

# European Platform for Urban Greening

Case Studies from Year Four



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## FOREWORD

# Creating Long-Term Impact Across Europe

**Through a series of cumulative initiatives over the past few years, the European Platform for Urban Greening is driving significant impact on multiple levels—from the individual to the institutional, and from localised initiatives to larger innovations. The Platform has been a catalyst for change, expanding the role of green in education, enhancing blue-green industry practices, forging new alliances, and influencing policy reforms throughout Europe.**

When we began, our goal was simple: to elevate the importance of Urban Greening and introduce the Platform's mission. At its core, we aimed to create lasting change in the field by bringing together vocational education, industry and policy under one platform, raising awareness, accelerating vocational education, and spurring innovation in Urban Greening across Europe.

Over these years, the European Platform for Urban Greening has succeeded in building a Platform of Vocational Excellence (PoVE), establishing six Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), and generating momentum around critical issues such as biodiversity, nature-based solutions, vertical green, and urban water management. We have not only explored key aspects of sustainable green cities, but also assessed the Platform's sustainability and strategic direction, ensuring it will continue to drive progress in the years to come.

Through our work, we have strengthened green curricula, increased learning mobility, and seen concrete policy reforms and industry innovations across all regions. The concerted actions we have taken have reshaped our understanding of the sector's potential and fundamentally transformed how we educate, empower communities, and approach environmental stewardship.

Today, we no longer need to define Urban Greening; we are proactively engaging a broad spectrum of sectors, professions, and industries that already recognise the benefits of integrating green frameworks into their practices.

As we stated from the outset of our project, the answer is green. With the funding and support of the European Commission, we have had the opportunity to collaborate extensively with stakeholders across borders. These collaborations have established annual International Urban Greening Weeks, solidified long-term partnerships in industry and vocational education, and developed an open-source innovation network and a robust skills ecosystem. Together, these efforts will continue to shape recruitment, education, best practices, and foster stronger alliances in Urban Greening.



***“The European Platform for Urban Greening has been more than just a four-year project. What we have built is a movement across Europe that accelerates vocational education, innovation partnerships, and excellence in Urban Greening.”***

*– Jan Jeronimus, Project Leader, European Platform for Urban Greening*

## OVERVIEW

# Becoming A World-Class Reference Point for Skills

**As the first of its kind, the European Platform for Urban Greening has quickly established itself as a global leader and skills reference point for all aspects of Urban Greening. Over four years, the Platform has harnessed Europe's unparalleled ability to collaborate across borders, building a unified network of six Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) that work seamlessly together to advance the Green Sector.**

With a clear focus on equipping both students and professionals with the critical knowledge and skills needed to address biodiversity, climate adaptation, and well-being in urban environments, the Platform has mobilised a network of vocational education institutions, industry leaders, and professional associations. Together, they have created the foundational infrastructure necessary to meet these pressing challenges.

From the very beginning of our project, we identified shared priorities that would allow us to reach our goals and build momentum for the Platform. These included:

- Raising greater awareness around Urban Greening
- Recruiting for the new Green Labour Market
- Creating meaningful opportunities for knowledge exchanges
- Developing high-quality curricula and educational activities

As demonstrated throughout this year's Case Studies, the momentum we have built has not only sparked action but has ignited a long-term, transformative movement in Urban Greening across the continent. Amongst numerous initiatives, six stand out as prime examples of how the European Platform for Urban Greening has become a world-class reference point in the field. These initiatives highlight the effectiveness our collaborative approach and underscore the power of a unified Platform of Vocation Excellence in driving real, lasting impact.

## Uniform Training Offer

By focusing on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and providing training to our Platform partners on its importance, we have successfully aligned curricula across each Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) with the EQF standards, resulting in a uniform training offer based on learning outcomes and corresponding assessment criteria.

Led by the European Landscape Contractors Association (ELCA), Platform partners have gained a deeper understanding of what to teach, how to teach and assess it, and how to support their workforce, taking into account the varying levels of expertise and the diverse training needs within Urban Greening.

Adopting the EQF standards has fostered greater alignment and transparency between education and industry across the Platform. As a result, we are now better equipped to support the mobility of learners and workers throughout Europe and internationally. This, in turn, promotes lifelong learning and professional development, not only in Urban Greening, but also in the broader landscaping, gardening, and blue-green sectors.

## GREENVEU – Recruiting for the Green Labour Market

In addition to the recruiting initiatives of each Centre of Vocational Excellence, GREENVEU, a spin-off project of the European Platform for Urban Greening, addressed the talent pipeline shortage of trained and qualified employees in the Green Sector. Using immersive storytelling and engaging content this project looked at ways to connect aspiring individuals with the educational opportunities and career pathways available in Green VET education.

The project developed “Worlds of Green”, a framework showcasing the diverse and interconnected domains within the Green Sector, including renewable energy, eco-friendly technology, sustainable agriculture and green entrepreneurship.

With Worlds of Green as a framework, Platform partners and stakeholders from across Europe developed Target Group Personas based on qualitative and quantitative research. These personas guided the development of educational and career pathways tailored to specific audiences, enabling effective recruitment strategies.

The initiative also developed a Toolbox resource, to empower Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs), VET institutions, and green industries. This resource equips them with insights and strategies to attract young people and career changers, inspiring them to pursue careers in the sustainable Green Labour Market.

## Biodiversity Education in Urban Spaces

One of the most successful examples of raising greater awareness around Urban Greening has been the *Biodiversity Education in Urban Spaces* initiative, introduced by the Romanian Platform partners in 2023.

Integrating key themes of Urban Greening into the national education system including biodiversity, climate adaptation, and urban well-being during Romania’s inaugural Green Week led by the Ministry of Education, the initiative reached 19,500 students across the country in its first year.

Offered at every educational level *Biodiversity Education in Urban Spaces* teaches students how to assess biodiversity and incorporates activities designed to help students understand ecosystems, protect pollinators, and develop transversal skills.

This year, the 40 hour training initiative grew to reach more than 23,000 students, demonstrating the impact the Romanian CoVE is having on inspiring the next generation of green practitioners, elevating the status of vocational education, and embedding a major culture shift in the Romanian population.





## Urban Greening Metro Map

One of the most significant achievements of the Platform is the *Urban Greening Metro Map*, an interactive tool that visually represents the breadth of the Platform’s training opportunities and innovative curricula across Europe.

