

**Monitoring, reporting and verification of  
international cooperative initiatives for  
biodiversity**

Mapping international cooperative initiatives for biodiversity

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This report was commissioned by: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency  
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## IVM

The Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, contributes to sustainable development and cares for the environment through scientific research and teaching. A unique feature of the institute is our capacity to cut through the complexity of natural-societal systems through novel interdisciplinary approaches. Being the oldest environmental research institute in The Netherlands (est. 1971), IVM is currently one of the world's leading institutes in sustainability science.



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## Acknowledgements

We want to extend our thanks to Cebuan Bliss for assistance in data collection, Bas Bruning for proofreading, Daniel Petrovics for internal review and Sandy Tol for the design of figures in this report.



## BioSTAR project – Global Biodiversity Governance Beyond 2020: the Role of International Cooperative Initiatives

The BioSTAR project is a collaboration between the Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) and the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) in which we explore the institutional landscape of governing for biodiversity. IVM works on creating a database of international cooperative initiatives for biodiversity, analyzing their impact for biodiversity governance, summarizing lessons learnt from the climate regime to transfer to biodiversity and identifying pathways for the CBD to harness the potentials of international cooperative initiatives.

Governance for biodiversity has expanded beyond the multilateral negotiations in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). A recent report, 'Mapping international and transnational cooperative initiatives for biodiversity', identifies 330 international and transnational cooperative initiatives with relevance for biodiversity. The initiatives operate outside the auspices of the CBD, engaging nearly 10,000 non-state (e.g. companies and non-governmental organizations) and sub-national (e.g. cities and regions) actors, in various biodiversity-related policy fields such as energy, fisheries, agriculture and forestry.

Mobilizing support from other actors than governments could catalyze action in multilateral forums. In global climate governance, for example, the 'groundswell' of non-state and subnational actors supporting climate action had a significant and positive influence on the negotiations leading up the Paris Agreement signed in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Bottom-up climate actions are now officially recognized as part of the implementation agenda of the Paris Agreement.

The follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity beyond 2020 provides an excellent opportunity for discussing the possible contribution of international cooperative initiatives within the context of the CBD. Experiences from the climate regime could provide important lessons on if, how and under what conditions international cooperative initiatives could support the biodiversity regime.

To fill in the knowledge gap, the BioSTAR project addresses four questions:

1. How does the institutional landscape of global biodiversity governance look like, beyond the CBD?
2. By what criteria (output, outcome or impact) could international cooperative initiatives be assessed in the context of biodiversity?
3. What data are available to assess the impacts of international cooperative initiatives?
4. To what extent is it possible to bring international cooperative initiatives closer to the CBD?



## Glossary

### *Accountability*

Mechanisms to hold actors responsible for their commitments and actions (Mashaw 2006).

### *Biodiversity*

The variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems (Convention on Biological Diversity 1992).

### *Governance*

Processes, systems and actors involved in addressing collective problems and guiding society towards socially desirable collective outcomes.

### *Governance architecture*

An overarching system of public and private institutions that are valid or active in a particular issue area. It includes the array of governing institutions, regimes and other forms of principles, norms, regulations, and procedures that govern the issue at hand (Biermann *et al.* 2009, 15).

### *Governance triangle*

A heuristic framework developed by Abbott and Snidal, to structure and analyse governance of different issue areas (Abbott and Snidal 2009a; 2009b; Abbott 2012). Within the triangle, institutions are placed based on their governing members (public, firm and CSO). Furthermore, the governance triangle is divided into seven zones, which represent the potential combinations of actor types (public, private and hybrid). Finally, the triangle highlights the governance institutions' role (standards & commitments, operational activities, information & networking and/or financing).

### *Institutions*

Structures of rights, rules, norms, agreements and decision-making procedures that induce social practice or social order. Institutions assign roles to participants in that social practice or order and guide interactions among occupants of these roles.

### *International and transnational cooperative initiative*

Initiatives that are: '(i) international and transnational institutions, which not only have the (ii) intention to guide policy and the behaviour of their members or a broader community, but also explicitly mention the (iii) common governance goal, accomplishable by (iv) significant governance functions' (Widerberg, Pattberg, and Kristensen 2016a). International and transnational cooperative initiatives consist of companies, civil society organisations, and national, regional or local governments.

*Members*

Actors involved in a governing an institution, i.e. holding a formal position to influence the rules, norms, operations or performance of the institution.

*Transnational*

Operating across different levels, which could imply across country borders, among different organisations with different constituencies (public, private and/or subnational). In the case of this paper, transnational refers primarily to institutions that govern or engage members beyond the state level and include actors from two or more countries.

## List of abbreviations

<b>CBD</b>	Convention for Biological Diversity
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>ITCI(s)</b>	International and transnational cooperative initiative(s)
<b>MRV</b>	Monitoring, reporting, verification
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation



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## Summary

A growing number of international and transnational cooperative initiatives, including thousands of state, non- and sub-state actors, engage in governance for biodiversity beyond the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). While this trend provides new opportunities for effective biodiversity governance beyond the formal international regime, it also raises questions about broader normative questions such as accountability. This report analyses how accountability is operationalized, i.e. the mechanisms to hold actors responsible for their commitments and actions, across 99 initiatives, focusing on whether monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) frameworks are in place. MRV is not only important for accountability but might also tell us something about ambition levels and potential effectiveness.

The results show that the number of international and transnational cooperative initiatives monitoring their activities is relatively large, but decreases quickly when moving on to reporting and verification. While 82% of the initiatives monitor their performance, only 34% have quantitative targets. 66% of the international and transnational cooperative initiatives publicly present their performance results in the form of a report. Only 34% conduct annual reporting. Finally, performance is verified in less than a quarter of the sample. 23% of initiatives conduct verification themselves and 18% have an independent body or consultant checking their performance. Sanctions are applied in only 10% of the cases.

