ReNature

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PROMOTING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR INNOVATION, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HUMAN WELL-BEING IN MALTA.

TRAINING COURSE 4

24-25 February 2020

Paola, MALTA

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Project coordinator:	Dr. Mario Balzan Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology mario.balzan@mcast.edu.mt
Project website:	www.renature-project.eu

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Project Summary

Nature-based solutions are defined as actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits[1]. Examples of nature-based solutions include different forms of green and blue infrastructure, green roofs and walls, rain gardens, sustainable urban drainage systems, natural water retention measures, hedgerows, salt marshes and dunes, floodplains, and urban green spaces.

The challenge of putting together socio-economic demands and environmental challenges are particularly felt in Malta, the smallest member state of the European Union (EU). Malta has limited natural resources, but also the highest population density in the EU, a strong and demanding tourism sector, rapid urbanisation and economy growth. The region is also characterised by an increased risk to human life driven by a strong rise in the frequency and intensity of heatwaves towards the south of Europe, and an upsurge in drought conditions, with previous studies indicating higher rates of weather-related fatalities in Southern European countries as a consequence of climate change. A central idea in the use of nature-based solutions is that of addressing societal challenges of innovation, job creation and community development but at the same time creating net positive effects on the environment by making sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources, in order to improve human well-being.

The ReNature project aims to establish and implement a nature-based solutions research strategy for Malta with a vision to promote research and innovation and develop solutions in a pursuit of economic growth, whilst at the same time improving human well-being and tackling environmental challenges. The strategy will be complemented by a newly-developed research cluster to act on it, with a vision to stimulate both scientific excellence and innovation capacity towards achieving the goals of sustainable development. More specifically, the objectives of the ReNature project are to:

1. strengthen collaborations across the science-policy interface and stimulate common research projects and information flow among the different players;
2. provide opportunities for capacity-building to enable Maltese entities to collaborate and link up with third parties for the development of excellent scientific research in the nature-based solutions sector;
3. develop evidence-base to inform practitioners and policy-makers on landscape and urban planning as key components of green infrastructure;
4. carry out a knowledge synthesis for policy-making and share a developed, evidence-based compendium, consisting of research data and peer-reviewed publications from collaborative research, in open access repositories;
5. extend the partnership by clustering with ongoing and future projects on nature-based solutions at European scale, and
6. provide solutions and alternatives to national authorities, policy-makers and businesses on the implementation of nature-based solutions.

[1] Cohen-Shacham, E., Walters, G., Janzen, C. and Maginnis, S. (eds.) (2016). Nature-based Solutions to address global societal challenges. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xiii + 97pp.

Nature-based Solutions in Rural Landscapes

ReNature 4th Training Course Programme

Auditorium, Institute of Applied Sciences, MCAST Main Campus, Paola, Malta, 24-25th February 2020

Day	Activity		Trainer/s
February 24th	08.30 - 09.00	Registration	
	09.00 - 10.00	Welcome note Introduction to the ReNature Twinning collaboration and ongoing research on NBS	Mario V Balzan
	10.00 – 10.30	Coffee break	
	10.30 - 11.30	Nature-based solutions: not just a city thing!	Marcus Collier
	11.30 – 12.30	Planning and nature-based solutions: concepts and applications	Davide Longato
	12.30 - 13.30	Lunch break	
	13.30 - 14.30	Management and restoration of Mediterranean wetlands to provide ecosystem services and benefits	Lorena Segura
	14.30 - 15.30	Nature-Based Solutions in the Mediterranean region	Andres Alcantara
	15.30 – 16.00	Coffee break	
	16.00 - 17.00	How can we save bees through sustainable farming?	Simone Marini
	19.30	Working Dinner	ReNature partners
February 25th	08.30 - 9.00	Registration	
	09.00 – 10.00	Identifying priority knowledge needs for implementing nature-based solutions in the Mediterranean islands: results from the Malta and other Mediterranean Islands	Miriam Grace
	10.00 – 10.30	Coffee break	
	10.30 - 11.30	Assessing non-material ecosystem benefits of Protected Areas (PAs) to address future challenges in sustainable development	Judita Tomaskinova
	11.30 - 12.30	Lunch break	
	12.30- 15.30	Fieldwork session Drone usage to extract environmental science data: a practical approach	Steve Zerafa
	15.30 - 16.00	Discussion and closing	
	19.30	Working Dinner	ReNature partners

