



Potential Policy Levers to mainstream freshwater NbS

European Commission Policy Webinar

22nd June 2023

MERLIN

Mainstreaming Ecological Restoration of freshwater-related ecosystems in a Landscape context: INnovation, upscaling and transformation



Welcome and housekeeping

- Please use chat panel to ask for support or share information with participants
- Please tell us if we speak too fast or anything is unclear
- We hope everyone has read the information sheet and consents to using the recording
- We will start recording at the end of this slide

Time (CET)	Topic
10:30 - 10:45	Welcome and introductions - Anna Bérczi-Siket (WWF Hungary)
10:45 - 11:10	Presentation - Kirsty Blackstock (James Hutton Institute) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the MERLIN Project? ● How are policies related to transformation and mainstreaming? ● Draft findings about how the focal policies link to NbS and to economic sectors, and what transformation might be needed.
11:10 - 11:50	Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you agree with our findings? ● What would you suggest to mainstream NbS using policy levers? ● Suggestions of further documents to read, policies to review, good practices cases
11:50 - 12:00	Wrap up and Next Steps - Kirsty Blackstock (James Hutton Institute)

MERLIN Policy Team



Anna Bérczi-Siket (WWF HU)



Kirsty Blackstock (JHI)



Marine Boulard (APE)



Esther Carmen (JHI)



Géza Gelencsér (WWF HU)



Eva Hernández (WWF NL)



Alhassan Ibrahim (JHI)



Fanni Nyíró (WWF HU)



Josselin Rouillard (Ecologic Institute)

Further contributions from: Levin Scholl, Leonie Schultz, Tamas Gruber, Veronica Manzon, Sanja Pokrajac, Jabier Ruiz Mirazo, Keith Marshall, Claire Baffert

Purpose of today's meeting

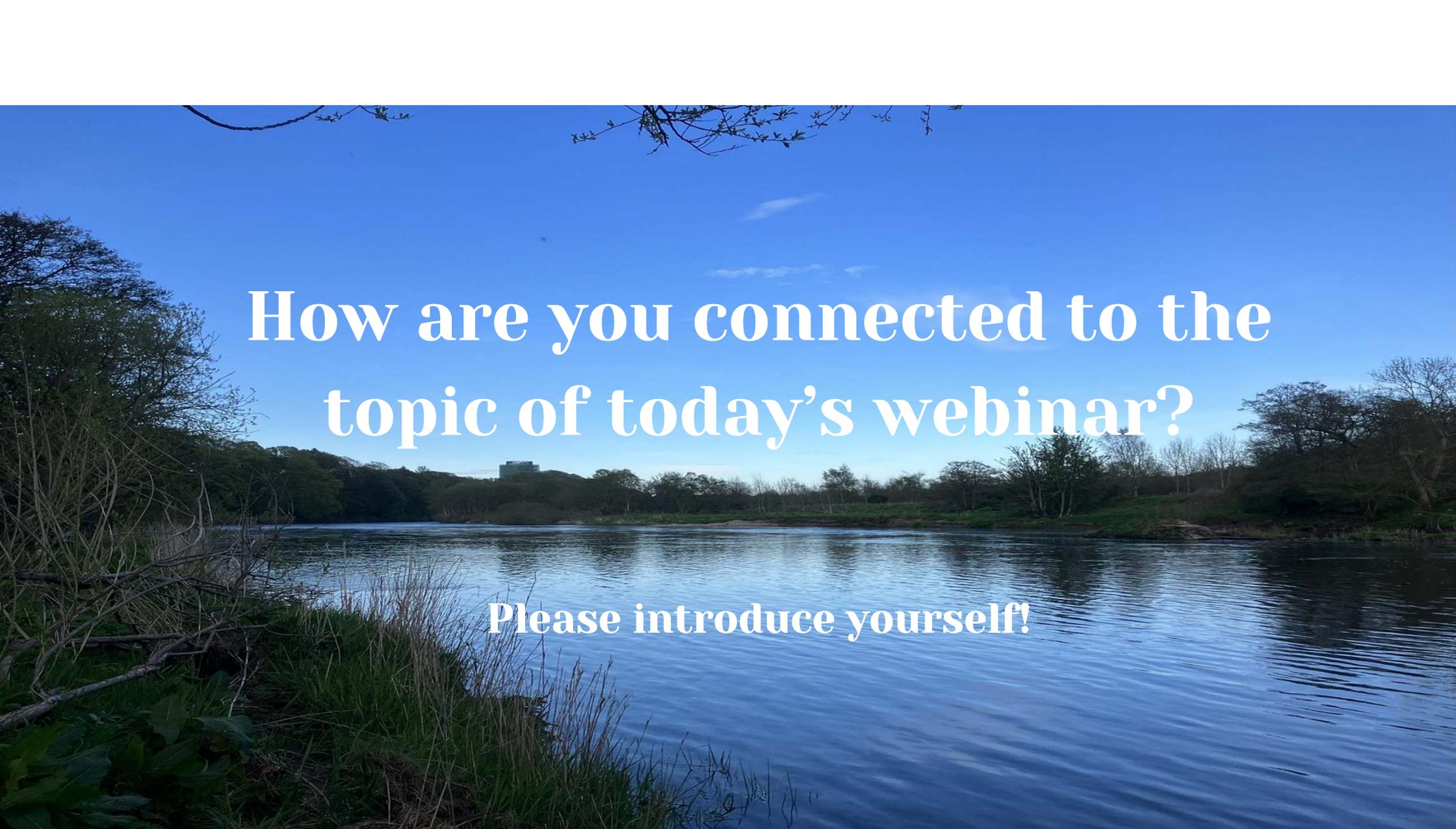
Present draft results and get 'peer review' by policy experts.

- Do you agree with our findings?
- What recommendations would be useful for us to make?
- How best to present our findings?
- What further policies are a priority to review?

By the end of the meeting we will...

- better understand where to focus on transforming policy levels that are relevant to the commission and other actors;
- build cooperation to make our products useful.





**How are you connected to the
topic of today's webinar?**

Please introduce yourself!

