

Greening Cities Draft Action Plan Summary



Version from 05 June 2024

A. Executive Summary

The Greening Cities Thematic Partnership is **focusing on green infrastructure** in the urban areas. The Partnership would be of high relevance to the problems and needs of cities of all sizes with regards to biodiversity preservation and adaptation to climate change. The Partnership would be aligned with the objectives of cities to provide higher well-being to citizens through cleaner air, better inclusiveness and a more aesthetic environment.

In this regard, the **objective** of the Partnership is to **contribute to the development of an implementation framework for green infrastructure** at local, regional/national and EU levels, including links/reflections to the provisions of Article no. 8 from the **proposal** for a **Nature Restoration Law**, through:

1. **ensuring knowledge** (methodologies, guidelines, indicators) for the deployment of concrete green infrastructure (GI) solutions at city level and national level;
2. **strengthening the integration of green infrastructure** (GI) in the urban dimension of upcoming EU policies and in other sectoral policies;

The Greening Cities Partnership is composed of **29 members**, including **10 cities**, **2 regions**, and **3 national authorities**. It was approved in October 2022, started its work in December of the same year, and is expected to implement its work by the end of 2025. To develop its Action Plan, the Partnership used an Ex-Ante Assessment study as a foundation, structured its work under four Working Groups (WGs) focused on **Funding, Indicators System, Methodology for quantifying demand for Green Infrastructure and Urban Nature Restoration Plans**.

All UAEU Partnerships aim to contribute to **Better Knowledge, Better Funding, and Better Regulation** by applying multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation processes at the EU level.



Have a look at the dynamic Miro Board Infographic here:

https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVKCXnHxE=/?share_link_id=993284264210



B. Summary of Actions

Action 1

Need for Green: Methodology for quantifying the demand for green infrastructure at local level

Brief Description:

The Action will develop a comprehensive methodology to help municipalities quantify their demand for urban green infrastructure. This methodology serves a dual purpose: (1) addressing climate adaptation needs while enhancing biodiversity and (2) providing evidence-based substantiation for green infrastructure implementation.

Main Objectives:

- Create an evidence-based tool for municipalities to define and quantify their demand for green infrastructure.
- Incorporate the methodology into urban planning processes for both existing and new urban developments.
- Ensure that the methodology supports EU laws and policies, facilitating subsequent investments and projects.

The Challenge:

The primary challenge addressed is the lack of a standardized, evidence-based methodology for quantifying the demand for green infrastructure at the local level. This gap makes it difficult for municipalities to plan and implement green infrastructure projects effectively, impacting climate adaptation efforts and biodiversity enhancement. The Action addresses the need for accurate, quantifiable data to support urban green infrastructure investments, fulfilling multiple environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Output:

A comprehensive guide or handbook that municipalities can use to quantify their demand for green infrastructure. This tool will support urban planning processes and the substantiation of green infrastructure projects, ensuring they meet climate adaptation and biodiversity goals.

Implementation Strategy*:

Phase 1: Stocktaking of existing methodologies and indicators (Q2 2024).

Phase 2: Develop and validate the new methodology with stakeholder input (Q3 2024 - Q2 2025).

Phase 3: Finalize and disseminate the methodology (Q3 2025 - Q4 2025).

**The implementation of the Action will be supported by ESPON Cooperation Program.*

Completion Date: 31/12/2025

Action 2

Indicator System for Evaluating Urban Nature Plans

Brief Description:

The Action will develop an indicator system that promotes comparability across EU Member States and local authorities to measure and monitor progress towards urban greening. It will include several thematic areas of assessment, a set of common mandatory and voluntary indicators, and will outline the methodology for their measurement.

Main Objectives:

- Develop indicators to assess the development of urban green infrastructure.
- Create common mandatory and voluntary indicators to measure and monitor Urban Nature Plans.
- Establish a methodology for the measurement of these indicators, ensuring standardization and comparability across cities.

The Challenge:

The primary challenge is the lack of a standardized system to measure and compare urban greening efforts across different cities and Member States. This gap makes it difficult to monitor progress and implement effective urban nature policies such as the Urban Nature Plans, the Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Climate Adaptation Strategy and others. The Action addresses the need for a harmonized indicator system that supports evidence-based policymaking and enhances urban biodiversity and ecosystem restoration.

Output:

A comprehensive indicator system, including a methodological appendix, to evaluate Urban Nature Plans. This system will be documented in a handbook and supported by multimedia materials for dissemination.

Implementation Strategy:

Phase 1: Initial Version of the Indicator System (Q1 2025)

Conduct a literature review, analyze survey results, and consult with experts.
Develop the first proposal for the indicator system.

Phase 2: Co-creation and Consultation (Q2 2025 - Q3 2025)

Conduct workshops and interviews with stakeholders and cities.
Refine and validate the indicator system based on feedback.

Phase 3: Communication and Dissemination (Q4 2025)

Organize dissemination events and promote multimedia materials.
Submit the final proposal for the indicator system and methodological appendix.

Completion Date: 31/12/2025

Action 3

Reaching Meaningful Urban Greening Targets

Brief Description:

The Action will provide guidelines for national, regional, and local authorities on how to meet their urban greening targets, helping them to overcome key challenges, learn from the best practices of others, and offer tips on developing and implementing their Urban Nature Plans. Additionally, it will develop recommendations and promote for the establishment of an EU-wide legislative framework on urban green space to help stop the loss of green infrastructure promoting its steady increase in the future.

