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Country Fact Sheet
AZORES



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Country Fact Sheet: The Azores

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This fact sheet is based on the knowledge of the SELINA partners and some additional literature. If you feel there are ongoing or upcoming research projects, policy initiatives or legislations, concerning the use of biodiversity, ecosystem condition and ecosystem services knowledge in decisions and policies, missing please contact inge.lieken@vito.be and we update the country fact sheet (until March 2027)

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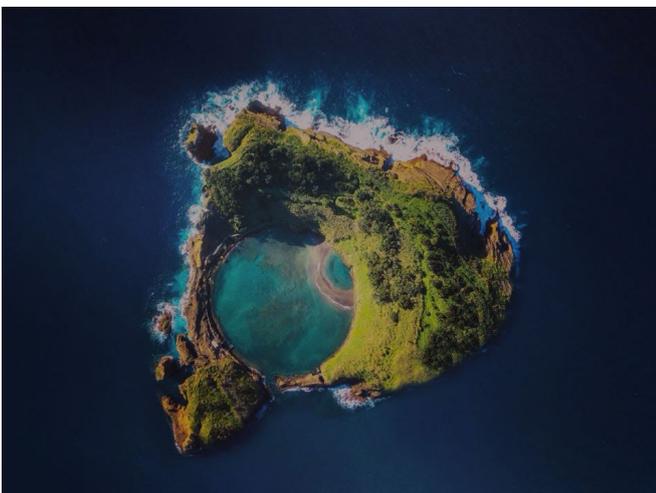
Update on projects concerning biodiversity, ecosystem condition and ecosystem services assessment and accounting since 2022

São Miguel test site is one of the islands of the Azores archipelago, an outermost region of the EU. The recent paper by **Vári et al. (2024)** provides a good description below of the current lagging state of mapping and assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Azores, as one of the EU Outermost Regions, and mentions the initiatives from MOVE and MOVE-ON projects (although MOVE-ON was already undergoing before 2022).

As actual mapping proceeds, a territorial expansion of included areas can also be observed towards EU Overseas. Some of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories have also picked up the ES concept and first applications of EU MAES can be found (Sieber et al., 2022, Sieber et al., 2021, Sieber et al., 2018). Yet, MAES implementation in the EU Overseas still lags far behind continental Europe (Sieber et al., 2018), and even where EU Overseas are included in national assessments, (e.g., France), they are not considered to the same extent [the same can be said of Portugal and Azores]. This can largely be attributed to the lack of appropriate data, knowledge, and research capacity (Sieber et al., 2022), which are being addressed by current anchor projects such as MOVE and MOVE-ON. To protect ecosystems all across the EU and meet the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, an inclusion of the EU Overseas is vital.

The **MOVE-ON project** aims to advance MAES methodology implementation in European ORs and OCTs. The project also intends to strengthen the scientific and technical MAES community in those territories,

tackling the bottom-up approach initiated in MOVE project and demonstrating the benefits of ecosystems conditions assessments and their services to support decision-making, capitalising the on-going work to further test and implement the MAES methodology in different regions underpinned by four anchor projects in French Guiana, Macaronesia, Reunion and South Atlantic Region. In the case of the Azores, the focus was on marine and coastal habitats, namely the creation of the Macaronesian Marine Habitat Platform (MHP), that settles a baseline for future management of the archipelago's ecosystems and their services up to 100m depth, since decisions about conservation strategies need to be supported by data about habitat trend variations. The results highlighted the importance and singularity of coastal marine habitats of the Macaronesia.



There are some research projects, mainly driven by academia and research institutes, concerning biodiversity and services in the Azores, such as EU BIODIVERSA+ **BioMonI** – Biodiversity monitoring of island ecosystems or **MaCoBioS** – Marine Coastal Ecosystem Biodiversity and Services in a Changing World. BioMonI aims to empower local and regional stakeholders by providing them with standardised monitoring protocols, historical baselines, quantitative estimates, and co-develop future scenarios of Essential Biodiversity Variables (EBVs) and Ecosystem Service Variables (EESVs). Meanwhile, MaCoBioS aims to ensure efficient and integrated management and conservation strategies for European marine coastal ecosystems to face climate change by filling the knowledge gaps on the impacts of climate upon the biodiversity, functions and services of



the most important marine coastal ecosystems, with the end goal of providing evidence-based guidance for marine policy formulation and innovative research pathways to support policymaker strategies.