The MERLIN project: An overview

- H2020 “Green Deal” call freshwater (peatlands, wetlands, rivers and floodplains) restoration to respond to climate and biodiversity emergency whilst leaving no-one behind
- Need to protect & restore freshwater ecosystems in more places
- Solutions need to be embraced across society



- Duration: 2021-2025
- Budget: 21 million EUR (50% to restoration measures)
- 47 partners from research, NGOs, Public agencies and industry
- *Ambition: How to upscale and mainstream nature-based solutions?*

<https://project-merlin.eu/>

MERLIN

Mainstreaming Ecological Restoration of freshwater-related ecosystems in a Landscape context: INnovation, upscaling and transformation



The MERLIN project: sharing and shaping good practice

PEATLANDS
AND WETLANDS

SMALL STREAMS
AND BASINS

LARGE RIVERS

18 restoration case-studies



Upscaling freshwater
ecosystem restoration:
18 practical case studies



Agriculture



Insurance



Peat
Extraction



Water Supply
& Sanitation



Navigation



Hydropower

Mainstreaming NbS across
economic sectors

MERLIN

Measures

floodplain reconnection / re-meandering rivers (i)

wetland restoration (ii)

river bank restoration (iii)

dam removal (iv)

increase of water infiltration (v)

Benefits for both people and nature

minimised downstream flood risk (A)

zero pollution / clean drinking water (B)

recreation & enjoyment (C)

drought resilience & carbon storage (D)

wetland habitats (E)

biodiversity (F)

safeguarding natural water needs (G)

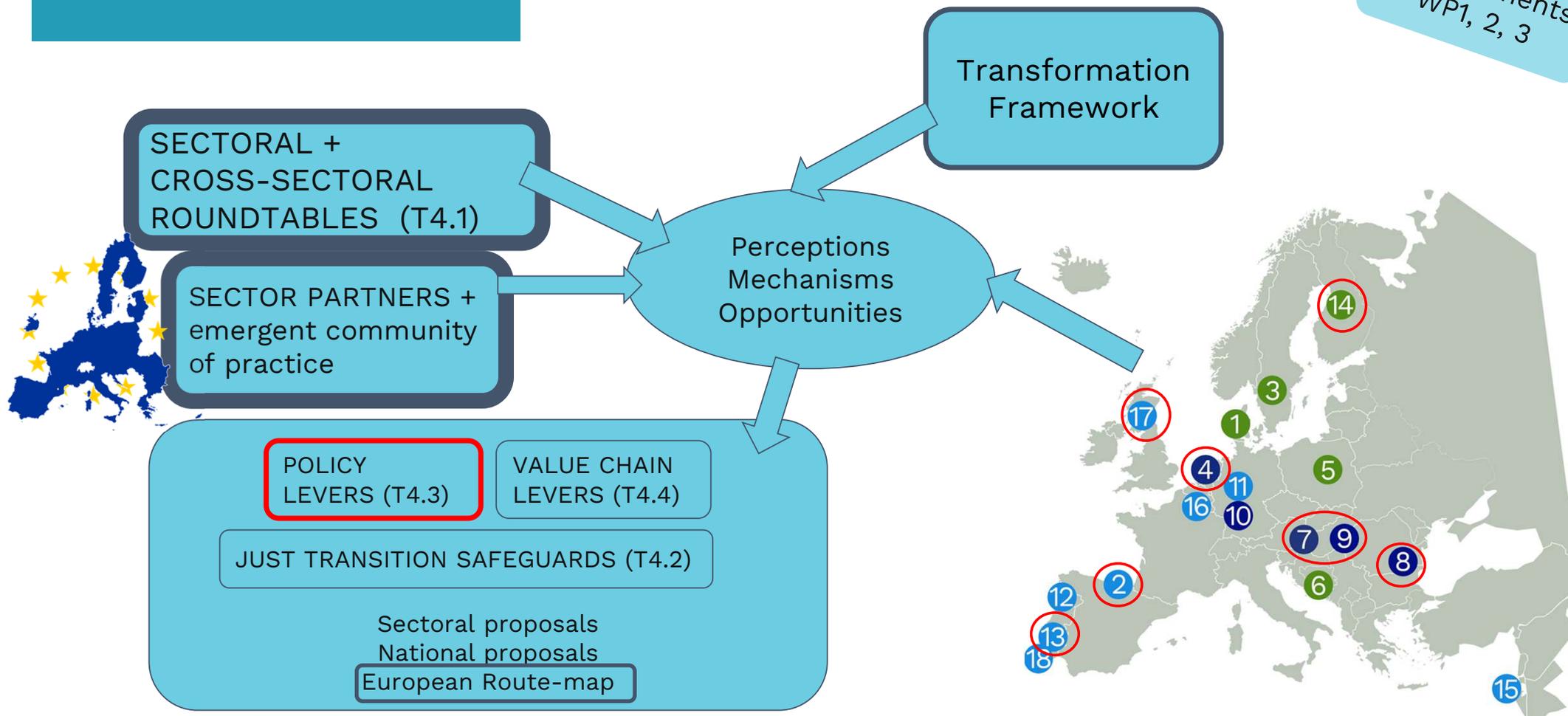


www.project-merlin.eu

[euMERLINproject](#) [merlin-eu](#) [freshwaterblog.net](#)

MERLIN's WP4

Complements
WP1, 2, 3



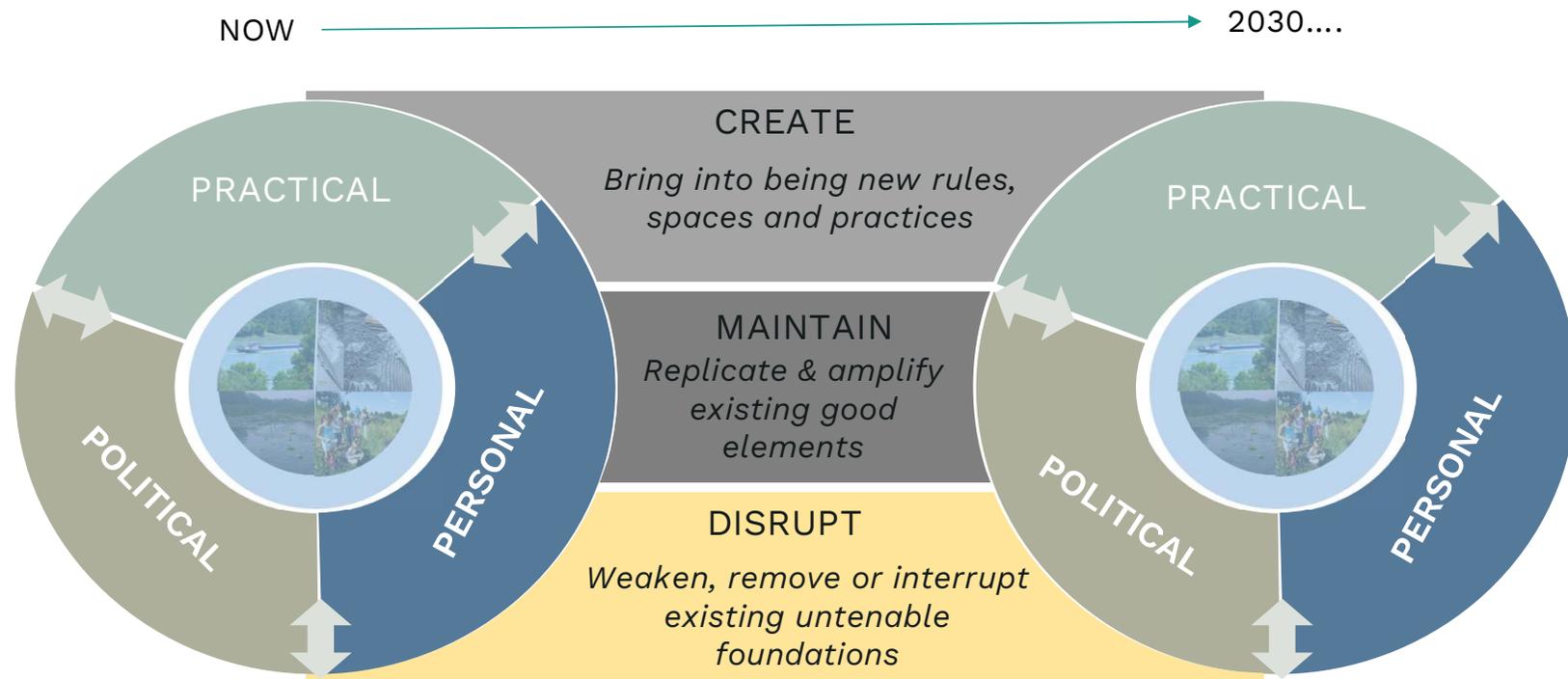
We need your expertise!

