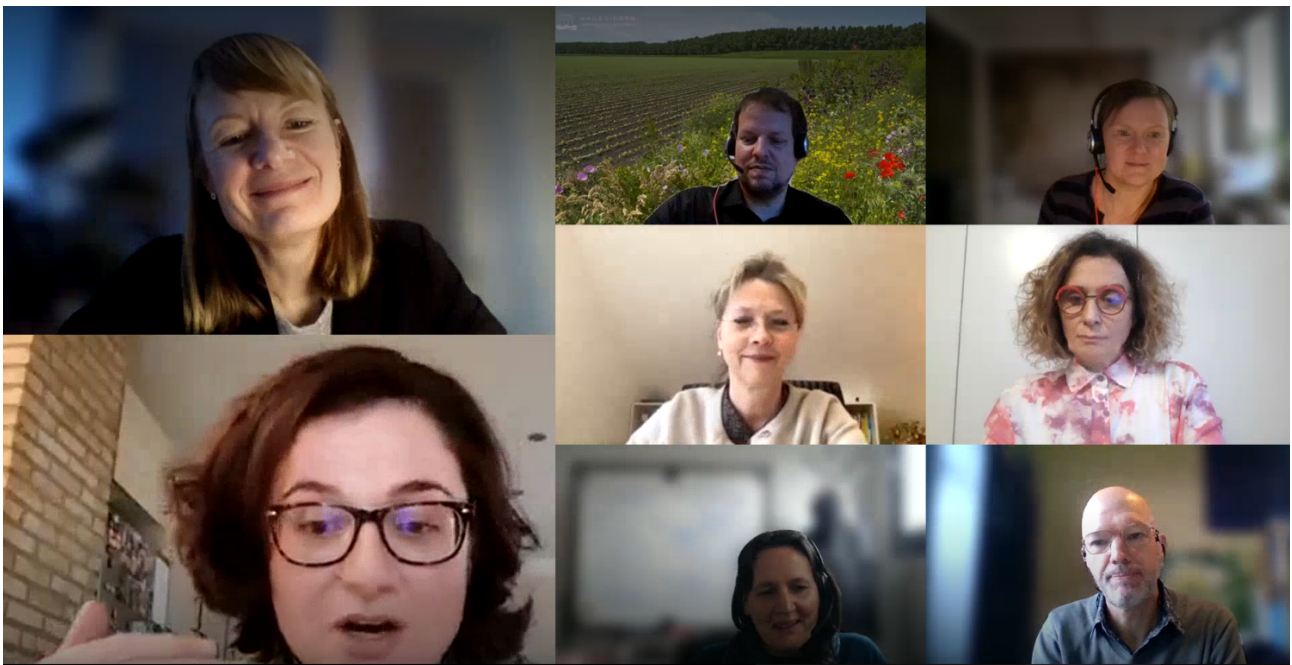


Effective science-policy interaction needs both clear messages and a continuous dialogue

Biodiversity conservation and ecosystem sustainability can be fostered through interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration, addressing system-level challenges.

Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation pose an increasing threat for human wellbeing and resilience of our societies. We know this because science has shown us the trends, the cascading impacts and the causal chains. Science has also produced the basis and concrete means for policy to halt biodiversity loss and make ecosystems more sustainable. This cooperation between science and policy has resulted in protected area network implementation, urban green infrastructure plans, management guidelines and even nature therapy prescriptions. In this sense, there is a functioning connection between science and policy.



Eeva Primmer, Georg Winkel, Marie Vandewalle, Niki Frantzeskaki, Babette Simon, Eeva Furman, Juliette Young, Ben Delbaere.

This interface has successfully been supported by science-policy mechanisms and platforms, such as [IPBES](#) at a global level, and [Alternet](#) and [Eclipse](#) in Europe.

We took a deeper look into science-policy interfaces and the ways in which science-policy can become more effective and adaptive in a webinar hosted by the Finnish Environment Institute ([SYKE](#)) and Alternet on 3 February 2022.

