



# RESEARCH STRATEGY 2025 - 2032

VERSION 10.2.26

BIOSPHERE RESERVES INSTITUTE  
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO

## 1 - BACKGROUND

The Biosphere Reserves Institute (BRI) at the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (HNEE) was established in 2019 to support UNESCO Biosphere Reserves (BRs) in their role as model regions for sustainable development. Following the tripartite agreement [1], this is done through providing education and training, research, and through facilitation of transfer of research results to relevant policy-domains and biosphere reserve management. This **research strategy** provides direction in terms of priority research fields, to ensure the institute develops according to its mission and long-term vision, but also to support decision-making processes, e.g. regarding the allocation of resources. This research strategy outlines how the BRI aims to consolidate the institute in the time 2025-2032 through its engagement in applied and transdisciplinary research activities.

[1] A tripartite agreement was signed on 19 June 2024 between the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, the Federal Republic of Germany and UNESCO regarding the designation of the BRI as a UNESCO Category 2 Institute. The document outlines, among other things, the main goals of the institute for the next 8 years.

## 2 - RESEARCH FOCUS

BRI research is seen in the wider context of sustainability science and research on social-ecological transformations. The distinctive feature of research coordinated or conducted by BRI is its focus on **UNESCO biosphere reserves** or biosphere reserves in their larger socio-political, institutional, ecological and biophysical

context. In line with the Hangzhou strategy and idea of biosphere reserves as living laboratories for sustainability, BRI research is expected to contribute to solutions to (wider) sustainability challenges in line with the SDGs and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and other post-2030 strategies on local, regional and global levels, and to foster sustainability transformation action.

## 3 - TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH

BRI research shall shed light to pathways how to transform social-ecological systems to be within safe and just operating space for humanity. **Transformative research** can be disciplinary or interdisciplinary research engaged with biosphere reserves. However, in recognition of the potential of transdisciplinary research to drive change, we place a focus on approaches that involve non-academic actors and their interests, visions and knowledge in research processes. BRI supports engagement with BRs' stakeholders, citizen, decision makers and scientists from different disciplines in the **early phases** of identifying relevant research questions and deciding for suitable methods. Besides applying consolidated methods from natural and social sciences, BRI is exploring possibilities of citizen science, action research as well as the integration of arts in scientific inquiries.

## 4 - NETWORKING AND COLLABORATIONS

Through the involvement of BRI members and their networks, BRI has the ambition to become an **international hub** for research collaborations on biosphere reserves. Close cooperation with UNESCO biosphere reserves, other UNESCO Ca-

-tegory II institutes and chairs, universities and public and private research institutes, as well as think tanks, companies and NGOs shall enable new and innovative research cooperation, and contribute to match-making with BRs' research needs and capabilities.

## 5 - RESEARCH TOPICS

**Research topics** comprise, but are not limited to, biodiversity conservation, governance and policy strategies, participatory methods and decision support tools, BR's zonation, functions and monitoring, natural resources management, forestry and agricultural practices and value chains, natural resources related conflicts and cooperation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, landscape narratives, education for sustainable development, food cultures, and innovation and sustainable businesses. New capacities can be developed through new members, collaborative research projects and in-institute training.

## 6 - YOUNG RESEARCHERS

Especially the contribution and further professional growth of **young researchers** is encouraged at BRI and supported through training, summer schools and continuous coaching. The doctoral certificate programme of Brandenburg's universities of applied sciences, which is currently in its founding phase, enables ambitious early career researcher to dive into research on BRs and their role as spaces of innovation and experimentation for sustainability transformations.

## 7 - EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Integration and seeking **synergies** with the two other action fields of BRI – Education/Training and Policy/Outreach shall be in the centre of BRI activities, benefiting among others the Biosphere Reserves Management master programme. Ideas from the field of education and capacity building can cross-pollinate research activities and vice versa. Emphasizing policy relevance in finding research topics, the identification of strategic partners from policy and practice, and communicating results through outreach activities also contributes to long-term efforts beyond short project cycles. BRI research is expected to contribute to evidence-based policy making and follows a long-term vision towards sustainable development and transformative pathways.

## 8 - MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The research strategy shall have a mid-term **evaluation** by 2028, by the BRI directorate and the BRI governing board. In a world of polycrises and the aggravation of sustainability challenges new research needs related to biosphere reserves will be addressed in a second iteration of the research strategy. Furthermore, at this time, it will be possible to integrate new international sustainability policy priorities in the strategy. Learnings from the implementation of the current strategy shall also be implemented, supporting adaptive management and learning. The selection of indicators to evaluate the research strategy of an inter- and transdisciplinary research institute should reflect its broader engagement with the civic society and societal impact beyond academic ivory towers,

but also contributing to academic excellence. The proposed list of key performance indicators displayed in Table 1 aims to contribute to tracking progress towards the implementation of the current BRI Research Strategy. The list of KPIs does not cover all the BRI research working sectors. Instead, it serves as a general framework to support reporting, accountability processes, and an opportunity to clarify the BRI goals, research priorities and collective learning.

**Table 1 - Key Performance Indicators for the BRI Research Strategy 2025 - 2032**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>KPI</b>
<b>Academic outputs</b>	Number of academic publications in peer-reviewed journals or books	10/year
	Number of PhD thesis finished	5
	Number of master thesis that lead to a published peer reviewed scientific paper	10
<b>Sustained collaboration with non-academic actors</b>	Number of transdisciplinary projects with research questions co-developed with stakeholders	1
	Number of networking events organised that bring together researchers with non-academic actors	2/year
	Number of published publicly available data sets	10
	Number of non-academic actors engaged in research activities, such as workshops, interviews, field trips	>100/year
	Number of research outputs developed for non-academic audiences (newspaper articles, podcasts, community events, etc.)	40
	Number of MoUs on research cooperation signed with BRs or non-academic partners	5
<b>Institutional support</b>	Number of training opportunities developed to support researchers developing TD skills	7