- Ambitious approach
- Hard to keep up with developments
- Broad not deep
- Find useful focus
- Use chat to capture thoughts



MERLIN Policy Analysis

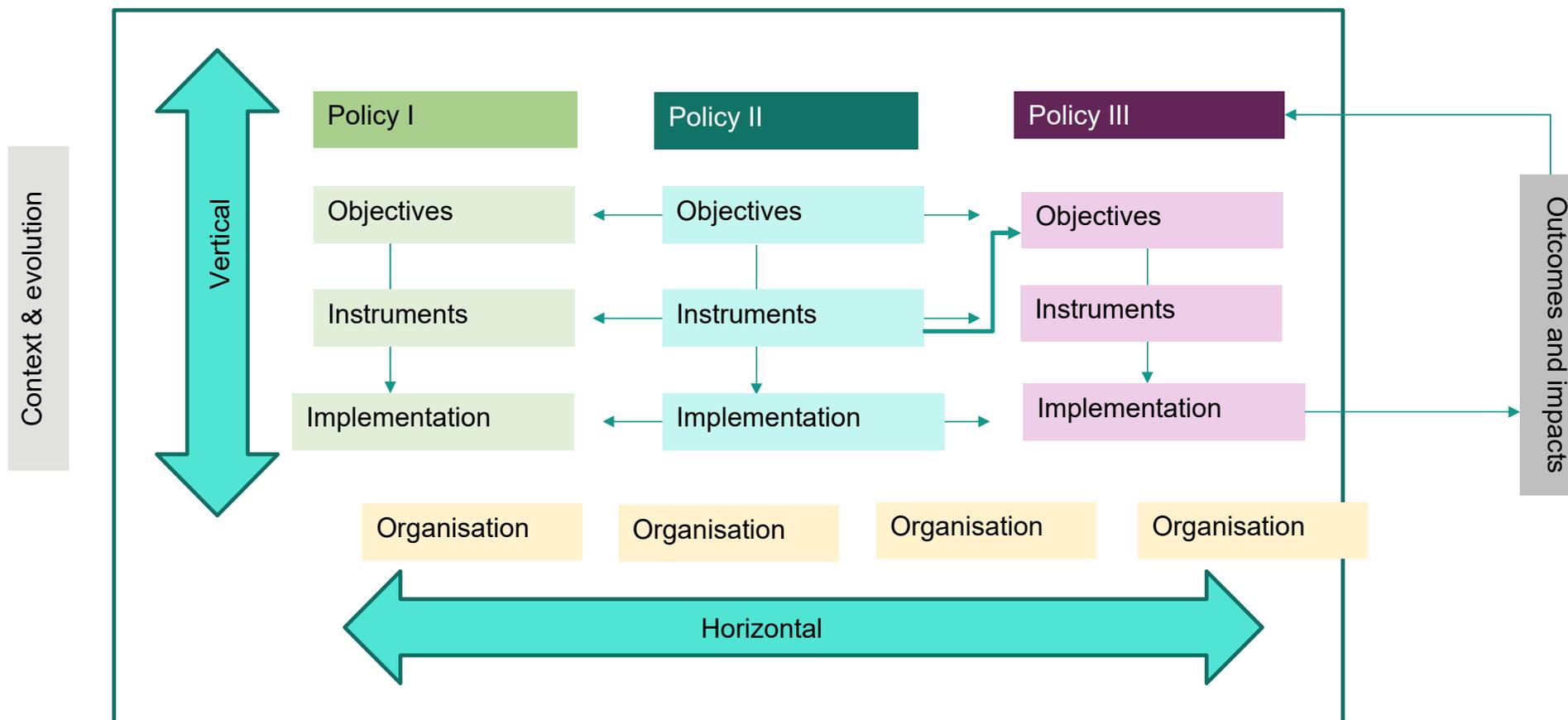
Do key EU policies need to CHANGE to enable MERLIN NbS to be mainstreamed across Europe?