The *Metro Map* organises training and course offerings by thematic lines—such as water, soil/substrates, vegetation, materials, energy saving/machinery, and well-being. For each theme, specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been defined, creating a clear pathway for navigating the curricula available.

This facilitates Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), provides opportunities for micro-credentials, and offers more flexibility in addressing the required skills to meet current and future demands of the green industry and the Urban Greening sector at large.

Learners can explore training, courses, and resources based on their areas of interest, following a single theme or hopping between different lines as their needs evolve. Each stop on the *Metro Map* represents a unique educational opportunity, allowing learners to personalise their journey and choose the path that best aligns with their goals.

The *Urban Greening Metro Map* not only charts the educational landscape but also highlights the professional opportunities that lie ahead. By providing this visual and interactive resource, we are able to engage both professionals and students, broadening the conversation around Urban Greening and helping to future-proof the sector.

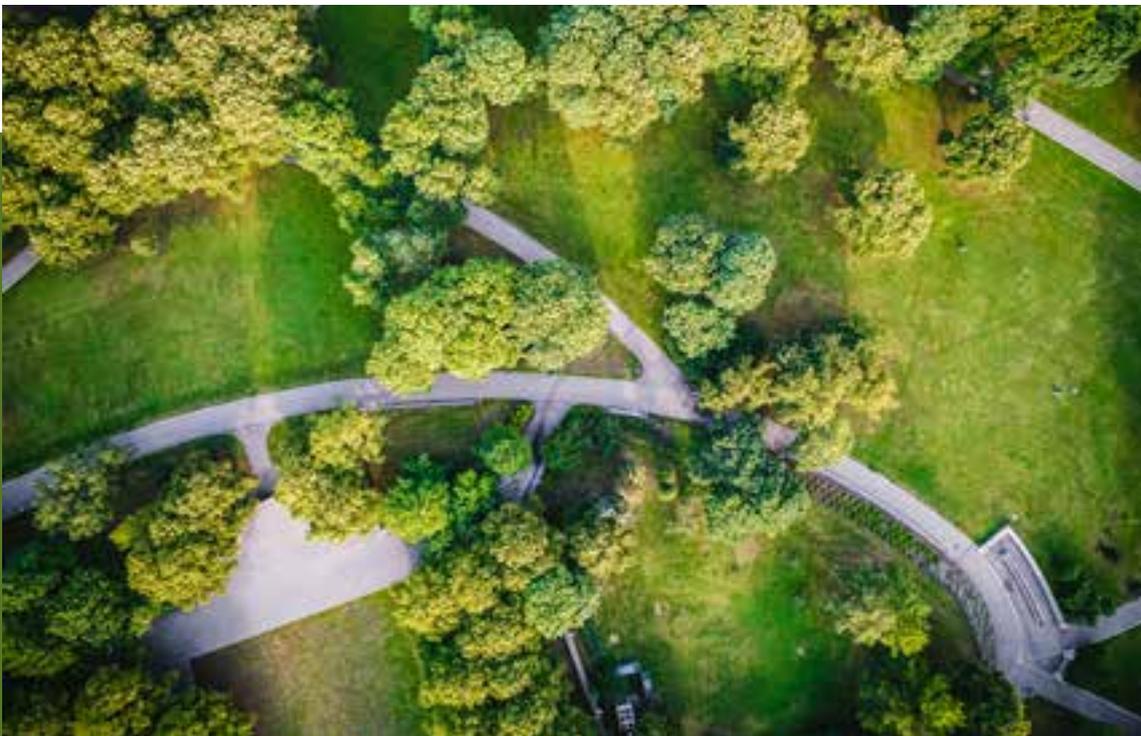
## International Urban Greening Weeks

Leveraging the European Platform's ability to collaborate seamlessly across the Centres of Vocational Excellence, led to the emergence of International Urban Greening Weeks. Based on the shared priority to create meaningful opportunities for knowledge exchanges, in 2023 the PoVE organised two inaugural events held in Finland and the Netherlands.

Since then, International Urban Greening Weeks have been hosted in alternating CoVEs annually, empowering students, educators, and industry professional to travel and connect in dynamic challenge-based cooperative learning environments. Forming cross-continental teams to tackle the most pressing challenges in Urban Greening has been hugely beneficial for generating momentum in the Green Sector, accelerating innovation, and forging a collaborative European skills ecosystem.

The outcomes of this additional initiative has been invaluable to the impact of the European Platform. Learning outcomes for participants are formally recognised and transferable using Europass and plans to develop recognised micro-credentials for these mobility learning experiences are scheduled for 2025.

International Urban Greening Weeks have inspired participants by providing opportunities for mobility learning and empowering them to acquire new knowledge first-hand in diverse contexts. Each CoVE has committed to continuing International Urban Greening Weeks, beyond the formal completion of the European Platform for Urban Greening project.



## Vertical Green Virtual Course

With funding from the European Commission, the Platform has also developed and launched a pioneering *Vertical Green Virtual Course*.

Led by Platform partner AhlmanEdu in Finland, this immersive course was created through transnational collaboration, using a flexible, blended learning model. This approach allows learners to engage with the content at their own pace, anytime and anywhere, while experiencing a simulated real-world context. Mirroring the structure of the *Urban Greening Metro Map*, the course is organised into thematic pathways, each focused on key elements of the *Vertical Green* framework.

The course introduces learners to the core principles of green walls and vegetative roofs, covering foundational knowledge in five key areas: definition, design, construction, maintenance, and the environmental and social benefits of vertical green systems.

The learning materials were developed in close partnership with both educational institutions and industry stakeholders, ensuring the content aligns with current best practices in the field. Each Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) has the flexibility to adapt and expand the course content, seamlessly integrating it into their own curriculum to meet local needs.

To maximise accessibility, the course is available in six languages, ensuring it becomes a valuable resource for learners across Europe and beyond.



## CASE STUDY

# European Landscape Contractors Association

Creating Impact through Policy Making and Implementation



*“The EU Nature Restoration Regulation is a historic opportunity for Urban Greening professionals. Together we contribute with greenery and nature-based solutions to better climate, biodiversity and public health in the urban area. My role in Brussels is to present these green solutions and to make sure that our professionals are at the table at national and local level to bring in their expertise in designing, creating, and maintaining these green solutions.”*

*- Egbert Roozen, Secretary General, ELCA*

## Impact Achievement

### Nature Restoration Law

ELCA is proud to have played an influential role in the legislative process that has resulted in the new *Nature Restoration Law*, which successfully passed through European Parliament in the summer of 2024.