This analysis provides better understanding of accountability mechanisms among non- and sub-state actors. It offers useful insights for policy-makers, environmental organisations or researchers. The MRV of biodiversity governance requires further investigation to identify to whom the initiatives report and how these mechanisms can support the primary goal of halting biodiversity loss.



## 1 Introduction

Governance for biodiversity has expanded beyond the multilateral negotiations in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The number and type of international and transnational cooperative initiatives (ITCIs) in global biodiversity governance – including states, regions, cities, companies, investors, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, and other non-state and subnational – are growing rapidly (Pattberg, Kristensen, and Widerberg 2017; Negacz *et al.* 2020). Parties to the CBD are also taking notice, with new institutional instruments being put in place to bring ITCIs closer to the international negotiations what is further examined in the policy brief ‘Opportunities for the Action Agenda for Nature and People’ (M. T. J. Kok *et al.* 2018; Pattberg, Widerberg, and Kok 2019; M. Kok *et al.* 2019).

Building on previous work (Negacz *et al.* 2020) that has mapped out the landscape of ITCIs in more detail, this report focuses on accountability. A central question for policymakers is whether ITCIs “work” and not merely represent greenwashing and PR activities, as some critics argue. Accountability, i.e. the mechanisms to hold actors responsible for their commitments and actions, is an important evaluative lens alongside more common criteria such as effectiveness and efficiency.

This report consequently evaluates how initiatives with a primary focus on biodiversity governance monitor, report and verify their activities. It answers the question: **to what extent do international and transnational cooperative initiatives for biodiversity governance have the tools and practices in place to ensure accountability?** We analyse the monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) procedures of 99 ITCIs with a direct focus on biodiversity. We use a heuristic tool called “governance triangle” (Abbott and Snidal 2009), to study how MRV procedures differ depending on the initiatives’ actor-constellation (public, private, hybrid) and functions (operational, financing, standards and commitments, information and networking).

To measure MRV mechanisms, we have developed a set of nested variables that reveal different levels of communication activities used by the initiative (see Figure below).

### Monitoring, Reporting and Verification framework

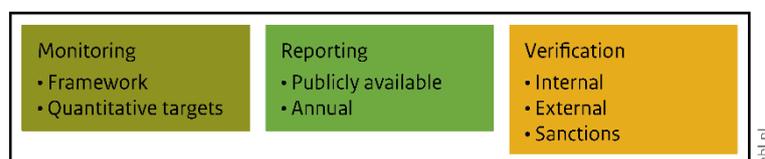


Figure 1 MRV framework

The report is structured as follows: after the introduction, we briefly discuss the importance of accountability for ITCIs. Further, we present the research methods applied in our study. Then we describe our results, including detailed sections on monitoring, reporting and verification, including some illustrations. The report ends with conclusions.



## 2 Why accountability matters for international and transnational cooperative initiatives

This report uses accountability as an evaluative lens to study international and transnational ITCIs in biodiversity governance. Accountability presents an increasingly challenging subject for researchers as the institutional architecture of global biodiversity governance expands to include hundreds of ITCIs emerging in parallel to the CBD (e.g. Bäckstrand 2012; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). On the one hand, new initiatives enable more ways to hold non-state and subnational actors accountable for their actions and promises vis-à-vis biodiversity. For instance, from our database of more than 330 ITCIs, 25% were found to set standards and commitments for their members (Negacz et al. 2020). Each new standard and commitments initiative means a possibility to hold actors accountable for these standards. On the other hand, more transnational rules may lead to a watering down of already established international agreements, primarily those created under the CBD. Eventually, more international and transnational rules and regulations could lead to what Kramarz and Park (2019) refer to as the “accountability trap”, where tools for accountability proliferate (including monitoring, reporting and verification) while the environment continues to deteriorate. Hence, in addition to the broader question of whether ITCIs have an impact, we need to know if the members or larger public can hold ITCIs accountable for their actions (and possible failures to meet their targets).

To evaluate accountability, we start from the concept of “accountability regimes” (Mashaw 2006; Chan and Pattberg 2008). It operationalizes accountability by asking the questions: “who is accountable to whom, about what, through what processes, by what standards and with what effect” (2006, p. 18). We focus primarily on whether ITCIs for biodiversity have the tools in place for accountability, in particular, what in policy terms are often referred to as monitoring, reporting and verification procedures. We check whether:

- initiatives have any monitoring framework in place;
- they have qualitative or quantitative targets;
- reporting data is made publicly available and with what frequency;
- there is first, second or third party verification; and,
- there are sanctioning mechanisms in place.

We define a monitoring framework as any strategy or goals which enable tracking the progress towards goals and objectives. Reporting is understood as the activity of issuing a report about the performance of an initiative on its website. Some initiatives have reports available on their websites, but they are not updated regularly. Therefore, we investigated two categories: public availability of reports and whether reports are periodical (e.g. annually updated). Finally, we analyse verification as mechanisms introduced to validate data regarding performance. Here we first analyse information on internal verification of the performance evaluation. Second, we examine whether independent third party verification exists. Finally, we check the reports and websites for compliance mechanisms such as sanctions and penalties.

The next section introduces the empirical basis of his report, 99 initiatives, and provides details on the research methodology and operationalization of each variable.



### 3 Methods: Mapping the MRV of governing for biodiversity

This section defines the methodology for the analysis. In the first phase of this study, we identified 330 initiatives primarily focusing on governing five different issue areas of importance for biodiversity: agriculture, climate change, energy, fisheries, and forestry (see Pattberg, Kristensen, and Widerberg 2017). The data come from the BioSTAR and CONNECT-projects<sup>1</sup>. The extended methodology used for the initial data collection can be found in (Widerberg, Pattberg, and Kristensen 2016a). Figure 2 shows the research process for the first phase of the BioSTAR project (Negacz *et al.* 2020).