- Climate and biodiversity crises accelerating
- Green Deal sets the ambition
- Focus on resilience (Quantity & Quality)
- ‘Implementation deficit’ problems
- Policy coherence as part of the solution
 - Mainstreaming environmental policies into other domains
 - Building a shared vision, Addressing trade-offs

MERLIN policy analysis – crossing the silos



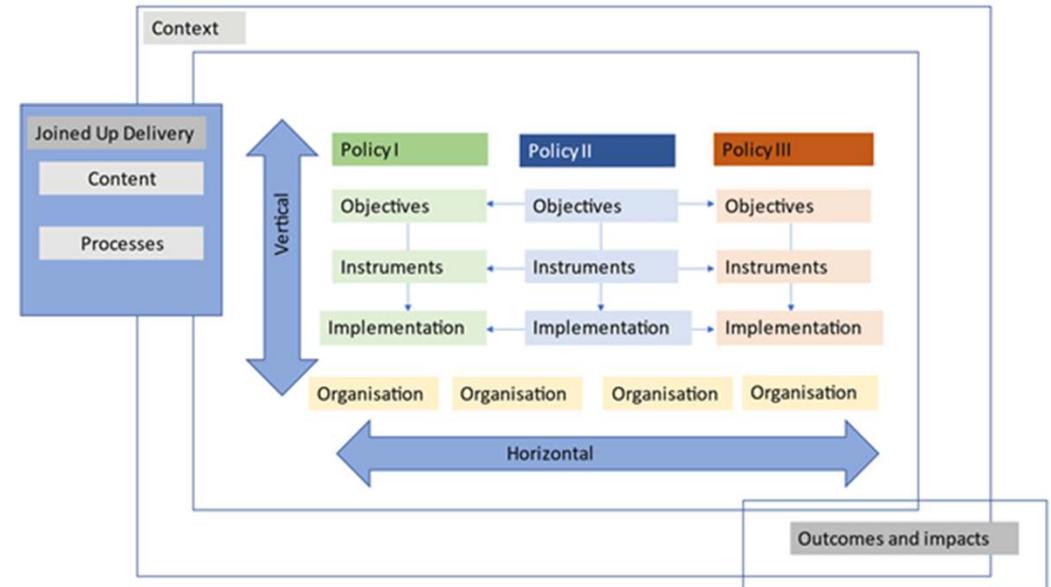
Policies

European Green Deal (2019)	Groundwater Directive	EU solvency II	Urban agenda for the EU (i.e. Pact of Amsterdam, 2016)
Bioeconomy strategy (2012) and its update (2018)	Drinking Water Directive (2020)	Climate, Energy and Environmental Aid Guidelines	Renewable Energy Directive (2018)
Biodiversity strategy for 2030 (2020)	Bathing Water Directive	Fit for 55	Natura 2000
Green infrastructure strategy (2013)	Environmental Quality Standards Directive	EU Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP)	EU Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive
Habitats Directive (1992)	Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive	Urban Water Agenda 2030	EU energy policy frameworks
Birds Directive (1979/2009)	Nature Restoration Law	The Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe	EU's Clean Energy Package
EU forest strategy (2013)	EU Inland Navigation Policy	The Sustainable Finance Action Plan (SFAP)	The EU Strategy for Energy Integration
LULUCF Regulation (2018)	Cross-compliance policy	Taxonomy Regulation	European Parliament resolution towards future-proof inland waterway transport in Europe (2021/2015(INI))
Action plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2016)	Trans-European transport network (TEN-T) (2021)	Insurance Distribution Directive	Strategic Environmental Assessment
Strategy on adaptation to climate change (2013, 2021)	European Standard for Qualifications in Inland Navigation	European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000)	Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)
Farm-to-fork strategy (2020)	European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) of 1996.	The Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979)	Climate Law (2021)
Floods Directive (2007)	Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2919/85 (1985)	White Paper: 'European transport policy for 2010:	Water blueprint (2012)
Water Framework Directive (2000)	Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3921/91 (1991)	Navigation And Inland Waterway Action and Development in Europe) Program (2006-2013)	Soil Thematic Strategy/Soil Directive
Common agricultural policy (2013)	Water Reuse Regulation		Nitrates Directive (1991)

What are we doing?

EU level analysis of six policies:

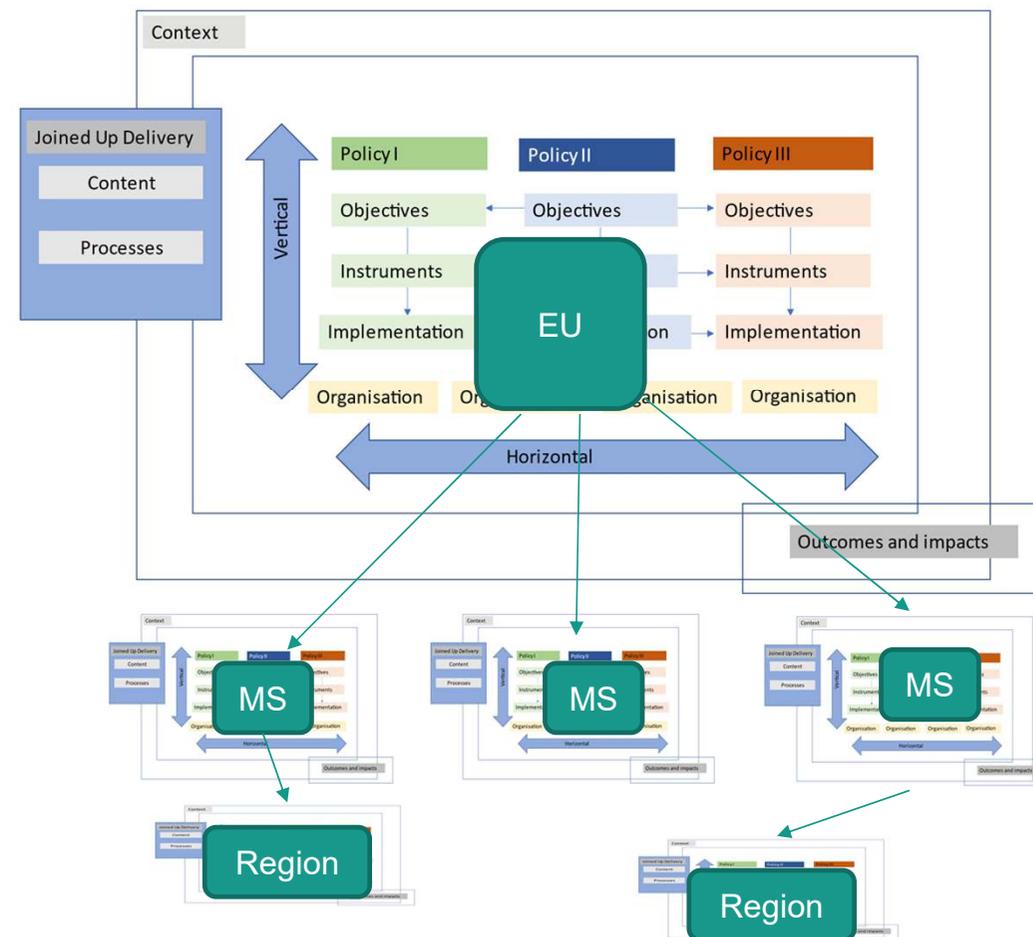
- Green Deal
- Nature Restoration Law
- Water Framework Directive
- Common Agricultural Policy
- Climate Law
- Adaptation Strategy