- **We asked: how can we make science-policy interfaces even more effective? How can they respond to the ever-increasing global sustainability challenges? How does biodiversity conservation connect to other areas in which science and policy are closely connected?**

Science-policy needs to be adaptive

Biodiversity loss is a system-level challenge, transcending sectors and disciplines – and touching people. “A quarter of all global deaths are connected to environmental degradation and pollution”, said one of the panellists of the event, **Babette Simon**, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Health of the University of Paris and member of the Expert Advisory Group One Sustainable Health Forum. Making the connection between ecosystem health and human health is one important challenge for science-policy communities. In this sense, the different policies need to be brought into dialogue.

The science-policy interface supporting biodiversity conservation faces some system-boundaries as rather rigid silos—or even frontiers—in which different paradigms clash; explained another featured panellist, **Georg Winkel**, Professor in a Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group at Wageningen University. He exemplified this with his area, forests, which host much biodiversity. They play a key role for many policy areas: economy, trade, energy and climate, and are therefore approached with different expectations, different emphases, and different scientific disciplinary approaches.

→ **Interdisciplinary work is a good entry-point for recognising and bridging different paradigms.**



Science-policy is about communicating

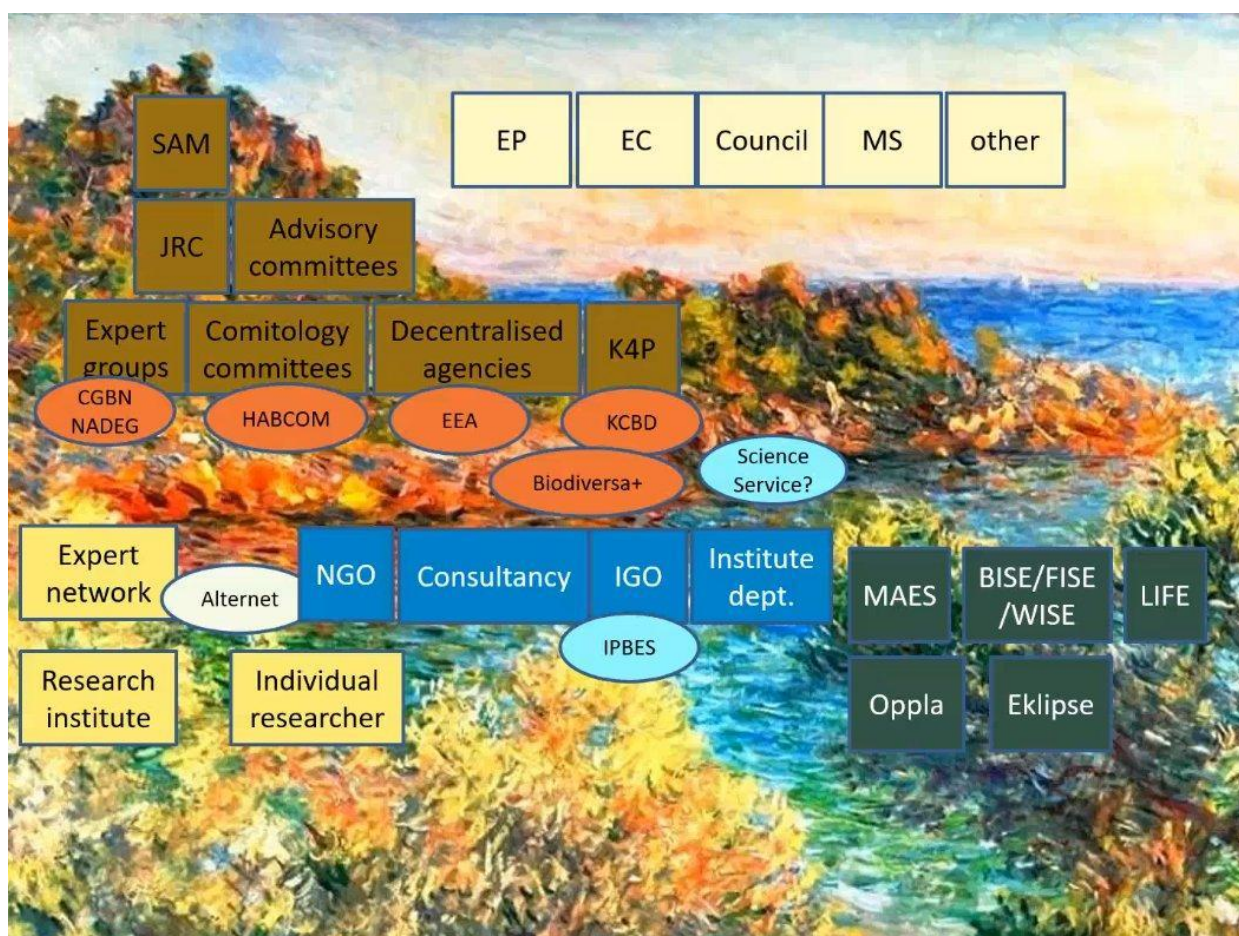
To move from talking to action, science-policy interfaces must be more transformative. This requires that scientists speak truth to power about urgent challenges and also about their consequences in regards to justice—and to engage those whom the policy addresses, said panellist **Niki Frantzeskaki**, who has experience in science-policy in an urban space. Scientists should take an active role in communicating results and translating knowledge to policy processes, in a language that is meaningful to participants in these processes. They can also enforce more listening into processes.