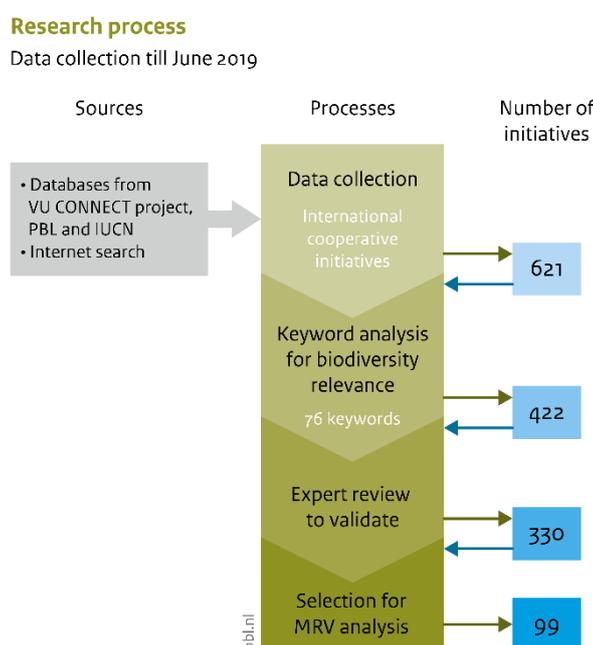


Figure 2 Research process for first phase of BioSTAR project

Based on the list of initiatives collected in the first part of the BioSTAR project, we focus on 108 initiatives with the closest link to biodiversity – classified as Tier 1. Tier 1 is defined as initiatives with a direct biodiversity link, observable via the keyword “biodivers\*” in their mission or vision statement. Initiatives that are inactive as of January 2020 have been excluded, which led to a sample of 99 initiatives.

#### 3.1 Definition of initiative

We define ITCIs by four criteria, also used in the previous report, i.e.: the report includes “(i) international and transnational institutions, which not only have the (ii) intentionality to steer policy and the behaviour of their members or a broader community, but also explicitly mention the (iii) common governance goal, accomplishable by (iv) significant governance functions” (Widerberg, Pattberg, and Kristensen 2016: p. 13).

<sup>1</sup> For more information see the project homepage: <http://fragmentation.eu/>

### 3.2 Sample

The sample used in this report has been taken from the BioSTAR dataset. The dataset was divided into three tiers based on their link to biodiversity (see: Negacz *et al.* 2020). In this study, we analyse the Tier 1 initiatives with a direct focus on biodiversity in their mission statements<sup>2</sup>.

*Table 1 Comparing sample in this report with BioSTAR dataset by function*

Function	Whole dataset	MRV Sample
Standards and commitments	25%	25%
Operational	33%	29%
Information and networking	60%	56%
Financing	17%	24%

Note: Initiative can have more than one function.

*Table 2 Comparing sample in this report with BioSTAR dataset by governance zones*

Zones	Whole dataset	MRV Sample
1	33%	31%
2	4%	0%
3	14%	19%
4	4%	3%
5	13%	20%
6	10%	11%
7	21%	15%

Table 1 and Table 2 show that the differences between the sample and the whole data set vary between 0 and 7% points. Tier 1 has fewer initiatives with operational, information and networking functions and more financing functions. As it comes to governance zones, there are no companies, but states and civil society organisations (CSO) have larger representation. The partnerships between states and CSO are better represented, while the total amount of hybrid initiatives is underrepresented by 6% points. It is important to note that Tier 1 does not include any initiative involving business actors only.

<sup>2</sup> The initiatives were divided into three tiers based on keywords in their mission statements. The keywords, identified through workshops and expert consultations, were divided into three groups: Tier 1 – including “biodivers\*” word stem; Tier 2 – keywords with a strong link to the biodiversity; Tier 3 – keywords with a weak link to biodiversity. A direct biodiversity link (Tier 1) was represented by including “biodivers\*”. Tier 2 keywords included, for example, “ecosystem”, “forest\*”, “genetic diversity. Including a strong keyword in the initiative’s statement increases the probability of governing biodiversity. Further, Tier 3 keywords, such as “sustainable use”, “use sustainably”, “integrated landscape management” were selected. Inclusion of a Tier 3 keyword may also indicate a link to biodiversity, however, they may also belong to other sustainability governance areas.

### 3.3 Operationalisation

Monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) have been operationalised based on the following binary variables:

- Monitoring - does the initiative have a monitoring framework in place (1) or does not monitor its performance (0).
- Quantitative targets – does the initiative have (1) for quantitative monitoring of performance in terms of biodiversity involving numerical data or (0) for a purely qualitative framework
- Public reporting – are there public reports of the initiative (even irregular) available (1) or not (0)
- Public annual reporting – are there annual reports available (1) or not (0). We checked the reports for 2018 and three previous years, if applicable.
- Internal verification – does the initiative have 1<sup>st</sup> party verification, i.e. it verifies its performance itself (1) or not (0)
- External verification – does the initiative have 3<sup>rd</sup> party verification, i.e. whether an independent body conducts verification of an initiative's performance (1) or not (0).
- Sanctions – does the initiative have any sanctions, penalties or other forms of punishment for members not following the rules and standards (1) or not (0)

For visualizing the institutional architecture, the report uses a 'governance triangle', a heuristic framework developed by Abbott and Snidal (2009a; 2009b). An institution's positions in the triangle is determined by the types of governing members (public, private or civil society organisations) and other participants essential to the institutional operation of rules and norms, i.e. their constituent actors. Consequently, we employ the governance triangle as a heuristic tool to sort initiatives in the biodiversity governance landscape according to the type of governance they engage in, i.e. public, private or hybrid.

All data were collected based on information available on initiatives' websites and, therefore, reflects the state of publicly available data between October and December 2019. Some initiatives mention monitoring or reporting practices but do not display them online, which was coded accordingly (0).

### 3.4 Limitations

This study is a subject to some limitations, which we discuss in this section.

The selected sample include initiatives with a direct focus on biodiversity defined as Tier 1. Out of 108 initiatives in this tier, 99 are currently active which allows for their evaluation. Further data collection is required to determine accountability mechanisms for the full set of 330 initiatives.