The law is the first continent-wide, comprehensive law of its kind and is a formal acknowledgement of the key value of greenery and nature-based solutions for a better climate, biodiversity, and public health. With legally binding targets, the law aims to restore ecosystems, habitats and species across European land and sea areas in order to enable the long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient nature. It will contribute to Europe achieving climate mitigation and climate adaptation objectives that now, thanks in large part to ELCA, include protecting and enhancing green urban areas.

Urban ecosystems represent around 22% of the land surface of the European Union and constitute the area in which the majority of European citizens live. They provide many vital ecosystem services, including natural disaster risk reduction and control, such as for floods, heat island effects, cooling, recreation, and water and air filtration. In order to ensure that green urban spaces continue to provide the necessary ecosystem services, the law acknowledges that the loss of these green spaces should be stopped and that urban ecosystems should be restored and increased, by integrating green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, like green roofs and green walls, in the design of buildings. Such integration can contribute to maintaining and increasing not only the area of urban green space but also, the area of urban tree canopy cover.

Led by Egbert Roozen, Secretary General and Henrik Bos, President, the European Landscape Contractors Association will participate as a member of the expert sub-group that will advise on the implementation of the *Nature Restoration Regulation*. As a member of this sub-group ELCA will be in a prime position to champion Urban Greening and nature-based solutions, ensuring that the green industry at large will have an impact on shaping the implementation of policy and influence how “Green” is valued in real terms.



## Project Highlight

### SoGreen Alliance & Proposal for an EU Green Deal 2.0

In 2024, ELCA and the members of the SoGreen Alliance drafted a compelling white paper for the European elections and the next EU semester 2024 – 2029. The alliance represents the European Associations of tree nurseries, landscape architects, builders of green roofs and living walls, interior greeners, landscapers and gardeners, tree care specialists, builders of natural bathing waters and green professionals at municipalities.

The white paper calls for the inclusion and discussion of greenery and nature-based solutions at the beginning of the policy and design process and stresses the importance of having green practitioners at the table as early as possible to present realistic and effective green solutions with growing benefits in the years to come. The SoGreen Alliance wants to play a proactive role in thinking about the opportunities and support the successful implementation of initiatives on site.

Importantly, the whitepaper calls for an EU Green Deal 2.0 focussed on the “Renovation Wave” of tackling climate change, that will not only reduce CO2 emissions but expand the possibilities to absorb those emissions. Greenery and nature-based approaches such as green roofs, green façades, greenery indoors, and green infrastructure are solutions to make buildings energy efficient. As such, the SoGreen Alliance has stressed the importance of the next iteration of the Green Deal to include a dedicated chapter for the built urban area aka Urban Greening.

In realising this vision, together with educational institutes, ELCA intends to work on future focussed vocational training and further advance EQF-levels, in particular EQF-levels through the perspective of sustainable behaviour. The visibility of the green profession is a very important element in inspiring new perspectives and together, making Europe a greener, more resilient, and better place to live.



## Priorities & Outcomes

**As a key organising partner of the European Platform for Urban Greening, ELCA has worked to bridge the gap between industry stakeholders and vocational education institutions, leveraging the momentum from their initiatives to drive change and foster innovation across the Green Sector. Over the past four years, ELCA has focused on three main priorities:**

### Development of Education & Industry Networks

In partnership with the European Platform for Urban Greening, ELCA has successfully expanded the Platform's network across Europe and beyond. As the Green Sector evolves rapidly, it remains essential for both companies and professionals to continuously up-skill in response to shifting market demands. Equally, educators and trainers must update curricula to ensure they equip learners with the most relevant knowledge and skills.

Recently, ELCA launched a new Masterclass, *The Present and Future of Urban Landscaping*, in countries with emerging Urban Greening sectors such as Latvia, Romania, and Bulgaria. This four-module Masterclass, conducted in collaboration with European Platform partners, brings together company owners and landscaping managers for challenge-based training. The course addresses key industry needs while offering insights into best practices from Centres of Vocational Excellence in Urban Greening.

The strength and value of the Platform's network—comprising leading practitioners and educators—has sparked interest in these emerging regions to join the Platform and contribute to the momentum driving change within their own Green Sectors.

### Industry Feedback & Impact

Over the past four years, ELCA has played a leading role in establishing a robust feedback loop between the green industry and vocational educators. By gaining a deep understanding of the specialised knowledge and skills currently needed by the industry, ELCA has driven the development and adoption of relevant curricula and training programs in Urban Greening. This collaboration has also supported the recognition and integration of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) across the sector.

With a solid understanding of EQF levels now in place within the Platform, both vocational educators and industry partners have identified a critical need for greater focus on EQF levels 1 and 2. Providing up-skilling and training at these foundational levels will enhance workers' basic understanding of Urban Greening best practices. This, in turn, will have a profound, long-term impact on landscaping practices across Europe and play an important role in reshaping the Green Sector as a whole.



*“Together with the network of the European Platform for Urban Greening, ELCA has been able to have an impact on the political level, by empowering one individual at a time on a personal level. We believe that education is personal, which is why targeted EQF level training is such a powerful lever for change. Legislative changes often rest in the hands of committed practitioners, who are able to see the demands of the future, today.”*

*- Railii Laas, Exchange Team, ELCA*

### **Dissemination of Information**

To ensure the longevity and sustainability of the European Platform for Urban Greening and to facilitate the ongoing dissemination of information and activities from this vital network, ELCA has launched a new Knowledge Hub on GlueUp [elca.glueup.com](https://elca.glueup.com). This hub serves as an extension of the Platform’s main website.

Hosted by ELCA, the site and its accompanying app provides each Centre of Vocational Excellence and Platform member with a dedicated space to promote new courses, Masterclasses, and specialised training opportunities. It has become a central hub for engagement, allowing CoVE activities to be showcased and training materials to be embedded, while making it easy for participants to register.