The ReNature 4th Training Course
Nature-based Solutions in Rural Landscapes

The Horizon 2020 project ReNature (Promoting research excellence in nature-based solutions for innovation, economic growth and human well-being in Malta) aims to position Malta as a regional leader in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean region for nature-based innovation. Based on an understanding that biodiversity can contribute to the well-being of people, and that nature-based innovation can offer new opportunities for economic development, the ReNature project community wants to capacity-build the MCAST, the national research, policy, business and stakeholder community into a front-runner country in research and innovation and in the generation of novel nature-based solutions that tackle environmental challenges faced by modern societies.

Over the past few decades, research about nature-based solutions in rural landscapes has provided scientific evidence on the important co-benefits to human well-being and biodiversity. Nature-based solutions in rural landscapes can take the form of green infrastructure development, and ecological restoration and engineering projects, to provide resources and conditions required by ecosystem service providers leading to benefits to human well-being. Such benefits include contributions to agricultural production, water provisioning, soil erosion and fire regime regulation, flood protection and soil nutrient cycling. An analysis of social-cultural benefits and the economic costs and benefits arising from nature-based solutions provides an opportunity to finance nature-based solutions and to work with local stakeholders in rural landscapes

Against this background, the ReNature 4th training course aims to provide participants with a basic understanding of the state of the art on the implementation of nature-based solutions in rural landscapes, with a focus on the Mediterranean region. The course includes speakers from the ReNature consortium and the research and practice community within which it is embedded. The ReNature team considers this training as an opportunity for capacity-building and networking opportunity that researchers and practitioners working towards the sustainability of rural landscapes in Malta and the Mediterranean region.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Define nature-based solutions and provide an overview of ongoing initiatives in the Mediterranean region;
2. Assess the demand for nature-based solutions based on environmental monitoring and socio-economic data
3. Identify nature-based solutions and interventions that may be applied in rural landscapes to provide co-benefits to human well-being and biodiversity;
4. Select the appropriate nature-based solution to address a specific societal challenge in rural landscape

The following section provides a more detailed description of the training course sessions.

Welcome note and Introduction to the ReNature Twinning collaboration

Assessing benefits arising from nature-based solutions in rural landscapes

Mario V. Balzan
Institute of Applied Sciences, Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology

Abstract: ReNature is a Coordination and Support Action aimed at significantly strengthening research on nature-based solutions in Malta by linking MCAST and the national stakeholder community with internationally-leading research institutions. ReNature has contributed to several impacts that extend beyond the current state of art of research on nature-based solutions in Malta, and potentially, also within the Mediterranean region. Through the project activities, we are establishing an interdisciplinary nature-based solutions cluster with strong interlinkages with stakeholders working in the environmental sector and beyond. The project has contributed to the training of experts working at the coordinating institution, the ReNature partners and stakeholders working in Malta and other countries. This is expected to contribute to the long-term capacity to carry out research on nature-based solutions at the coordinating institution and at national level.

During this session, an overview of the societal challenges that would benefit from nature-based solutions interventions will be presented. This will be followed with a presentation of the ReNature strategy for the mainstreaming of nature-based solutions and an overview of the capacity-building, networking and clustering, and open-data sharing activities of the ReNature consortium.

Given the objectives of the ReNature 4th Training Course to share knowledge about the implementation of nature-based solutions in rural landscapes, this session will also include an overview of the contributions of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions interventions to biodiversity conservation, agricultural production, regulation and cultural ecosystem services using data from the Maltese Islands.

Nature-based solutions: not just a city thing!