Analysis of how they fit together
& work with the sectors

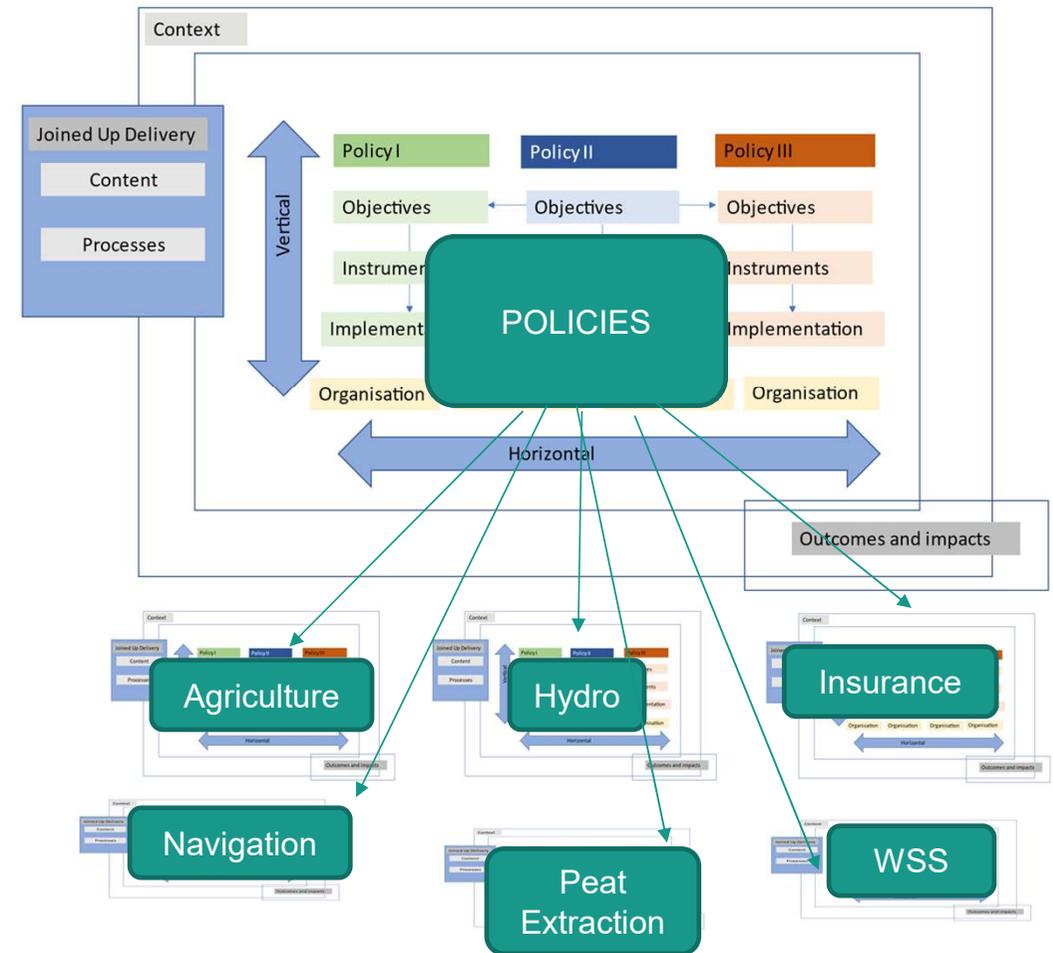
Multi-level analyses

- Heterogeneity across Europe
- Multi-level approach
- CAP: **Hungary/Tisza** and **Portugal/Sorraia** in contrast
- WFD/DWD **Spain/Basque** and **Hungary/Upper Danube**
- Climate Law – **Finland/Kompassuo** and **Austria/Upper Danube**
- Adaptation Strategy – **Romania/Lower Danube** and **Netherlands/Rhine**



Sectoral Policy Analysis

- Relate to the sectors
- What do the EU policies say about the sectors?
- What do the MS policies say about the sectors?
- What can be changed to let the sectors mainstream NbS whilst respecting these policies?



Overview of Findings

- FW restoration
- NbS
- Sectors
- Emerging coherence issues
- Potential focal areas

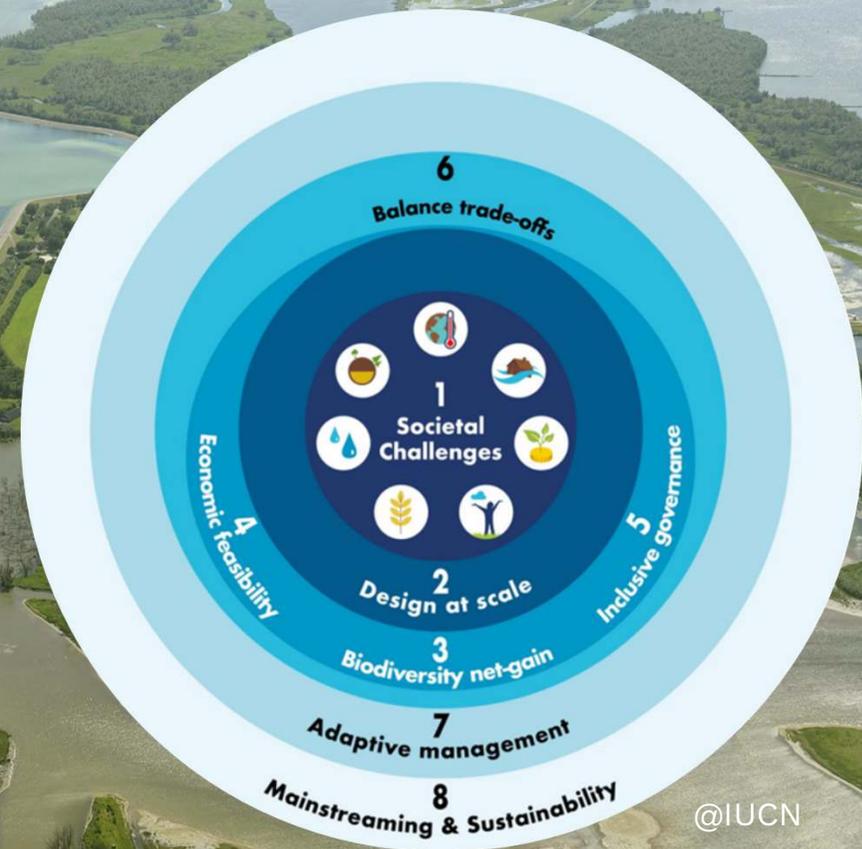
How do the policies support Freshwater Restoration?