Through this Knowledge Hub, the European Platform for Urban Greening is able to proactively share information and track engagement metrics, bringing together stakeholders in a single, interactive space. By making knowledge and resources more accessible, the Hub is enhancing the impact of Urban Greening efforts on climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, helping to influence political and policy shifts across Europe.



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## CASE STUDY

# Katapult

## Creating Impact through Building a Framework for Trust, Collaboration and Innovation

### Impact Achievement

#### Open-Source Innovation Network & Skills Ecosystem

As one of the lead organising partners of the European Platform for Urban Greening, Katapult embarked on a journey four years ago to help create a Platform of Vocational Excellence. By uniting industry and vocational education partners from across the continent, they successfully facilitated the establishment of six Centres of Vocational Excellence, together with the partners in each region, laying the groundwork for an open-source innovation network and a robust skills ecosystem in Urban Greening.

This emerging network and ecosystem have evolved through careful development, beginning with a thorough analysis of the needs identified by project partners. This foundational step led to the implementation of case-based Innovation Deep Dives and challenge-oriented Transnational Project Meetings, fostering a culture of trust and innovation among participants.

In response to the specific needs of the Platform's industry partners, the Innovation Deep Dives focused on highlighting the value and opportunities available within the newly established European network. Using design-thinking methodologies, Platform partners engaged in annual work sessions to delve into pressing issues, ranging from Urban Water Management to Vertical Green Technologies, and Biodiversity.

For example, the Deep Dives provided a unique space for industry partners—many of whom could be considered competitors—to candidly discuss their innovation challenges and collaborate on solutions. Initially hesitant to share details about their technologies or specific roadblocks, the industry partners soon recognised the immense benefits of exchanging skills and leveraging collective networks for the benefit of the whole sector and the greater good.

The impact of these Deep Dives has been significant, resulting in several groundbreaking innovations, such as a circular grey water system co-developed by industry partners and successfully implemented in markets across Europe, along with the redesign of a new vertical green wall system currently undergoing testing across the six Centres of Vocational Excellence in a spin-off project called BreatheGreen.

Four years on, Platform partners now actively seek collaboration opportunities beyond formal project agendas, sharing skills and facilitating knowledge transfers. This shift underscores the establishment of a vibrant open-source innovation network and skills ecosystem, built on the trust cultivated through the European Platform for Urban Greening.

*“During the last transnational project meeting, there was a feeling, sensing and trusting amongst participants that the European Platform for Urban Greening may have reached the end of its initial funding period, but that it was not the end of our journey and network. There is still so much collaboration to look forward to!”*

– Laura Roebroek, Change & Innovation Agent, Katapult

## Project Highlight

### Innovation Deep Dive on Urban Biodiversity

This year, the Deep Dive format was used to drive innovation, bringing together industry and educational partners to explore the critical topic of Urban Biodiversity. By combining expertise, the group developed smart solutions to address future challenges in Urban Greening, with industry partners sharing their innovations and working collaboratively to advance biodiversity in urban environments.

Participants were divided into four groups, each tackling a specific challenge:

- **Health & Green:** This group explored the connection between biodiversity and health, developing a roadmap to bridge these fields. They created two new training modules: one introducing key Urban Greening principles to healthcare professionals like nurses and doctors, and another bringing essential healthcare principles to green practitioners such as landscapers and gardeners. This cross-disciplinary approach will lay the foundation for future collaboration and knowledge-sharing.
- **Participatory Maintenance:** Focusing on how to engage the public in the maintenance of urban green spaces, this group examined best practices in maintenance, monitoring, and education. They proposed involving citizens in collecting biodiversity data, enabling scientists to gather a wealth of observations that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. Mobile apps that provide information and allow users to report local plant and animal sightings were highlighted as an effective tool for this initiative.
- **Biodiversity Monitoring:** This group took a comprehensive look at biodiversity monitoring in urban settings, considering genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity. They developed a systematic approach to monitoring, from defining a balanced biodiverse ecosystem in cities to identifying urban factors that influence biodiversity. The group also created an *Urban Ecosystem Pyramid* and outlined methodologies for measuring biodiversity, producing a forward-thinking guide: *Urban Biodiversity*.
- **Urban Tec-Roc:** In a Hackathon-style format, this group focused on the new *Urban Tec-Roc* green wall system developed by Platform partners PAIMED and Projar. Following a pilot project in Spain, they refined the product's market positioning, developed a marketing strategy, and identified ways to enhance its biodiversity and environmental benefits. The group also created a roadmap for further testing and product launch.



The outcomes of this Deep Dive on Urban Biodiversity include new course outlines for Centres of Vocational Excellence, engagement roadmaps, a comprehensive framework for monitoring biodiversity, and the aforementioned BreatheGreen project, installing and testing the *Urban Tec-Roc* system across Europe in different climate zones. These results highlight the value of the Platform's collaborative, open-source approach to driving innovation and strengthening the skills ecosystem.



## Priorities & Outcomes

**Within the European Platform for Urban Greening, Katapult acts as a catalyser for public-private partnerships with the aim of strengthening green education, accelerating innovation in the sector, and future-proofing the green workforce. Over the past four years, Katapult has focused on three main priorities:**

### **Building a Platform of Vocational Excellence (PoVE)**

Building a PoVE relies on trust and collaboration. Relationship-building has been vital to establishing the European Platform for Urban Greening, necessitating meaningful face-to-face interactions. Initially, the Covid pandemic forced the first year of the project to proceed entirely online. However, once partners gathered for their first in-person transnational meeting, team building, and partnerships began to flourish.

Under Katapult's guidance, these relationships have evolved into an open-source innovation network and skills ecosystem. The establishment of this Platform and its progress is visually represented by the *Urban Greening Metro Map* – a comprehensive resource showcasing leading experts from both education and industry. Users can navigate thematic lines to discover key skills, courses, and expertise in Urban Greening, demonstrating the strength, breadth, and overall network of this Platform of Vocational Excellence.

### **Needs Analysis**

Beginning with a formal Survey Analysis conducted at the outset of the European Platform for Urban Greening project, Katapult has consistently attuned itself to the evolving needs of both industry and educational partners. Aiming to maximise the value participants gain from the project and the network, they have utilised a blend of formal and informal channels to gather ongoing feedback throughout the process.