As a result of the abovementioned selection process, this sample does not include purely business initiatives. However, the data does include initiatives in which companies participate, e.g. together with a state or CSO actors.

Finally, the adopted operationalisation allows for comparison of ITCIs with various functions and MRV schemes on a general level. However, with the adopted framework it is not possible to investigate their performance in detail due to diversified measurements and MRV mechanisms ITCIs adopt.



## 4 Results: MRV in the institutional landscape of governing for biodiversity

In this section, we present the results of our analysis, beginning with an overview followed by monitoring, reporting and verification sections. In the main text, the reader will find some illustrations of exemplary initiatives and their MRV activities.

### 4.1 Overview

The vast majority of initiatives monitor their performance in one way or another (see Figure 3). 81% of the initiatives monitor their performance. Within this group, only 35 have numerically measurable targets. 66% of the ITCIs publicly present their performance results in a form of reports. Only 34% conducts annual reporting. The performance is verified in less than ¼ of the sample. 23% conducts verification themselves and 18% has an independent body or consultant checking their performance. Sanctions are applied in 10% of the initiatives.

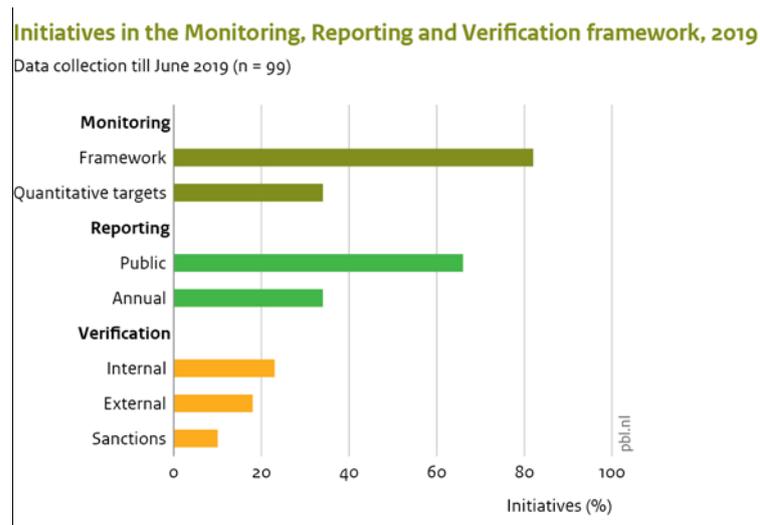


Figure 3 MRV framework

Further, we look at the MRV results through the perspective of governance zones from the governance triangle. The triangle is divided into seven zones representing the potential combinations of actor types. Institutions in zones 1-3 are dominated by a single type of actor. Those in zones 4-6 involve two actor types, and those in the central 7<sup>th</sup> zone involve all three types of actors. Additionally, the triangle is divided into three 'tiers', the public tier where public actors are dominant, the private tier where firms and CSO are dominant and the hybrid tier where government bodies share governance with firms and/or CSO in public-private partnerships. The Figure 4 shows the MRV results according to the governance zones.