Main Objectives:

- Develop guidelines to help national, regional, and local authorities meet urban greening targets.
- Enable local authorities to better understand the satisfactory levels of green infrastructure they should aim for.
- Promote the establishment of an EU-wide legislative framework on urban green spaces.
- Support the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 and the Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Challenge:

Urban areas face the challenge of losing green space, which is crucial for climate adaptation, biodiversity, and citizen well-being. The EU Biodiversity Strategy and the proposed Nature Restoration Law highlight the need for urban greening, but many local authorities lack cohesive approaches and effective implementation strategies. The Action addresses the need for standardized guidelines and legislative support to enhance urban green spaces and green infrastructure.

Output:

A comprehensive guidebook providing guidelines for setting and meeting urban greening targets, illustrated with case studies and best practices. Recommendations for an EU-wide legislative framework on urban green space will also be produced.

Implementation Strategy:

Phase 1: Development of Guidelines (Q4 2024)

Research case studies, best practices, and survey results; conduct workshops and consultations with experts and stakeholders; draft and refine the guidebook based on feedback.

Phase 2: Promotion of Legislative Framework (Q1 2025 - Q1 2026)

Research and analyze existing legislative frameworks; conduct workshops and discussions to explore legislative options; develop recommendations and position papers; disseminate findings and promote discussions among stakeholders.

Completion Date: 31/01/2026

Action 4

Strengthening Structural Funding for Urban Green Infrastructure

Brief Description:

The Action will recommend the earmarking of resources in future national-level fund regulations for green infrastructure investment and maintenance focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund for the next EU financial period (2028-2034). Additionally, it will create a one-stop shop tool for easier access to information on available funding for green infrastructure.

Main Objectives:

- Recommend earmarking funds for green infrastructure under the ERDF and Cohesion Fund for the 2028-2034 EU financial period.
- Facilitate access to information on EU funding opportunities for green infrastructure through a one-stop shop tool.
- Increase the availability of structural funds for green infrastructure and improve the funding process for municipalities.

The Challenge:

Urban areas need increased resilience to climate change and better quality of life through green infrastructure. However, funding for urban greening and maintenance remains insufficient, fragmented, and difficult to access. Current EU funds do not explicitly prioritize GI, making it a lower priority for local authorities. Additionally, the complexity of funding opportunities and bureaucratic barriers further hinder effective GI investment and maintenance.

Output:

A position paper with two formal recommendations:

1. Earmarking at least 25% of Sustainable Urban Development funds under the ERDF and Cohesion Fund for GI.
2. Creating a one-stop shop tool to consolidate information on EU funding opportunities for GI.

Implementation Strategy:

Phase 1: Development of Position Paper (June - December 2024)

Draft the position paper with input from stakeholders and experts; conduct participatory meetings with DG Regio and other governance levels; finalize the position paper with feedback from key partners.

Phase 2: Building a Coalition and Dissemination (September 2024 - June 2025)

Build a coalition of partners within EU structures and among European cities; promote the position paper and gather support during the Polish Presidency in the EU Council; organize events and workshops to disseminate information and gain stakeholder support.

Completion Date: 31/12/2024

Action 5

Enhancing the Use of Innovative Funding by Urban Authorities to Green Cities

Brief Description:

This Action identifies and shares knowledge on best practices regarding innovative funding to support urban green infrastructure. It focuses on three main areas: (1) public-private partnerships (PPPs), (2) debt-based instruments such as green bonds and loans from the Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF), and (3) long-term financial constructions for funding GI projects and maintenance costs.

Main Objectives:

- Identify good and bad practices in PPPs for GI projects.
- Examine the use of debt instruments like green bonds and loans from NCFF.
- Focus on long-term financial strategies to fund and maintain GI projects.

The Challenge:

Although investments in GI are increasing, there is a significant need for innovative funding mechanisms to enhance urban greening efforts. Public funds alone are insufficient to meet the financial requirements for large-scale GI projects. Many cities struggle with establishing effective PPPs and accessing debt-based instruments due to perceived risks, uncertain returns, and regulatory challenges. Additionally, long-term maintenance costs pose a significant financial burden.

Output:

An inspiration booklet on innovative funding for GI, containing good and bad practices in PPPs, debt-based financing instruments, and long-term financial strategies. This booklet will serve as a guide for urban authorities to explore alternative financing options for GI projects.

Implementation Strategy:

Phase 1: Survey and Data Collection (April - August 2024)

Develop a survey focusing on PPPs, debt-based instruments, and long-term financial strategies; identify and contact cities and private investors to gather data.

Phase 2: Analysis and Documentation (September - October 2024)

Hold an online meeting to discuss the preliminary findings with stakeholders, including the European Investment Bank (EIB) and cities; analyze the survey results to create a comprehensive document detailing good and bad practices in innovative funding for GI.

Phase 3: Dissemination (November - December 2024)

Finalize and translate the document into an inspirational booklet; promote the booklet through Portico, in-person conferences, and online meetings with national and international stakeholders; ensure wide dissemination among cities.

Completion Date: 31/12/2024



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Disclaimer:

**** The Pact of Amsterdam states that the Action Plan 'can be regarded as non-binding'. Therefore, the actions presented in this Action Plan are not compulsory. **** (chapter 4 clause 19.)

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