Regular Transnational Project Meetings and Innovation Deep Dive sessions have created structured opportunities to stay aligned with partners' changing requirements, while informal networking sessions—held during project meetings and throughout the year—have provided valuable insights. This comprehensive approach has empowered the Katapult team to effectively steer the momentum of the Platform.



*“One of the main lessons learned from the last four years, is how important it is to really focus on the needs of the partners and the impact activities make for students, teachers and companies. If you focus on the impact you want to make, the ownership and funding for continuing the activities will emerge quickly. It is key however to focus, if you try to create one solution for everyone, you create a solution for no one. Luckily, the European Platform for Urban Greening and the Centres of Vocational Excellence allow for this diversification.”*

– Boudewijn Grievink – Program Lead, Internationalisation, Katapult

### Ensuring Sustainability

Katapult has worked diligently to transform the Platform for Urban Greening from a four-year project into a long-term movement. They have helped established the necessary infrastructure and supported CoVEs in obtaining financial security to ensure the ongoing success of each Centre of Vocational Excellence. Additionally, they have played a key role in initiating annual International Urban Greening Weeks and facilitating numerous spin-off projects, including BARCOVE and GREENVEU, that have emerged from this PoVE over the past few years.

The latest spin-off project to receive funding is BreatheGreen, which will run through 2026 and assess the performance of the new *Urban Tec-Roc* green wall system at each of the six Centres of Vocational Excellence.

Looking ahead to 2025, all vocational schools and industry partners have committed to collaborating on the continuation of International Urban Greening Weeks. These events will be hosted in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and Romania, bringing together regional and national networks throughout the year. It will create valuable opportunities for project-based learning, knowledge exchanges, and training for students, teachers, and green practitioners.



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## CASE STUDY

# Czech Republic

Creating Impact through Regional, National and International Discourse



## Impact Achievement

### Surveying Central Bohemian Municipalities on Urban Green Spaces

Four years ago, European Platform partners at the Agricultural College and Secondary Agricultural School Benešov began discussions with 26 municipalities in the Central Bohemian Region of the Czech Republic to address key aspect of Urban Greening.

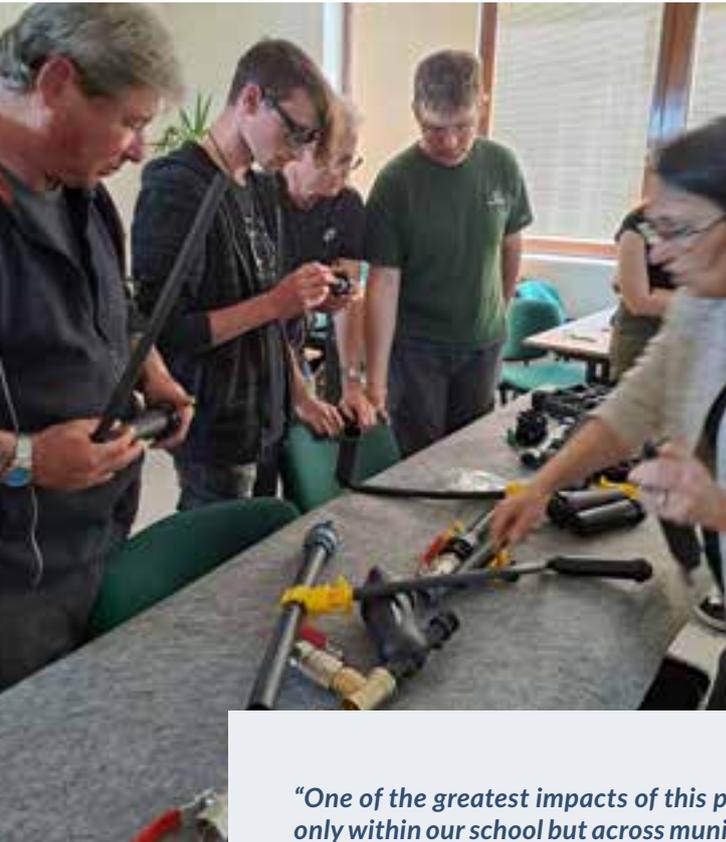
While interest and engagement from these municipalities was initially limited, significant progress has been made year-on-year. Thanks to the persistent efforts of the Czech Platform partners, this year saw the highest level of participation thus far, with a strong consensus emerging on the value of Urban Greening in protecting the climate, enhancing the visual appeal of cities and towns, and conserving biodiversity. This shift in attitude and engagement highlights a growing awareness of the numerous benefits Urban Green offers municipalities and its increasing vocational status in the Czech Republic.

In the spring of 2024, an in-depth regional survey on *Urban Green Spaces* was conducted to assess how municipalities manage their greenery and to evaluate the importance they place on Urban Greening. In response to the survey, ten of the region's largest municipalities detailed green projects that they have implemented, shared their best practices, and identified their needs for further training and vocational education in this field.

As a result of the survey, the Czech Platform partners were able to identify the four most pressing professional training needs of green practitioners across the region, including: Urban Water Management, Sustainable Urban Development, Biodiversity Conservation, and Climate Protection.

With over 70% of municipalities surveyed reporting active engagement and success in Urban Greening projects, a foundation is now in place for more transparent conversations around financing and public administration support for these initiatives across the region. Meanwhile, the remaining 30% of municipalities, primarily focusing on routine maintenance, now have a pathway to expand their efforts and integrate more impactful green initiatives.

The willingness of major municipalities to openly share project implementations and best practices with regional, national, and international counterparts has inspired a ripple effect. This cooperation is encouraging neighbouring municipalities and regions to more actively establish, maintain, and expand their green spaces, creating a shared vision for greener urban areas across the Czech Republic.



Building on this momentum, the Czech Centre of Vocational Excellence (Green Cities 2030+), in cooperation with the Department of Environment and Agriculture of the Central Bohemian Region, is now developing strategic education and training programs. These programs aim to empower municipalities with the skills and knowledge necessary to address critical training needs in Urban Water Management, Sustainable Development, Biodiversity Conservation, and Climate Resilience. Such educational initiatives mark a pivotal step toward ensuring that Urban Greening becomes a transformative force for environmental protection and urban quality of life in Central Bohemia and beyond.