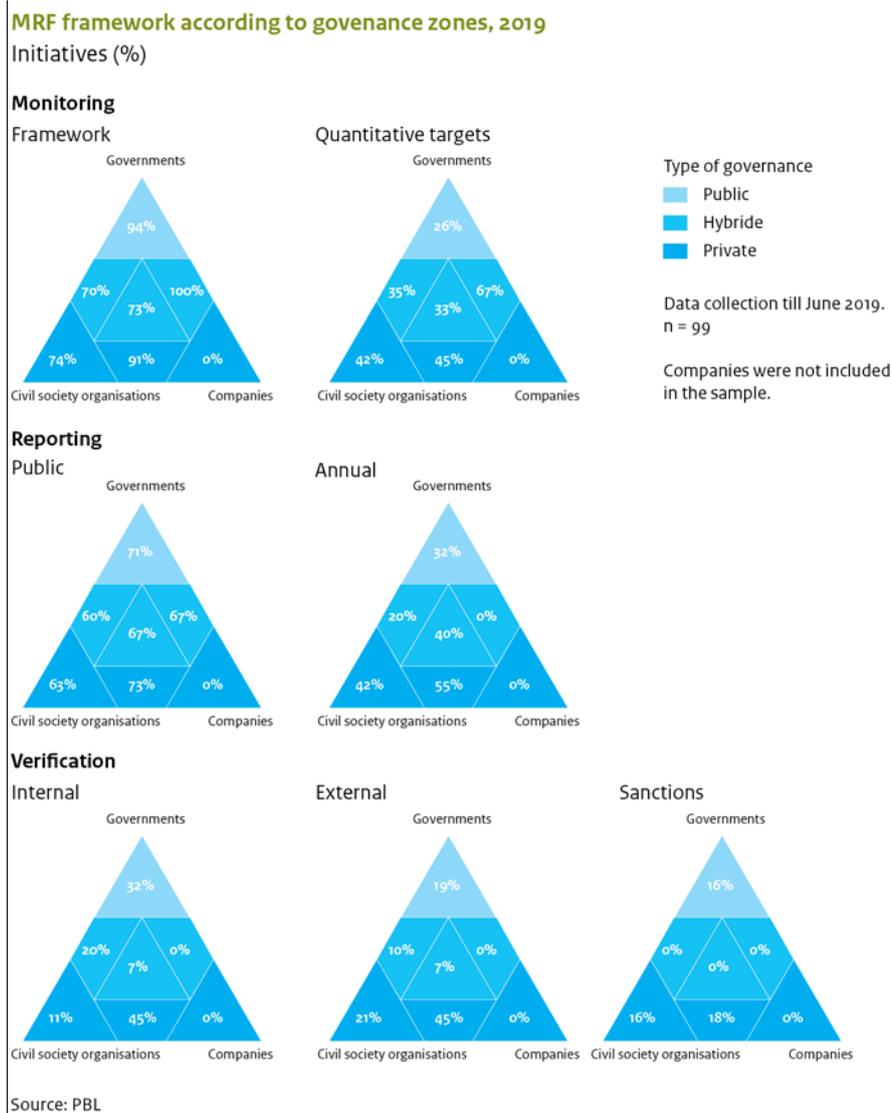


Figure 4 MRV framework according to governance zones

Government, public-private and companies-CSO initiatives have high monitoring rates of more than 90%. Public-CSO and hybrid initiatives score lower with around 70% of initiatives having a monitoring framework. Quantitative targets are often adopted by public-private initiatives (65%), while state initiatives often had qualitative goals. All the initiatives score equally in regard to the public availability of their reports. Most of the companies-CSO collaborative initiatives (55%) release reports annually. This indicator is the lowest among public-CSO initiatives. Again, internal verification is most common among companies-CSO initiatives (45%), while only 5% of hybrid initiatives indicate it and public-private initiatives do not mention it. Similar results are obtained for external verification. Finally, sanctions are included most often by companies-CSO companies.

Further, we study the initiatives according to their governance functions. The four main governance functions or roles are standards and commitments (e.g. mandatory compliance, standards for measurement and

disclosure of activities, and voluntary commitments), operational activities (e.g. technology research and development, pilot projects and best practice dissemination), information and networking (e.g. technical consulting, training and information services) and financing activities (e.g. providing financial support)<sup>3</sup> (Pattberg *et al.* 2014).



Figure 5 MRV framework according to governance functions

Monitoring frameworks are commonly used by financing initiatives (88%). The following sections will examine each variable in detail. Quantitative targets are mostly used also by financing initiatives (54%) followed by those working with standards and commitments (48%). Regardless of the function, between 60 and 70% of initiatives make their reports publicly available, but around 38% operational, information and networking initiatives do it annually, while the others updated them less often. Internal and external verification is especially high for standards and commitments initiatives with scores of 52% and 44%, respectively. It is less observed among the operational, information and networking initiatives with only 4-9% conducting verification. Finally, sanctions are used by 28% of standards and commitments initiatives and less than 8% of other initiatives.

<sup>3</sup> Figure 5 and following figures related to the governance functions depict the primary activity (or in some cases two primary activities) of an initiative, relatively to the way it pursues the governance goal of biodiversity.

## 4.2 Monitoring

Monitoring practices vary across the initiatives. Some institutions, like A Rocha or Alliance for Zero Extinction, do not provide information on their activities and how successful they are in meeting their goals. However, many of them carry out monitoring activities, e.g. Global Environment Facility, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services or Local Action for Biodiversity. Monitoring rates are high regardless of the function (see Figure 7) and zone of governance (see Figure 6).

### Monitoring mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance zones, 2019

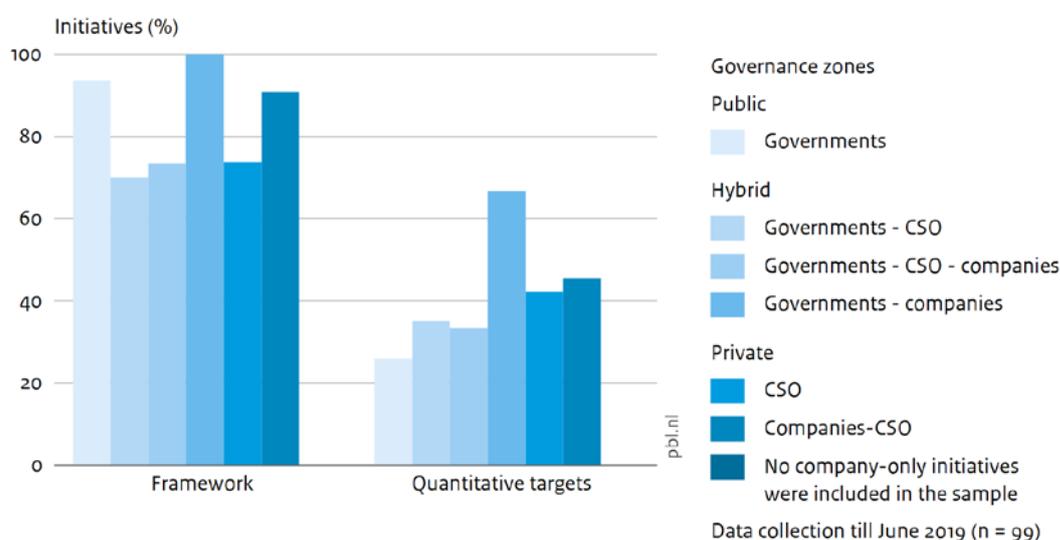


Figure 6 Monitoring practices of initiatives according to their governance zones

#### Monitoring example: Rainforest Trust

Rainforest Trust is an initiative that purchases and protects the most threatened tropical forests, saving endangered wildlife through partnerships and community engagement. Their model is based on four elements: establishing strategic partnerships, identifying critical sites, quick action and close collaboration with the partners. In monitoring, the focus is on impact measurement. The initiative identifies the number of acres covered, fellow and guardians per continent and features special cases, e.g. Golfo Dulce in Costa Rica.

See: <https://www.rainforesttrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2018-Impact-Reports.pdf>

The second variable was quality of monitoring understood as quantitative targets in which ITCLs develop numerical targets for their actions. These are most common among financing, standards and commitment initiatives, as well as public-private initiatives (see Figure 6 and Figure 7).

## Monitoring mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance functions, 2019



Figure 7 Monitoring practices of initiatives according to their governance functions

#### Quantitative targets example: Earth BioGenome Project

Earth BioGenome Project created a roadmap which calls for sequencing and annotating ~1.5 million known eukaryotic species in three phases over a 10-year period using a phylogenomic approach. Protection of biodiversity is necessary due to its increasing loss. Meanwhile, only <0.2% of eukaryotic species are sequenced, 52% of vertebrate population was lost in the last 40 years, and 23.000 species are threatened with extinction. The Earth BioGenome Project Roadmap assumes that: “during the three years of Phase I, one of the most important goals is to create annotated chromosome-scale reference assemblies for at least one representative species of each of the ~9,000 eukaryotic taxonomic families. Nucleotide divergence and divergence time will be additional factors in the selection of species so that balance across eukaryotic taxa is achieved.”

