see. While the feedback is anonymous, the visibility of comments to the group may generate positive bias in stakeholder-level evaluation. It may be appropriate to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to give anonymous feedback that does not appear on the screen or via written comment cards that can be collected at the end of the session.
- The structure of the consent form in workshop 1 was not well received due to being too long and using academic terminology. A simplified version of the consent form was produced and reviewed by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) ethical review committee prior to workshop 2. Paper consent forms were completed in both workshops, however it may be appropriate to also provide the option to complete an online consent form if preferred.
- A short introductory presentation providing information about the BMD project was shared prior to the workshop commencing. The BMD team felt that this was essential context for workshop participants to frame the discussions and activities. When conducting future co-design activities with stakeholders that are yet to get involved in the BMD project, an introductory presentation is recommended. Additionally, it may be appropriate to provide participants with a small flyer with a QR code that links to the information sheet and provides the BMD Stakeholder Engagement Manager's contact details if they wish to follow up about their involvement.
- For the purposes of diversity monitoring the WP1 team should consider including a short optional diversity monitoring questionnaire alongside the feedback and evaluation portion of future workshops. The inclusion of diversity monitoring questions would allow for the assessment of representation across protected characteristics.

## 8. Next Steps

This milestone report has presented the rationale, methods, findings and evaluation from the first set of co-design activities, namely the user story workshops implemented in collaboration with Eurosite in September 2025. The content of this report illustrates an overview of the approach and emerging insights that will inform the implementation of future co-design activities and the delivery of project outcomes. The next steps for stakeholder engagement and co-design are as follows:

- Implementation of an online user story workshop and survey (T1.1.4 and MS4)
- Analysis and synthesis of qualitative data from co-design activities to produce a list of 10-15 user stories that will inform the design of the VREs (D1.1)
- Reflection on any representation gaps in the co-design activity data to inform where targeted efforts to engage stakeholders should be focused (e.g. geographical areas or realms to focus future co-design activities on)





## 9. References

Wooldridge, T., Mroz, W., Alonso Vizcaino, E., Vidal, M., & Hollingsworth, P. (2025a). Biodiversity Meets Data (BMD) MS2 Project-wide published stakeholder engagement plan (1.3). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16985228>

Wooldridge, T., Mroz, W., & Hollingsworth, P. (2025b). MS1 Initial Phase of Stakeholder Mapping & Next Steps. BMD project deliverable MS1.

## 10. Appendix

### List of questions included in User Story Workshop Protocol

#### *Introductory Questions*

1. Briefly, tell us about you. What does your work primarily focus on?
2. Out of the following, which would you say are your primary interest? (past trends, current status, future projections, all)
3. What biological scale does your work focus on? (genetic diversity, populations, species distributions, community structure, ecosystem processes)
4. Which of these spatial scales best describes the level at which you work? (plot, reserve, regional, national, transboundary)
5. What drivers of biodiversity loss are you most interested in? (habitat loss, pollutants, climate change, invasive species, exploitation, other)
6. If you could have one big question relating to biodiversity protection answered, regardless of current resources or technological capabilities, what would it be?

#### *User Story Questions*

- Name
- Organisation
- Organisation Type (Governmental, Research/Institute, NGO, Private (business), Other)
- Role (Site Manager, Policymaker, Researcher, Consultant, Data Supplier)
- Natura 2000 Site Name (if applicable)
- Realm (Terrestrial, Freshwater, Marine)
- Relevant Directive(s)
- Scale of implementation (Plot, Reserve, Regional, National, Transboundary)
- What data are you interested in?
- What analyses are you interested in?
- Preferred Output Format (Maps, Tables, Datasets, Graphs, Other)
- What biodiversity question do you need answered?
- Why would you like this question answered?
- User Story (I am a... I need to... So that I can...)





*Discussion Questions*

1. How do you use biodiversity information (data, analyses) in your work?
2. Are there any areas in which biodiversity information could be improved to better support biodiversity monitoring and conservation practices?
3. How would improved biodiversity information impact your work? (what barriers would it overcome, what opportunities might it create? What would this mean for your specific site/role/context)

*Reflection Questions*

1. Thinking about the discussions today, what do you think should be the main priority when improving biodiversity information? Why?
2. Were there any challenges, opportunities or ideas discussed that you found particularly relevant to your work?
3. Is there anything that came up in the discussions that you would like to explore further (throughout this event, or future BMD activities)?

*Feedback Questions*

1. How relevant was this workshop to your work?
2. To what extent do you feel your contributions today will influence the BMD project?
3. To what extent do you feel the BMD activities/outcomes will impact your work?
4. In one word, please describe your overall experience of the workshop activities.
5. Have you got any final comments for the BMD team?