Marcus Collier
School of Natural Sciences, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Abstract: Nature-based solutions are a novel way for regreening our cities and improving the quality of urban life. Though the phrase is a recent arrival in the academic literature, as well as in political and planning discourses, the notion of using nature to provide benefits or services to humans is long established, especially when agriculture and forestry are essentially nature-based solutions. The nature-based solution approach aims to derive multiple co-benefits that increase over time and can provide opportunities for innovation. However, while cities are the intended target of the original nature-based solution debate, might we be missing a potentially powerful tool for conserving and restoring habitats in the ecologically declining rural hinterlands? Might we also be missing a mechanism for deriving rural innovation and sustaining a living landscape? This is especially important to understand because the EU seeks to realise the new Green Deal and make rural activities, such as farming and forestry, more sustainable and climate resilient. This lecture will look at nature-based solutions in rural landscapes, some of whom have been in situ for thousands of years in the European landscape. It will pose the question: what role do nature-based solutions play in the rural context?

Planning and nature-based solutions: concepts and applications

Davide Longato
University of Trento, Italy

Abstract: The relationship between planning and nature-based solutions stems from the fact that planning instruments regulate the existence, spatial extent and allocation, and even the management of such components, influencing the delivery of associated ecosystem services. Planning instruments dealing with the allocation of allowed land use zones regulate nature-based solutions that require space on the ground and that depend on land uses, while nature-based solutions that are integrated into constructed objects can be regulated by specific construction regulations such as building codes. In addition, nature-based solutions that may depend on on-site management and design actions can be regulated by site-specific or issue-specific management plans.

Nowadays, the increasing urbanisation exerts considerable environmental pressure on rural land located in peri-urban areas. As a result of the completion of infill areas within the compact city centre, new urban development is increasingly taking place at the rural-urban interface. Along with the abandonment of industrial sites that are no longer functional to the city, usually built outside the city centre close to rural land, a lot of areas located in the rural-urban interface are in the process of being regulated for development.

Current planning approaches used to regulate development are mainly focused on pure conformance and prescriptivism. A classic example is the approach based on spatial zoning with regulation for land use zones. However, such an approach has been shown difficulties in integrating and operationalising nature-based solutions.

An alternative to/A complement of spatial zoning as a means to regulate development is the so-called performance-based planning approach. This approach focuses on the physical and spatial characteristics and effects of development to determine suitability and makes use of quantitative standards to set limits to (or minimum criteria for) development, providing flexibility as to how they could be met.

Performance-based planning has therefore the potential to be a valuable planning approach to mainstream nature-based solutions in planning thanks to its capacity to better accommodate environmental performance criteria that can be related to ecosystem services.
Some planning tools that have been proposed are, for example, the biotope area factor applied in Berlin, Germany and the subsequent green area factor tool(s) applied in several cities (e.g. Stockholm, Sweden; Oslo, Norway; Seattle, USA).

Management and restoration of Mediterranean wetlands to provide ecosystem services and other benefits

Nature based Solutions in the former saltworks of the Camargue

Lorena Segura
Mediterranean Wetland Observatory, Tour du Valat, Arles, France

Abstract: The Mediterranean region is especially threatened by climate change, with an average sea level expected to rise to 1 m by 2100. In the Camargue, rising sea levels could eat away at the coastline and cause widespread flooding.

The former saltworks is a wetland area located in the Rhône delta, in the Camargue Natural Regional Park. This site represents a vast coastal area of more than 6,500 ha. Previously developed for salt production, the site is characterized by a strong artificialization of the water cycle (the Rhône river is canalized and dikes are used for protection) and a disconnection of the lagoons that were used as compartments for salt concentration.

Healthy wetlands such as seas, rivers and lakes provide areas to store and slow the flow of water during floods. These areas can help to steady flow rates, reduce flood peaks and lower the flood risks to towns and other infrastructure. Therefore, the Conservatoire du Littoral in collaboration with the Tour du Valat and other co-managers initiated a nature restoration project in 2011. This site is progressively becoming a stunning, functional wild coastal wetland that reconnects with surrounding ecosystems within the Camargue Natural Park. It hosts important biodiversity and plays an important role as a buffer against flooding from the sea.