See: <https://www.earthbiogenome.org/roadmap>

The next section analyses whether the monitoring results are also reported by the initiatives.

### 4.3 Reporting

Public reporting is most common for company-CSO initiatives (73%, e.g. Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies Principles or Nespresso AAA Sustainability Quality - The Positive Cup) and state initiatives (71%, such as Regions Adapt, OSPAR Commission or Program on Forests) which may be explained by business practices or administrative regulations, but also a high level of institutionalisation of these initiatives. The lowest level (63%) is noted among CSO initiatives like the Sustainable Agriculture Network or the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, which may be explained by lower financial support and no external requirements enforced (see Figure 8).

**Reporting mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance zones, 2019**

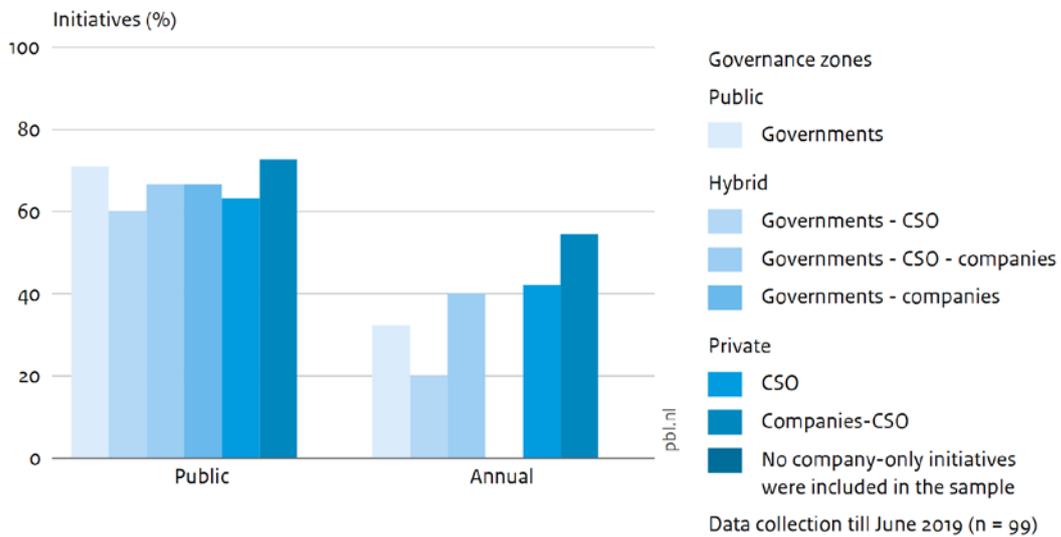


Figure 8 Reporting mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance zones

**Public and annual reporting example: Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity**

Slow Food is a global, grassroots organization, founded in 1989 to fight the disappearance of local food traditions and the spread of fast food culture. Each year they release a report including a description of their governance, projects, themes and campaigns.

See: <https://www.slowfood.com/tag/slow-food-foundation-for-biodiversity/>

More than 70% of standards and commitments initiatives (e.g. SwedBIO Collaborative Programme) has publicly available reports and 32% of them are available annually. In case of financing initiatives like the Global Environment Facility or International Climate Initiative, 63% provides the report with only 25% updating them annually (see Figure 9).

Reporting mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance functions, 2019

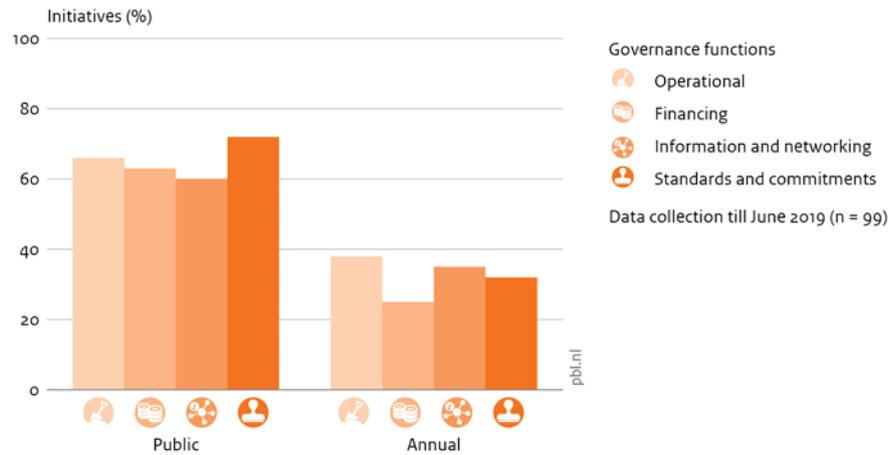


Figure 9 Reporting mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance functions

#### 4.4 Verification

The leaders in verifications are company-CSO initiatives (around 45% for both internal and external verification) with an example of Responsibly Produced Peat or Sustainable Forestry Initiative. Surprisingly, public-private initiatives mention neither internal nor external verification (see Figure 10).