***“One of the greatest impacts of this project has been the shift in mindset—not only within our school but across municipalities and organisations. By embedding the outputs of the project into our curriculum, we’re ensuring that the importance of urban greenery is truly understood and prioritised. This project has fostered a new level of collaboration, with municipalities now eager to share successful practices and align on educational needs. As a Centre of Vocational Excellence, Green Cities 2030+ is committed to sustaining this impact long-term, creating a foundation for greener, more resilient communities.”***

*– Jiri Holý, Director, Green Cities 2030+*

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## Project Highlight

### Establishing a Physical Centre of Vocational Excellence in Urban Greening

Platform partners in the Czech Republic, Agricultural College and Secondary Agricultural School Benešov and ITTEC—specialist in irrigation systems and turf technologies – embraced the mission of creating a Centre of Vocation Excellence (CoVE) and have successfully expanded their partnerships with the backing of the European Platform for Urban Greening to become Green Cities 2030+.

With the active support of the Central Bohemian Region's Department of Environment and Agriculture—representing 26 municipalities—and numerous other key industry and vocational education partners, Green Cities 2030+ now serves as the Czech CoVE in Urban Greening.

Promoting sustainable practices, environmental awareness, and green initiatives across the country, Green Cities 2030+ aims to build on four years of collaboration with the European Platform, and inspire cities and regions to become sustainable, eco-friendly hubs.

Amongst the new collaborators is the Educational Institute of the Central Bohemian Region (VISK), a leader in lifelong learning. By joining Green Cities 2030+, VISK has committed to embedding green principles into educational programs at all levels, from elementary education to professional development. This partnership enables Green Cities 2030+ to reach thousands of teachers and public service workers, ensuring that sustainability becomes a core part of educational curricula and professional training programs across the country.

In addition to these strategic partnerships, Green Cities 2030+ is establishing a permanent physical CoVE space at the Agricultural College and Secondary Agricultural School Benešov.

This facility will serve as an information and training hub for students, lifelong learners, regional authorities, and the public. It will feature state-of-the-art equipment and technology to support hands-on learning in crucial areas of Urban Greening, including Urban Water Management, Smart Irrigation Systems, Vertical Greening, and Biodiversity Conservation.

Taking inspiration from similar CoVE initiatives in the Netherlands, Green Cities 2030+ plans to launch their own *green roof* following the installation of the innovative *Urban Tec-Roc* green wall system, a component of the European Platform's latest spin-off project, BreatheGreen. This centre is now in a strong position to be a leader of vocational excellence in green transition efforts for years to come.



## Priorities & Outcomes

The Czech Republic has focused on three main priorities:

### Raise Awareness

Over the past four years, GreenCities2030+ has actively raised awareness of Urban Greening both regionally and nationally. Through initiatives like the *Urban Area Maintenance Showcase*, competitions for young gardeners, and partnerships with vocational schools to teach elementary students about greening practices, the Czech Platform partners have brought the field into greater focus.

The European Platform for Urban Greening has played a key role, helping the Platform partners to gain 15 new teachers, attract 84 new horticultural students, and provide training to over 330 employees on topics such as Urban Greening, Climate Change Adaptation, Biodiversity, and Urban Water Management.

Events have also been instrumental in promoting Urban Greening across the Czech Republic. In partnership with the European Platform, GreenCities2030+ has hosted prominent conferences, including the *Solutions for Green Cities of the Future* and an annual International Urban Greening Week.

Held last spring, the *Solutions for Green Cities of the Future* conference showcased Urban Greening trends and innovative green technologies from across Europe. Sessions covered topics ranging from electromobility in municipal centres and irrigation technologies for climate change, to enhancing living conditions with emission-free technologies for urban greenery maintenance.



This year, the Czech Republic hosted its inaugural International Urban Greening Week, inspiring future gardeners and urban planners. Teams of students from five European countries were challenged to design green roofs and work with specialised horticultural software, NBL Realtime Landscaping Architecture. A practical workshop led by BERNIS Europe, winner of the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade's award for best use of secondary raw materials, taught students how recycled auto industry materials can create green spaces.

Subsequently, the students were also challenged to design their proposal for a new green roof for a local hospital and also practically prepare the foundations for the establishment of the new green roof at the Benešov Agricultural College & Secondary School.

Building on the success of these events, the Czech Republic plans to host International Urban Greening Week again in 2025, continuing to raise the profile of Urban Greening through participatory and engaging activities.

*“I am really glad that we had the chance to be part of this significant project over the last four years. For our school, it was a major goal to develop new curricula, which is the result of our efforts during this period. This new curriculum is designed as a study program to help our students adapt to the evolving situation in Europe, including changes in climate, biodiversity, the use of new machinery, and new technologies. It prepares them for the emerging scenarios currently unfolding in Europe.”*

*- Ivana Dobešová – Head of Agricultural College & Secondary Agricultural School Benešov*



### **New Curriculum & Life-Long Learning**

From the outset of the project, Czech Platform partners identified the need to develop new courses and curricula that would enhance skills and knowledge specifically in the areas of Ecology and Sustainable Development.

Amongst other courses introduced over the past few years including *Creation & Maintenance of Greenery*, EQF levels 3 and 4, aimed at addressing the pressing training needs of industry, the Czech CoVE's hallmark achievement has been the establishment of a new four-year undergraduate study programme, *Design of Urban Greening* officially approved by the Czech Ministry of Education.

This EQF Level 4 program reflects a progressive approach to Urban Greening in the Czech Republic, recognising the crucial role of green space sustainable design in adapting to climate change and conserving ecosystems and biodiversity.

As the only vocational institution in the country offering this specialised program, the Agricultural College and Secondary Agricultural School Benešov now attracts students nationwide eager to pursue advanced studies in

Urban Greening. This programme has been created in such a way as to provide graduates with clear vocational pathways and significant career opportunities, whether as practitioners or in legislative branches of government.

In September 2024, the first cohort of 13 students began their studies, learning to use advanced software to plan and design urban green spaces, public areas, and landscape greenery. The program offers hands-on experience with the latest innovations, including smart irrigation systems, vertical green façades, and green roofs, while also ensuring graduates achieve professional proficiency in English.

Looking ahead, Agricultural College and Secondary Agricultural School Benešov, aspires to elevate qualifications in Urban Greening further by developing a university-level programme targeting EQF levels 5 and 6.