There is also a long-term LIFE IP project led by the directorate of the environment **LIFE IP Azores Natura**, which targets special conservation and special protection zones of Natura 2000 network in the Azores, seeking to contribute local actions for the improve-

ment and conservation of 24 species and 13 habitats protected by the Habitats directive and Birds Directive. LIFE IP **Climaz** is another long-term project by the Azorean directorate of the environment, focused on the adaptation and mitigation of climate change in the archipelago, which includes the implementation of nature based solutions for adaptation to extreme weather events as well as restoration and conservation actions inland and in coastal areas.





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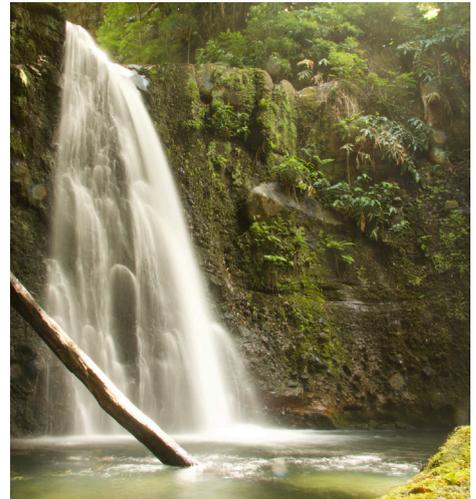
Perceived barriers and needs to enhance uptake

2.1 Barriers

- Fragmentation of efforts and resources between different projects and initiatives.
- Disconnection between the research work from academia and the outputs from the public sector (it is much more likely that some assessment done by a governmental entity receives uptake rather than the same assessment done in the context of academic research).
- High bureaucracy.
- Expanding ecosystem service assessments beyond purely biodiversity/conservation centred efforts.

2.2 Needs

- Centralised coordination of initiatives and resources towards common goals centered around ecosystem accounting.
- Centralised repository of reports, publications and datasets.
- Capacity building and involving more specialists in MAES and SEEA framework, especially from the valuation/policy angle.



3

On the way to transformative change

The overall conclusion of the IPBES global assessment (IPBES 2019) was that Goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories, and goals for 2030 and beyond, may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors.

Transformative or transformational change refers to “a fundamental, system-wide reorganisation

across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values” (IPBES, 2019). Simply said, doing things differently, rather than doing less or optimising the system.

A means to enhance uptake is bringing people of the quadruple helix together and exchange information and learn from each other. Another is to establish projects that can show that it works and lead to possible pathways of transformative change.

3.1 Community of practice

So far, at the São Miguel test site (Azores), there is no formal SELINA Community of Practice established. Relevant public regional stakeholders, namely the directorate of the forest resources and the directorate of the environment, have been approached for collaboration. However, because their contributions and involvement have been focused on necessary inputs

and provision of data for the test site activities in the context of the SELINA project., it has not yet evolved to a more diversified Community of Practice.

3.2 Seeds of transformative change

No seeds of transformative change were received through the online survey.



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References

1. Vári, Á. *et al.* National mapping and assessment of ecosystem services projects in Europe – Partic-

ipants’ experiences, state of the art and lessons learned. *Ecosystem Services* **65**, 101592 (2024).

Project duration: 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2027

Keywords: biodiversity, ecosystems, ecosystem services, natural capital accounting, evidence-based decision-making, transformative change

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PROJECT PARTNERS

-  Leibniz University Hannover
-  Stichting Capitals Coalition
-  Ecostack Innovations Limited
-  University of Trento
-  Pensoft Publishers
-  Centre for Ecological Research
-  Mykolas Romeris University
-  Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
-  University of Patras
-  space4environment
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-  The Finnish Environment Institute
-  Global Change Research Institute SarVision
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-  Gaspar Frutuoso Foundation
-  Flemish Agency for Nature and Forest
-  Municipality of Trento
-  Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania
-  Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia
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