Verification mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance zones, 2019

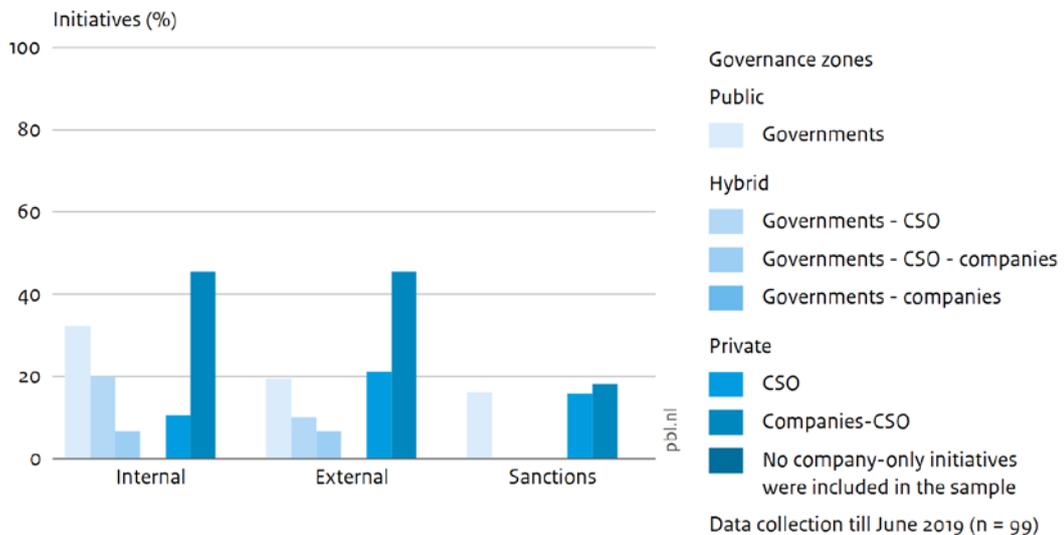


Figure 10 Verification mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance zones

#### Internal verification example: EUROPARC Federation

EUROPARC Federation is the largest network of European protected areas. It applies the EUROPARC Basic Standards taking an ecosystem perspective.

“The verification and certification of transboundary protected areas according to the EUROPARC Basic Standards is currently the only method in Europe which analyses the progress of transboundary cooperation, identifies examples of good practice and encourages the exchange of experience and expertise in this field.

The verification procedure is based on a set of clear, universal criteria and indicators, the Basic Standards, which have been approved by the European Commission’s DG Environment. The criteria guide protected areas through a structured analytical process which enables a thorough and transparent examination of their transboundary cooperation, towards certification. They are evaluated objectively by independent transboundary verifiers.

The procedure consists of five steps. To complete the process the parks need to be a member of the EUROPARC Federation and to contribute to the costs for the administration of the procedure.”

See: <https://www.europarc.org/verification-process/>

Standard and commitments initiatives perform well in verification schemes with 52% of them conducting internal verification (e.g. International Sustainability and Carbon Certification, Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity) and 44% external verification (e.g. International Tropical Timber Organization or Nespresso AAA Sustainability Quality - The Positive Cup). Only three operational initiative does internal or external verification (EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Action Plan; International Sustainability and Carbon Certification and Sustainable Agriculture Network). Information and networking are also rarely verified externally (4% only; see figures below).

## Verification mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance functions, 2019

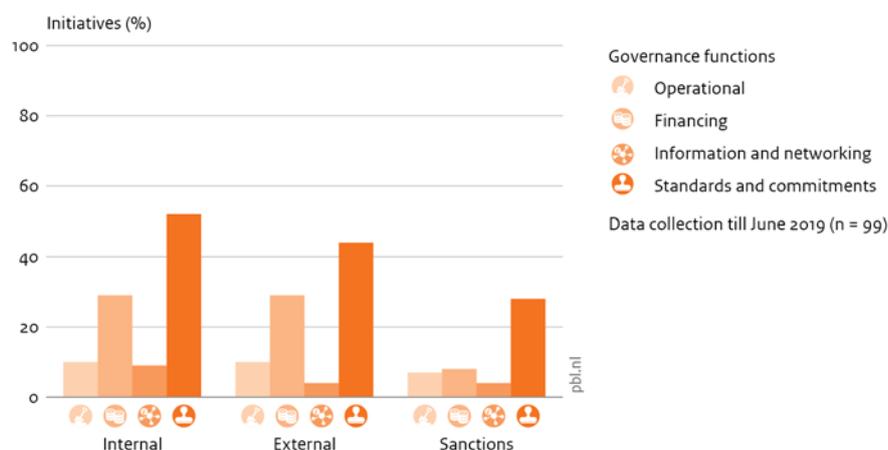


Figure 11 Verification mechanisms of initiatives according to their governance functions

#### External Verification example: Aquaculture Stewardship Council

Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) developed a certification program which promotes responsible farming practices. It uses a third-party certification system. It means that the audits are done by independent certifiers, which in turn are accredited and monitored by an independent organisation, Assurance Services International. The farms with ASC certificate are verified annually and conduct risk analysis and farm improvement plans. This third-party-verification scheme improves the credibility of this initiative and meets best practice standards set by FAO and ISEAL Alliance.

Learn more: <https://www.asc-aqua.org/what-you-can-do/get-certified/about-our->

Finally, sanctions are a consequence of a verification process. In case of a negative outcome, some initiatives (mostly public such as EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Action Plan, Aquaculture Stewardship Council or African Development Bank) impose sanctions on their members. In most of the cases, it involves losing membership, voting rights during the general assembly or withdrawing the certification. As a result, it is only common for standard and commitment initiatives (see Figure 10 and Figure 11).

**Sanctions example: South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization**

In 2006 Australia, Chile and New Zealand initiated negotiations to improve biodiversity conservation and management in the South Pacific Ocean. Further, 15 countries established the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO), which is an intergovernmental organisation focusing on conservation and sustainable use. Its Convention On The Conservation And Management Of High Seas Fishery Resources In The South Pacific Ocean. It reads that "3 Each member of the Commission shall (...) apply, in particular, the following principles: (...) effective compliance with conservation and management measures shall be ensured and sanctions for any violations shall be adequate in severity to discourage violations wherever they occur and in particular shall deprive offenders of the benefits accruing from their illegal activities;"

Learn more: <https://www.sprfmo.int/assets/Basic-Documents/Convention-web-12-Feb-2018.pdf>

## 5 Conclusions

This report analyses accountability in ITCIs for biodiversity, focusing on MRV procedures.