MERLIN measures	Adaptation Strategies	CAP	Climate Law	NRL	WFD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peatland and wetland restoration - Re-naturalisation and connectivity - Natural water retention in the landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NbS by Agri & Forestry for CC mitigation - promotion of wetland restoration - less clear on NWRMs and wider connectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Via GAEC 2, 4 etc - Carbon farming/Water resources/Agroecology Ecoschemes - ENVCLIM interventions - Non productive investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mainly focused on technical solutions - LULUCF net sink contributions (from 2026) - Promotes sustainable hydropower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protected areas (Art 4-5) - Free flowing rivers objective (Art 7) - Agro-ecology objectives (Art 9) - NbS annex (re-naturalise) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through protected area designations & horizontal guidance - Relevant KTMs e.g. 5 & 6; 7 & 8 - Role of BS Action 45



Can FW restoration be part of the solution?

- Water NbS - most explicit in Adaptation and NRL
- Areas where policies could be more explicit:
 - (2) implement at scale
 - (3) attention to do no harm
 - (4) blended finance
 - (5) conflict resolution



Links to the MERLIN Sectors



Role of Hydropower & WSS more explicit for barrier removal



Role of Insurance is muted (except CAP & Adaptation)

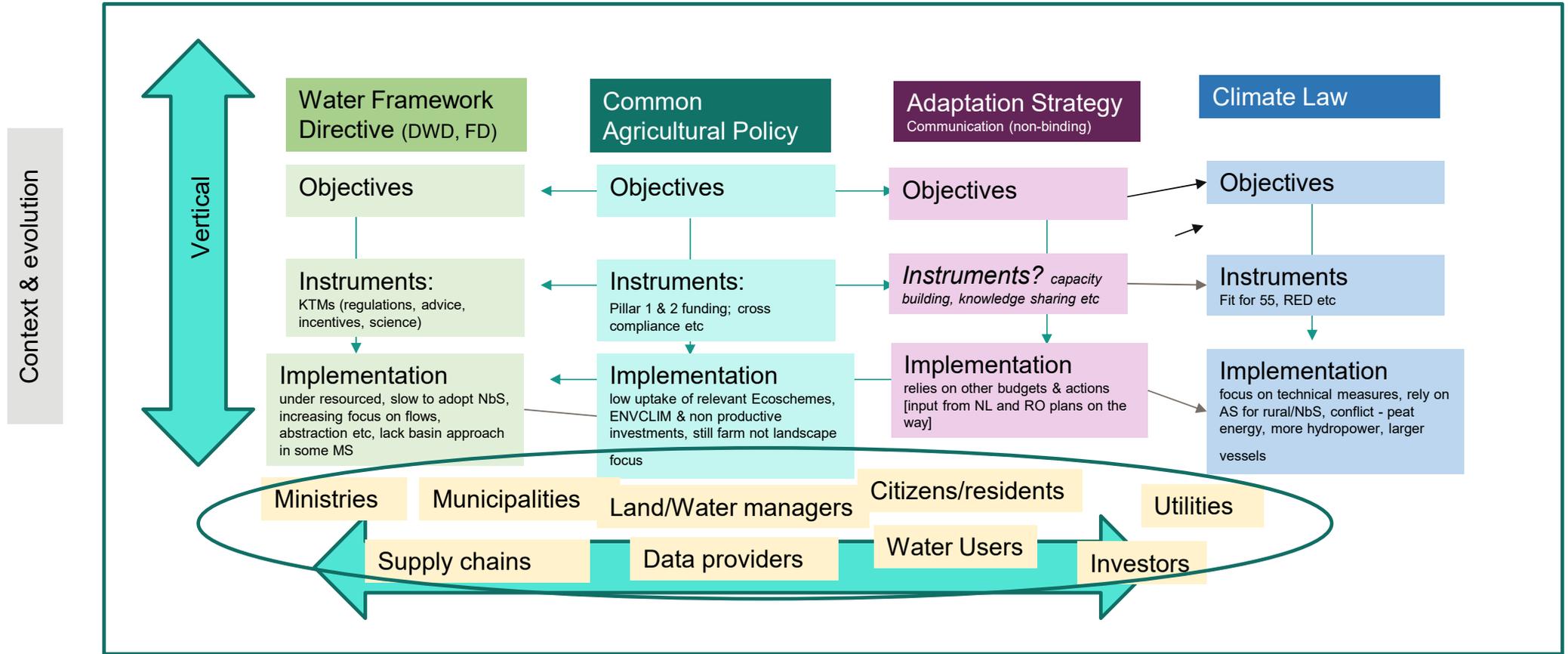


Role of Inland water transport and WSS in protecting flows

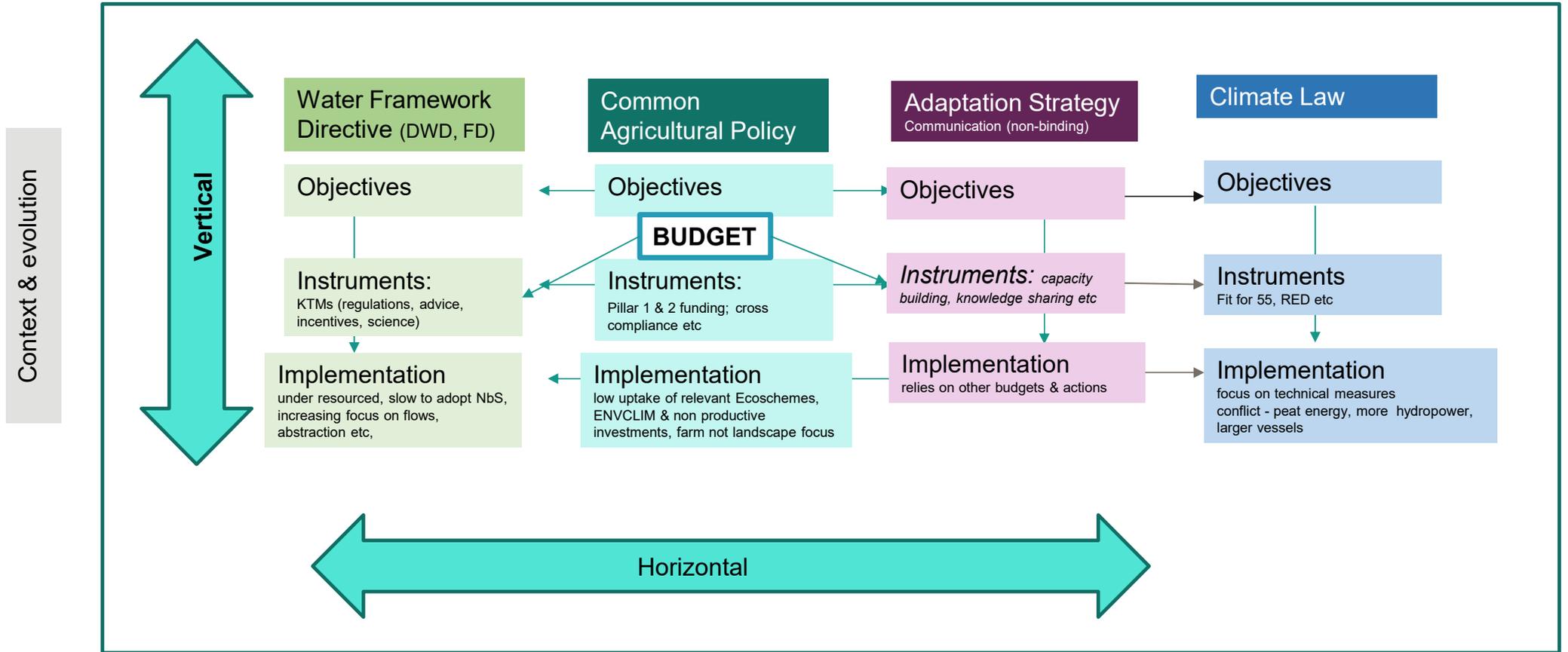


Peat extraction sector is not addressed, only ‘peatlands’