### Partnerships & Knowledge Exchanges

In solidifying their position as *Green Cities 2030+*, a leading Centre of Vocational Excellence in Urban Greening, the Czech Platform partners brought together an impressive array of high-level collaborators over the course of four years. By signing Memorandums of Understanding with organisations—including public authorities, educational institutions, private enterprises, and professional associations, *Green Cities 2030+* now has the scope and influence to accelerate knowledge exchange, education, and innovation in Urban Greening across the Czech Republic as never before.

New partners of *Green Cities 2030+*, alongside the Agricultural College and Secondary Agricultural School Benešov and ITTEC – Irrigation Systems and Turf Technologies– include:

- Central Bohemian Region – Department of Environment and Agriculture
- Benešov municipality
- Votice municipality
- Pyšely municipality
- Educational Institute of the Central Bohemia Region
- University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice
- Czech University of Live Sciences Prague
- Association of Establishment and Maintenance of Greenery
- Association of Green Roofs and Façades
- Ing. Vít Dvořák – Garden Architect
- Sedum Top – Plant Specialists for Green Roofs

As a result of these partnerships, *Green Cities 2030+* is now better equipped to foster collaborations amongst vocational schools, research centres, and industry. This enhanced network enables meaningful exchanges that are strengthening both the Green Sector and green education on a national scale.

## CASE STUDY

# Denmark

## Creating Impact through Living Labs and Urban Greening Experiences



### Impact Achievement

#### Green CoVE Denmark – Living Labs

Four years ago, at the inception of the European Platform for Urban Greening project, the Danish partners embraced the challenge of establishing themselves as a Centre of Vocational Excellence – Green CoVE Denmark. They envisioned *Islands of Excellence* to enhance their network, streamline feedback loops between industry, educators, and government bodies, and bridge the skills gap—ultimately improving the Green Sector’s responsiveness to evolving competency needs.

The goal of these *Islands of Excellence* was to sustain a highly skilled workforce, foster groundbreaking research, and promote innovative thinking, positioning Denmark as a benchmark for international excellence in vocational education and green industry leadership. This vision laid the groundwork for building new partnerships, with each new collaborator becoming an *Island of Excellence* that shared resources and facilities, leading to the emergence of *Living Labs* for applied research and green innovation development.

The introduction of *Living Labs*, along with spin-off projects like BARCOVE, has profoundly influenced the mindset of educators at Green Academy, who now take great pride in seeing themselves as leaders of the Green Transition. These initiatives have transformed teaching methods, reshaped narratives around Urban Greening, and enriched the curricula offered by the academy.

BARCOVE—*Building an Applied Research Facility into Centres of Vocational Excellence* — developed a model for collaboration between vocational education centres and small to medium-sized enterprises. Facilitating hackathons with more than 160 students, nearly a dozen green businesses, and over 20 educators, the project emphasised applied research as a catalyst

for technical innovation in Urban Space and Water Management. This approach has strengthened Europe’s capacity and fostered systemic change at both practical and policy levels.

Through their journey to become Green CoVE Denmark, the Danish Platform partners have forged strong alliances, now boasting over 14

members in their CoVE beyond the original partnerships (greencove.dk). They have truly hit their stride as a Centre of Vocational Excellence, and the momentum ignited by the European Platform has blossomed into a movement across Denmark, championing the future of Urban Greening.

***“The European Platform for Urban Greening grew roots around our organisation and those roots are spreading. Projects have bloomed out of Platform collaborations and new people and partners keep joining us in our movement to elevate green education and accelerate climate adaptive solutions.”***

*– Anne-Marie Thomassen, Teacher, Green Academy*

members in their CoVE beyond the original partnerships (greencove.dk). They have truly hit their stride as a Centre of Vocational Excellence, and the momentum ignited by the European Platform has blossomed into a movement across Denmark, championing the future of Urban Greening.





## Project Highlight

### Green Slope Experimental Centre

Inspired by Yuverta's *Green Roof and Façade Experience Centre* developed by Platform partners in the Netherlands, the Green Academy is now creating its own *Green Slope Experimental Centre*. Going beyond their core curriculum, this initiative involves vocational students actively participating in the construction of the space under the guidance of professional technicians, equipping them with valuable hands-on experience, skills, and knowledge for their future careers.

Once completed, the *Green Slope Experimental Centre* will serve as a multi-functional learning and research hub. Strengthening the connection between professional practice, scientific research and vocational education, students will be able to plant and maintain the green slope, monitor biodiversity, and research the local ecology.

Made possible with the support of the European Platform for Urban Greening, the *Green Slope* will feature soil, humidity, and nutrient sensors, allowing students to learn about the installation of these tools and implement applied research methodologies to measure conditions and water run-off on the slope.

This project exemplifies the successful sharing of knowledge and potential for collaboration between industry and educational partners across the Platform, highlighting the strength of the innovation network that has emerged and its far-reaching impact on Centres of Vocational Excellence.

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## Priorities & Outcomes

Denmark has focused on three main priorities:

### Recruitment

To highlight the diverse career pathways within Urban Greening and strengthen recruitment in the Green Sector, Platform partners in Denmark have implemented a range of initiatives targeting primary and secondary school students. These activities provide young people with hands-on experiences, such as visits to Green Academy, where they can explore various green professions. Over the past few years, more than 4,000 students across the country have participated, with many expressing a vocational interest in Urban Greening.

In addition to these outreach efforts, Denmark joined forces with other European Platform partners in the GREENVEU spin-off project, a targeted initiative aimed at addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the Green Sector. Based on extensive research and segmentation, Denmark developed a three-year regional recruitment strategy. This strategy aims to boost visibility and attract interest in agricultural professions while fostering stronger collaborations among stakeholders—from vocational schools and local communities to businesses and industry providers.

Green Academy plans to expand its regional recruitment strategy by taking its *Living Labs* on the road to raise awareness about Urban Greening and engage the broader public. Recognising that the most effective recruitment strategy is one that gets people personally involved in the greening process, Denmark will soon roll out a *Mobile Living Lab*—an electric truck that will travel to towns and cities, offering opportunities for hands-on involvement and further raising awareness about green careers.



### Continuous Education

To stay at the forefront of Urban Greening innovations, trends, and best practices, Green Academy has developed a range of specialised courses and continuous education opportunities, enabling green professionals to up-skill or retrain quickly and flexibly at all EQF levels.