A vast majority of ITCIs for biodiversity monitor progress towards their own objectives, summing up to 82% of the analysed initiatives. However, it is surprising that only around one third measure them quantitatively. Quantitative targets are adopted by only 34% of the initiatives studied in this report. Public-private partnerships (67%) and financing initiatives (54%) apply them most often. Nevertheless, descriptive goals are often translated to measurable achievements at the later stage which is visible in their reports.

The initiatives from the private sector (business-CSO collaborations) perform best in the overall monitoring, reporting and verification. It may be a result of reporting standards in business practice. This tendency of high MRV performance is also reflected in standards and commitment initiatives which usually operate in a commodity sector as certification bodies.

Reporting practices are less common among the initiatives, with around two-thirds of initiatives reporting publicly and one-third publishing their reports on an annual basis. The group publishing reports most often are initiatives which involve companies and CSOs (55%). Some of the initiatives present their performance at other intervals, such as every two years or every five years.

Only one-fourth of initiatives verify their performance. Internal verification is done only by 23% of the total, followed by 18% initiatives having an independent third-party verification. Standards and commitments initiatives are an exception with more than 50% of them verifying their performance, followed by financing initiatives with around 30%.

Finally, ITCIs rarely impose penalties on their members. Sanctions are mentioned only by 10% of the analysed sample. Standards and commitment initiatives are most likely to include them (28%).

Shedding light on accountability of ITCIs allows gaining better understanding about the role of non- and sub-state actors in the global biodiversity governance, but also opens a number of questions such as avoiding “the accountability trap”. Some issues, which may be further investigated, include the following:

- To whom are the non- and sub-state actors accountable? To what extent the ITCIs members or general audience can hold ITCIs accountable for the actions and commitments?
- What is the role of transparency and accountability in halting the loss of biodiversity?
- What obligatory or voluntary MRV standards enable comparing various actors' performance in the biodiversity landscape?
- What actors from biodiversity regime can learn from accountability mechanisms in other areas of environmental governance?



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## Annex A List of initiatives

Name of initiative	Acronym
A Rocha	AR
African Development Bank	AfDB
Alliance for Zero Extinction	AZE
Aquaculture Stewardship Council	ASC
ASEAN Agreement On The C Of Nature And Natural Resources	ASEAN
Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation	APFNet
Atlantic Forest Restoration Pact	AFRP
BiodivERsa	BERA
Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network	BESNet
Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition	BfFN
Biodiversity in Good Company	BiGC
Biodiversity Indicators Partnership	BIP
Biodiversity International	BI
BirdLife International Partnership	BLIP
Blue Ventures	BV
Bonn Challenge	BC
Both ENDS	BENDS
C Capital	CoCa
C International BHP Alliance	CIBHP
Cambridge C Initiative	CCI
Capacities for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development	CEBioS
CBD Global Strategy for Plant Conservation	GSPC
CEEweb	CEEW
CGIAR Water, Land and Ecosystems research programme	WLE
Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCB Standard)	CCBA
Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies Principles	CERES
Coalition for Rainforest Nations	CfRN
Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna	CAFF
Convention To Combat Desertification In Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought And/Or Desertification, Particularly In Africa	UNCCD
Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund	CEPF
Cross-Sector Biodiversity Initiative	CSBI
Deep Sea C Coalition	DSCC
Earth BioGenome Project	EBP
Ecological Organic Agriculture	EOA
EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Action Plan	FLEGT
EUROPARC Federation	EUROPARC
European Business and Biodiversity Campaign	EBBC
FAO European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission	EIFAAC
Fondation Segré	FS

<b>Name of initiative</b>	<b>Acronym</b>
Forest Carbon Partnership Facility	FCPF
Forest Connect by Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources	ANSAB
Forest Investment Program	FIP
Forest Legality Initiative	FLI
GEF Small Grants Programme	GEFSGP
Global Environment Facility	GEF
Global Forest Coalition	GFC
Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative	GSBI
Governors' Climate and Forest Task Force	GovCF
High Seas Alliance - The Ocean Foundation	HSA
ICCA Consortium	ICCA
IDDRI Biodiversity and ecosystems programme	IDDRI
IFC performance standard 6	IFCPS6
Indigenous Climate Action	ICA
Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	IPBES
International Climate Initiative	IKI
International network for seed-based restoration	INSR
International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative	IPSI
International Sustainability and Carbon Certification	ISCC
International Tropical Timber Organization	ITTO
International University Network on Cultural and Biological Diversity	IUNCBD
IUCN Global Protected Areas Programme	IUNCNPAP
IUCN Panorama Solutions	PSHP
IUCN SOS Save Our Species	SOS
IUCN The Restoration Initiative	TRI
IUCN's EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories Programme	BEST
Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change	FACCE-JPI
Landscapes for People, Food and Nature	LPFN
Local Action for Biodiversity	LAB
Mitigation of Climate Change in Agriculture programme	MICCA
Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity	NagoyaP
NEPAD	NEPAD
Nespresso AAA Sustainability Quality - The Postive Cup	NPC
RegionsAdapt	nrg4SD
NY Declarations on Forests	NYDF
OSPAR Commission	OSPAR
Pacific Invasives Learning Network	PILN
Plan Vivo	PlanVivo
Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification	PEFC

<b>Name of initiative</b>	<b>Acronym</b>
Program on Forests	PROFOR
Rainforest Alliance Certified	RAC
Rainforest Trust	RT
Responsibly Produced Peat	RPP
Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity	SFFB
South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization	SPRFMO
Sustainable Agriculture Network	SAN
Sustainable Forestry Initiative	SFI
SwedBIO Collaborative Programme	SBIO
Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture	SFSA
The Biodiversity Finance Initiative	BIOFIN
The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity	TEEB
The Endangered Landscapes Programme	TELP
The Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative	FERI
The Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative	GOBI
The Nature of Cities	TNOC
TRAFFIC	TRAFFIC
UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry	COFFI
Wetlands International	WI
World Bank Sustainable Development Bonds	IFC
World Rural Landscapes	WRL