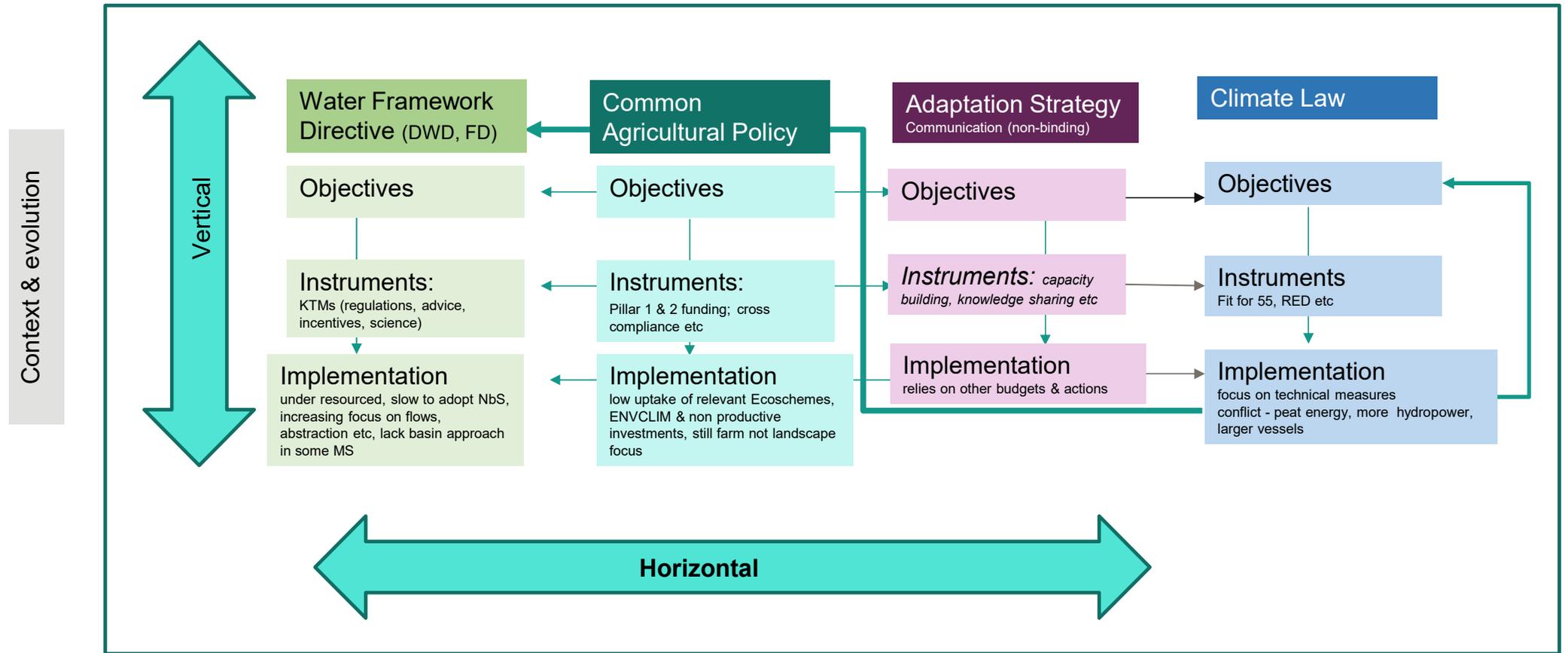
Initial policy coherence



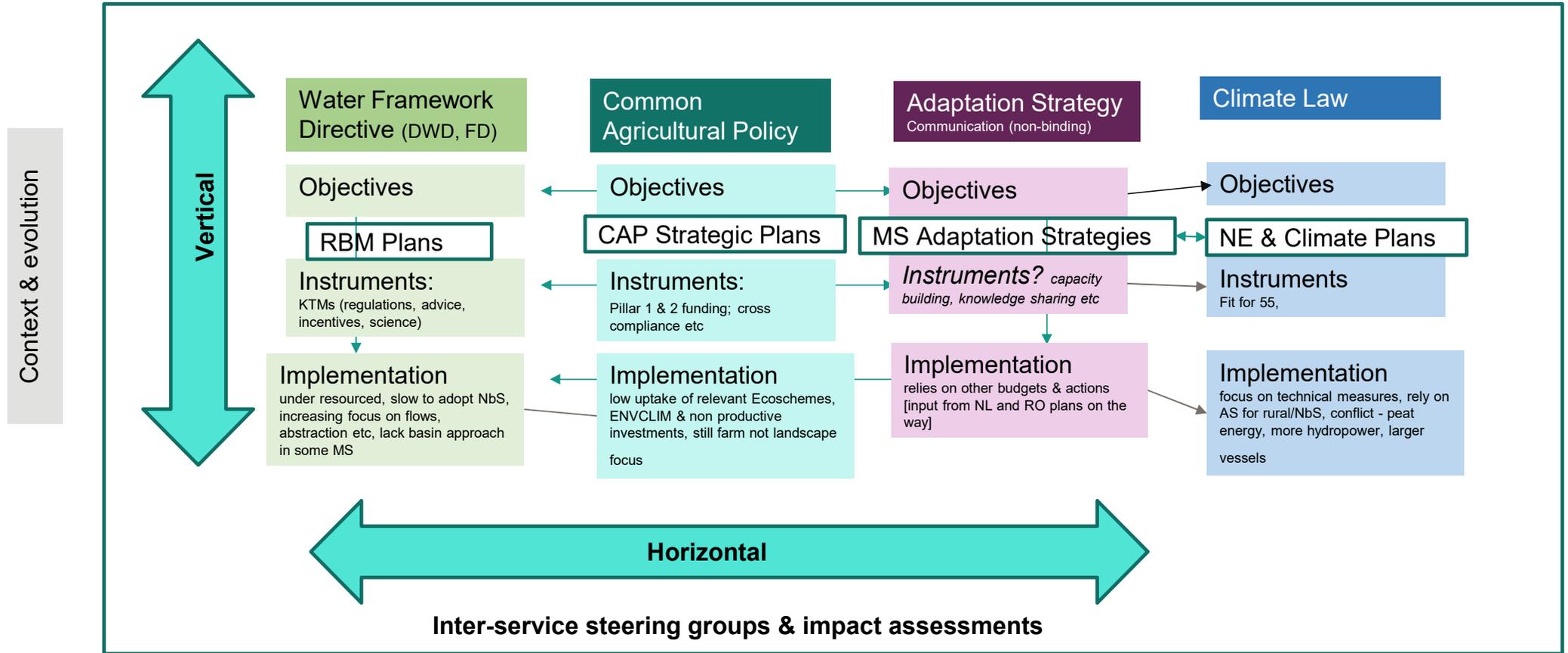
Initial policy coherence



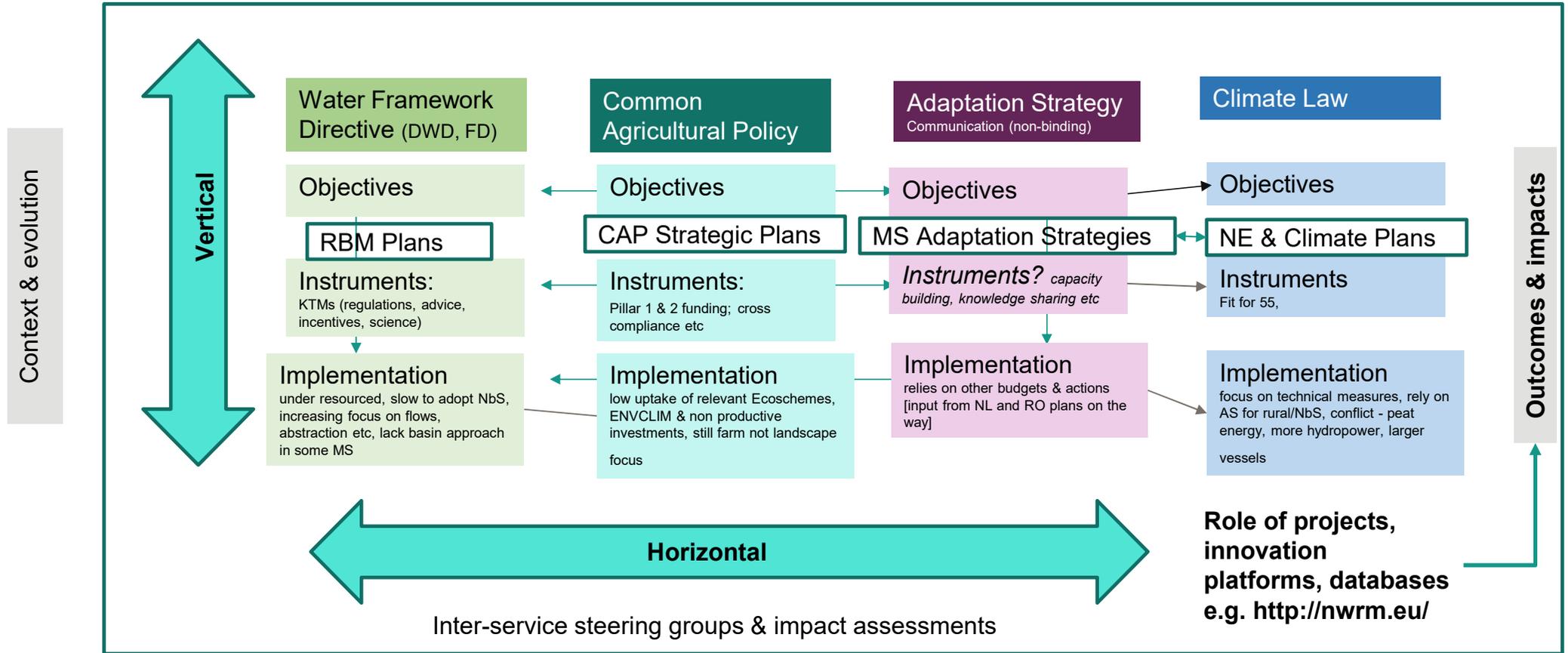
Initial policy coherence



Initial policy coherence



Initial policy coherence



Focal policy levers



Policy Framing:

- ‘Teal’ carbon mitigation - paludiculture and UAA
- Inclusion of wider sectors as stakeholders & *enablers*
- Working with nature for a Just transition/LTVRA

Policy Cycle:

- Permit review processes as leverage points
- Reporting & reviewing cycles to help with implementation deficit
- Mainstreaming projects and pilots

Focal policy levers

Policy implementation:

- Data on NbS performance, costs and benefits (land values)
- Integration of private finance & cost recovery measures

Evidence & adaptive management:

- Role of targets, indicators and benchmarks
- Role of standards/certification to support policy objectives



Focal policy levers



Cross-sectoral catchment approach:

- WFD ... but still lack a catchment approach?
- NbS Coordination or collective action instruments?
- Capacity and capability of advisors?
- Pre-financing support?
- Biodiversity Strategy action 61?



**Questions in
Plenary?**

Moderated Discussion

- Do you agree with our findings about...
 - ...contact with the sectors?
 - ...supporting MERLIN NbS?
 - ...coherence?
- What would you suggest to mainstream NbS using policy levers?
- Suggestions of further documents to read, policies to review, good practices cases...



Next Steps

- Short report of the meeting in next two weeks
- Draft deliverable to be circulated for comment at start of September (optional)
- Coordination with other policy reviews from Green Deal Cluster, other water or NbS projects in the autumn to share some common themes
- Additional analyses of further policies
- Ingredients for the sectoral strategies and cross-sectoral Member State and EU level routemaps due in 2025





Thank you for your
participation!