The former saltworks restoration project is an example of how humans can help reverse a disturbance with nature-based solutions until nature can regain its functionality and restore its resilience. The services provided by the recreated ecosystem include: provisioning (fish stocks), regulating (nutrient regulation, habitat and refuge for wildlife, genetic resources, and soil protection), and cultural (aesthetic values, inspiration for culture, scientific and cognitive development, environmental education, and recreation).

Nature-Based Solutions in the Mediterranean region

Andrés Alcántara
IUCN, Malaga, Spain

Abstract: Within the context of the environmental and climate challenges faced by the Mediterranean region, exploring the application of the NbS has become vital to improve the well-being of Mediterranean communities and to ensure long-term sustainability.

This session will provide an overview of the recent outputs from the IUCN which focus on Nature based Solutions (NbS) in the Mediterranean region. More specifically, the session will review the work carried out in the following two key documents:

- Towards Nature-based Solutions in the Mediterranean: this publication gives an overview of how the NbS can be applied in different types of Mediterranean ecosystems, using 14 examples of interventions proposed by IUCN Members and partners in the region as a part of a collective effort.
  Despite the recent origin of the NbS concept, the learnings extracted from this exercise can contribute to the ongoing development of NbS guidelines in IUCN, and mostly importantly, they can illustrate what is currently understood by NbS in the Mediterranean context. This process has highlighted the main difficulties of understanding the NbS concept, especially when it comes to designing project and actions, both in the socio-political and conservationist spheres.

- Nature based Solutions in the Mediterranean Cities - Rapid assessment report and compilation of urban interventions (2017-2018): this publication is intended as a preliminary survey of NBS interventions in the region: The report includes 50 concrete examples of NbS interventions in cities from 15 Mediterranean countries, covering societal challenges such as climate change, water management, coastal resilience, green space management, air quality, and urban regeneration.

How can we save bees through sustainable farming?

Simone Marini
Institute of Life Sciences, Land Lab, Pisa, Italy

Abstract: Agriculture needs pollinators in order to satisfy the increasing demand of pollination service. At the same time, pollinators, and especially bees, are facing a tremendous worldwide decline. Bee populations are affected by many negative factors e.g. lethal and sub-lethal effects of agrochemicals, pests, pathogens, climate change etc. One of the most problematic factors for bees is the lack of flower resources in agroecosystems. The importance of semi-natural habitats (SNHs – i.e. those managed habitats like channel banks, herbaceous areas, wood lots or hedgerows) in feeding bees might be the key to revert the bee population trend, thus the relation among SNHs, bees and crops is being investigated in Central Italy. In 2014, we investigated how SNHs structure and configuration affected wild and honey bee diversity. We found that the different types of SNHs hosted different abundance and richness of wild bees, both at landscape and local level. However, the contribution of wild bee to sunflower fields nearby SNHs was quite limited because the managed honey bees were much more abundant. Hence, in 2015, we investigated how each SNH type contributed to feed honey bees through their flower resources, and we found that honey bees collected pollen in the different SNHs types in different moment of the season. Finally, since 2018, we are investigating how woodlands management and wildfires affect the wild bee population, finding that recent management and wildfires contributes positively to amount of flower resources and bee abundance. This piece of research is a drop in the vast ocean of scientific knowledge on pollinators and pollination, however, this field still demand huge efforts to solve the many open research questions. We will discuss together about the role of SNHs diversity, abundance and management and we will try to set the future goals of research and how to achieve bee conservation.

Knowledge synthesis to identify priority knowledge needs for implementing nature-based solutions in the Mediterranean islands

Miriam Grace
School of Biological Sciences, University of East Anglia (UK)

