

# The Antwerp Declaration



**F**ollowing a decade of ever more research activity the ecosystem services framework has major political and scientific momentum. We must now deliver societal impact.

In this declaration we – the signatories – call for action to realise the transformative potential of the ecosystem services framework. We need to refocus on principles of sustainability, reclaim the notion of value and expand collaborations.

## **Refocus on principles of sustainability**

Ecosystem services gained prominence as a framework that acknowledges nature's fundamental role in supporting human wellbeing. There has been considerable progress in quantifying, valuing, and mapping ecosystem services. Yet, there is a risk that these methods are applied without consideration of equality and social justice. To ensure the fair distribution of nature's benefits we need to refocus the ecosystem services framework on the principles of sustainability. By explicitly including sustainability principles in ecosystem services assessments we can bring into focus trade-offs between conflicting interests, guide just decisions and avoid misuse of the concept.

## **Reclaim the notion of value**

How we understand our relationship with nature sits at the heart of the ecosystem services framework. To do justice to all the ways nature matters to us as humans we need to include diverse values into our assessments. By embracing a multitude of perspectives, voices and values we can move away from understanding nature's importance in a purely monetary way. Finding innovative approaches that include multiple values is challenging, but enables us to make better decisions. Collaborative projects with many different stakeholders should therefore be the starting point of any ecosystem assessment.

## **Expand collaborations**

The ecosystem services framework has been a catalyst for promoting collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. Expanding collaboration is essential to stimulate dialogue and generate common understanding that is necessary to achieve societal impact. Framing the challenges around issue-based research will encourage collaboration between disciplinary experts, business stakeholders and local government representatives. The involvement of knowledge brokers and the media is critical in supporting collaboration and in communicating outcomes.

## **For impact we need to**

- make the most of the large amount of knowledge and learning that is generated by case study research
- develop and share targeted information, packaged and communicated appropriately to selected audiences
- increase the user-friendliness of frameworks and tools to support their application beyond current users
- bring business and researchers together to encourage innovation and creation of new flexible business models that integrate ecosystem services
- strengthen the integration of ecosystem services into all policy sectors in dialogue with researchers and practitioners

**Sign the Declaration today:**  
[www.antwerpdeclaration.info](http://www.antwerpdeclaration.info)



*The Antwerp Declaration was launched on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2016 at the [ES EU Conference](#). It embodies the views of leading researchers, policymakers and practitioners in the field of ecosystem services, based on over 100 survey responses and several discussion events at the conference.*