When facilitating science-policy interfaces and dialogue, it is important that scientists acknowledge and understand the messiness of policy processes, said **Eeva Furman**, a Keynote speaker of the Webinar, Director of the Environmental Policy Centre at SYKE. Scientists can, in addition to sharing and boldly communicating, derive new questions from these processes. Policy can improve through this kind of dialogue especially when also the unknowns and taboos are brought up. Ideally, such a transformative co-learning process results in both an improved evidence-base and novel ideas.

Scientists can advocate specific messages and actions, but it is paramount that they are transparent and can distinguish their different roles and functions. Likewise, when scientists are motivated by their emotional connection to nature, they can mobilise others. The strength in science is that the connection between emotions, knowledge and action can be made explicit. The reason why scientists have a central role in policy processes is exactly this ability to position themselves and different arguments.

How do we combine dialogue and listening with the often-repeated call for uniform messages – including in this webinar? asked the chair of the event, **Eeva Primmer**, Research Director at SYKE and Alternet Council member.

- **Urgent challenges can be communicated and repeated in different forums, including reports and dialogues. This repetition can unify the message from science; yet maintaining sensitivity to plural views and observations as well as new signals is crucial.**



Science-policy landscape is like an ecosystem, by Ben Delbaere, with the painting 'Près Monte-Carlo' by Claude Monet in the background.

Science-policy interfaces are like an ecosystem

The Alternet webinar also introduced to the over 120 participants the broad range of science-policy activities, forums and processes in Europe, or the science-policy-landscape, as **Ben Delbaere**, an Alternet Council member portrayed it. The numerous Alternet science-policy activities were presented by **Marie Vandewalle**, an Alternet Management Board member.

- **Science-policy interfaces form an ecosystem in which encounters and communication are equally important as the feeding of evidence. Bringing scientists, policy actors, societal actors and practitioners together requires processes that have directionality and seek action.**

This webinar, opened by Alternet Council Chair **Maurice Hoffmann**, chaired by Eeva Primmer and closed by **Juliette Young**, Senior Researcher from INRAE, was the first in a series of Alternet science-policy webinars. It was organised by Eeva Primmer, Juliette Young and Riikka Paloniemi, and supported by **Tyler Kulfan** from the Alternet Secretariat as well as **Suvi Staudinger**, **Aino Laine** and **Suvi Rummukainen** from SYKE.