Abstract: Mediterranean islands face significant environmental challenges due to their high population density, reliance on imports, and water scarcity, exacerbated by increasing risks from climate change. Nature-based solutions (NBS) offer the potential to address these challenges sustainably and with multiple benefits, but their uptake in policy and planning is limited, and stakeholder perspectives are conspicuously lacking from current research. Here, we report the results of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder knowledge synthesis exercise to identify priority knowledge needs (KNs) that could enhance the uptake of NBS in Mediterranean islands. We used a well-established iterative prioritisation method based on a modified Delphi process. This exercise was conducted in collaboration with 18 environmental policy and practice stakeholders from across the Mediterranean islands, representing organisations including business, government, NGOs and research. We developed a long list of potential KNs through individual submissions, and prioritised them through a process of voting, discussion and scoring. Excepting workshop discussion, all individual contributions were anonymous. We present the 47 resulting KNs in rank order, classified by whether they can be addressed by knowledge synthesis and further research, or demand action in policy and practice. The top priority KNs are (i) Greater clarity on definitions and scope of the NBS concept; (ii) Which NBS are adapted to dry Mediterranean conditions and minimise irrigation needs?; and (iii) How to increase uptake of NBS into urban plans? Other priority needs included modifying buildings and built-up areas to accommodate green infrastructure, and cost-benefit analyses of urban green spaces. In collaboration with these stakeholders, our findings will determine future research strategies on NBS implementation in the Mediterranean islands.

Non-material ecosystem benefits of Protected Areas as a bridge to future challenges in sustainable development

Judita Tomaskinova
Institute of Applied Sciences, Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology

Abstract: Protected areas are locations in which, through deliberate efforts, ecosystems as well as the wild species living therein are preserved to varying degrees. In those areas of the planet which have undergone vast landscape transformations due to agricultural and industrial activity, protected areas may end up being the only remaining natural or quasi-natural representations of ecosystems which function over a larger area.

There has been increasing recognition of the broader socioeconomic and cultural values of such natural ecosystems as well as of the extremely necessary ecosystem services that they supply. Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) lead to benefits to tourism and opportunities for recreation, apart from furnishing other tangible and non-tangible advantages, including aesthetics, sense of place, and education. It is quite apparent that natural ecosystems boost human wellbeing through a range of other complicated positive elements which transcend a strictly utilitarian functionality; hence they enable persons to find a link with nature through their culture, psychology and spirituality. Of these, cultural benefits are often the most evident due to the aesthetically striking locations of the majority of protected areas. However, CES in protected areas (PAs) may not always be fully considered by decision-makers, amongst others, due to the lack of economic and socio-cultural data.

This session will revolve around a case study entitled "*Cultural ecosystem services as a bridge to future challenges in sustainable development in protected areas"*. This case-study is intended to illustrate a conceptualization of CES and evidence its importance by highlighting the links between tourism/recreation, CES and protected areas (PAs) and carrying out an assessment of visitors' perceptions when receiving CES in PAs, thus highlighting the links between CES and Tourism. The results obtained indicate a diversity of benefits which respondents associate with their individual well-being. The most salient interactions reported were of a physical-emotional and aesthetic nature.

The results of research aimed at valuing PAs and assessment of the recreational value (in the content of cultural value) of *Il-Majjistral* Nature and History Park will be presented. Such valuation and assessment has been carried out through the criterion of *willingness to pay* (WTP) an entry fee to the respective PA within the context of tourism/recreation connections, and the subsequent *calculation of approximate recreational value* (VTR) taking into account the costs directly linked to visits to the PA. A very important socioeconomic factor was the environment and how important people regarded it in their lives. The study tried to assess and analyse the importance that respondents gave to the environment, in order to see how this could affect the willingness to pay an entrance fee. The questionnaire thus had a section dedicated to the subject of environmental importance as perceived by respondents. Participants were asked if they thought the environment was important for the quality of their lives and if so, to give reasons for their answers. The environment appeared to bear importance for many people since nine out of ten respondents (90%) stated that they considered the environment to be either important or very important.

Ecosystems are vulnerable to local and global impacts due to human well-being, human activities and climate change. In this study, an economic valuation of the main CES generated in the *Il-Majjistral* Nature and History Park was carried out and visitors/tourists were chosen as main stakeholders in the protected area. We found out the positive linear relationship between

respondents` perception on CES and their WTP for supporting conservation activities capable of preserving the functionality of the assessed area to provide different goods and services. All the identified outcomes presented here could support local decision makers in charge of the implementation of adaptive conservation management strategies in the protected area.

Using unmanned aerial vehicles to extract environmental science data: a practical approach

Steve Zerafa
Institute of Applied Sciences, Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology

Abstract: We are all getting familiar with the images taken from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV; commonly referred to as drones). However, drones could provide much more than photos: drones could be used to gain answers and insights on the environmental and agricultural characteristics and acting pressures and threats among others. During this practical session we will explore the various benefits of drone usage in monitoring the environment. We will evaluate the benefits of using drones for monitoring vegetation and other environmental data.

A practical demonstration will be carried out to assess the use of drones, learn about the available software packages, deploy, plot an area of interest from various altitudes, and analyse and extract information from the collected data.

Practical Information

Training Course Location

The ReNature Training Course 4 will be held at the Auditorium of the Institute of Applied Sciences within the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), MCAST Main Campus, Corradino Hill, Paola, PLA 9032, Malta.

Figure 1 - The Institute of Applied Sciences, MCAST.

Transport Options

Getting to/from the Airport: There is only one International airport in Malta (Address: The Malta International Airport plc., Luqa LQA4000, Malta).

Reaching the airport in Malta by bus is very straightforward thanks to four express lines designated X1, X2, X3 and X4. They are fully air-conditioned and have extra space for luggage and passenger comfort. Jump on any one of these and you're either heading towards Malta International Airport or away from it. The bus service runs from just outside the Malta International Airport terminal, across the road from the Departures Hall. There is an Information and Sales Office in the Arrivals Hall, where you will be able to obtain further information on our services and to purchase our bus cards for immediate use.

Public transport and Taxi services: More information about the public transport in Malta can be obtained from the following link: https://www.publictransport.com.mt/en/ . You can also access information about public transport (routes, timings, bus stops, etc) from Google maps.

Taxi services may be booked from the hotel or online, amongst other, from the following websites:

https://bolt.eu/en/ https://www.ecabs.com.mt/ http://johns.com.mt/online-booking/

http://hicabs.com.mt/

Course Evaluation Sheet

Thank you for participating to ReNature's fourth Training course. In order to continuously improve our events, ensure high quality and participant satisfaction we need your valuable, honest and constructive feedback.

Please indicate important remarks and suggestions reflecting your opinion in more detail within the respective sections and the last part of this evaluation form. All answers will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. It should take roughly 5 minutes to complete. Thank you very much for your time and constructive feedback!

1. **Overall how satisfied were you by these two days?** ☺ 😐 ☹

2. **How would you rate each of the training course sessions/activities?** (Please tick the chosen rating)

Session details	**Session time**	**Rating**
Welcome note and Introduction to the ReNature Twinning collaboration and ongoing research on NBS	Monday morning	☺ 😐 ☹
Nature-based solutions: not just a city thing!	Monday morning	☺ 😐 ☹
Planning and nature-based solutions: concepts and applications	Monday morning	☺ 😐 ☹
Management and restoration of Mediterranean wetlands to provide ecosystem services and benefits	Monday afternoon	☺ 😐 ☹
Nature-Based Solutions in the Mediterranean region	Monday afternoon	☺ 😐 ☹
How can we save bees through sustainable farming?	Monday afternoon	☺ 😐 ☹
Identifying priority knowledge needs for implementing nature-based solutions in the Mediterranean islands: results from the Malta and other Mediterranean Islands	Tuesday morning	☺ 😐 ☹
Assessing non-material ecosystem benefits of Protected Areas (PAs) to address future challenges in sustainable development	Tuesday morning	☺ 😐 ☹
Fieldwork session: Drone usage to extract environmental science data: a practical approach	Tuesday afternoon	☺ 😐 ☹

3. Which aspect(s) of the session(s) did you find most useful and why?

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4. Was there anything you found less useful? Why?

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5. Your ranking on:

- Organisation ☺ 😐 ☹
- The form of the presentations/activities ☺ 😐 ☹
- Venue ☺ 😐 ☹
- Catering ☺ 😐 ☹

6. Did the training course meet your expectations? YES NO

7. Do you have any other suggestions to help us improve?

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Please feel free to add any further comments.

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Thank you for your participation and feedback.