Over the past four years, Green Academy has launched five forward-thinking modules and expanded its training offerings across Denmark, establishing new channels to reach professionals in every region. Recently introduced courses and modules include:

- Mentor Programme, EQF level 5
- Biodiversity Training Course, EQF levels 3 and 4
- Climate Adaptive Gardener, EQF level 4
- New Trends in Urban Greening, EQF levels 4 and 5
- Urban Greening Principles & Maintenance, EQF level 4
- Biodiversity with a Purpose, EQF levels 4 and 5

In partnership with prestigious institutions like the University of Copenhagen, Green Academy has elevated the value of vocational education by hosting workshops on critical topics such as *Rainwater Management* and *Vertical Urban Drainage Solutions*. This integration of vocational education with academic research has created a new, dynamic training pathway that has sparked growing interest in green careers. As a recognition of its innovative approach, Green Academy was invited to lead a workshop on *Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems* at the annual Global Youth Climate Summit 2024 in Lemvig, Denmark. This impactful day provided an opportunity to present their project results to a diverse audience of students, teachers, policy makers and industry professionals, all united in their dedication to climate action and education.

These new educational platforms and training channels have generated significant interest across Denmark, with every region reaching out to Green Academy to explore collaboration opportunities and join the movement toward a more sustainable future.





### **Virtual Learning & Education**

Participation in the European Platform for Urban Greening has provided Green Academy with emerging technologies and tools that have significantly advanced their educational offerings and expanded learning opportunities for students.

Thanks to the Platform's support, Green Academy developed and launched the Virtual Green Academy, a virtual reality campus that has attracted over 140,000 visitors since its inception. This innovative platform offers an interactive 3D experience, allowing users to explore the school's grounds, facilities, and plant life in a fully immersive, 360-degree environment via smartphones, computers, or VR headsets.

The Virtual Green Academy features a wealth of engaging content, including time-lapse videos that showcase plant development, interactive information pop-ups, and access to online courses, podcasts, and digital showcase sessions. These resources provide students, prospective students, and the general public with a dynamic way to engage with Green Academy's curriculum in multiple languages.

Now in its second season, the Virtual Green Academy's *The Biodiversity Podcast* has expanded its global reach, engaging listeners from every continent. This platform not only elevates the value of vocational education but also strengthens Green Academy's partnerships. The podcast series explores the economic and social benefits of Urban Greening and features an episode in collaboration with Copenhagen Business School, further emphasising the sector's importance.

In an effort to act locally while connecting globally, Green Academy has also hosted *Virtual Exchange Meetings* for students and teachers from educational institutions around the world. These meetings have facilitated the exchange of new perspectives on key topics like Biodiversity and Artificial Intelligence, sparking innovation and inspiring international collaboration.

*"I am happy that OKNygaard was invited to be part of the European Platform for Urban Greening. Back then, I didn't know what it was all about, but four years later I truly understand its importance. The Platform has focused on biodiversity, climate adaptation and well-being, while providing the opportunity for us to build important relationships and gain valuable learning outcomes across borders.*

*As a European community, we are facing the same challenges – we are connected by rivers that affect us all, both literally, and metaphorically when it comes to finding new sources of knowledge and wisdom. Our combined resources as a Platform have allowed us to become a river, and that is what I'm proud of.*

*In my opinion, the European Platform for Urban Greening has become a movement of collaboration between VET-schools and companies across Europe. The schools are exchanging students and sharing knowledge, that hugely benefits the green industry by recruiting a new generation of green professionals who are trained in the skills we as companies need right now and, in the decades, ahead.*

*We still have a long way to go before more streams really start flowing into our river – we need to continue making them stronger, so that the river is wider and can reach more students in the future. Vocational students are necessary in greater numbers to ensure that companies have enough skilled workers to be able to tackle and solve the environmental challenges we face as a continent.*

*I am proud of the partnerships, curricula and innovations we've made, and most of all, I am proud of our ability to collaborate together, even though we could have chosen to just to focus on our own little part of the world."*

*– Jakob Vest Arler, Head of Human Resource Development, OKNygaard*



## CASE STUDY

# Finland

## Creating Impact through Specialised Training and Meeting Industry Needs

### Impact Achievement

#### Biodiversity Gardener Course

In response to the needs of Finland's Green Sector, AhlmanEdu developed the *LUMOtarhuri* Biodiversity Gardener Course. This intensive three-month program is tailored to address the seasonal nature of the industry, providing valuable training during the winter months when job opportunities typically decline.

Initially piloted in 2021, the course offers training and education that responds to the quickly evolving needs of industry and covers local issues in biodiversity management, maintenance techniques, urban ecology, and introduces best practices in Urban Greening inspired by partners from across the European Platform. Students and professionals take a deep dive into biodiversity, learning to identify habitat types and understand the effects of plant stratification, while also taking account of soil quality and water management, ensuring ecological sustainability and nutrient cycles.



Now in its third year, this course has significantly impacted students, professionals, and the green sector at-large in Finland. Offered free of charge, it fosters collaboration between students and professionals, facilitating the informal transfer of generational knowledge and skills. This dynamic has led to unexpected long-term relationships and vocational networking opportunities, resulting in internships and job placements due to the course's intensive nature.

A standout feature of the course is its inclusive evaluation methodology, accommodating EQF levels 2-5. Instead of formal exams, participants demonstrate their skills through practical applications. For instance, they explore real-world scenarios such as designing a garden to enhance local biodiversity or advising clients on compost system integration, including recommendations on compost types and relevant regulations. These hands-on challenges enable learners to showcase their understanding and practical expertise effectively.

From an industry perspective, the demand for biodiversity and maintenance training has proven significant. Following the completion of the *LUMOtarhuri* training, AhlmanEdu has witnessed immediate recruitment of its graduates, while smaller green businesses have successfully secured municipal contracts that require specialised biodiversity training. This course has also influenced larger housing associations in Finland, which are now integrating this training into their development teams, and smaller municipalities that have prioritised biodiversity best practices in their agendas.

What began as a pilot program, conceived during a Transnational Project Meeting of the European Platform for Urban Greening, has continued to expand and professionalise the green vocational sector in Finland. Its success has prompted two major vocational schools in the country to adopt the *LUMOtarhuri* training into their curricula, creating a ripple effect throughout the sector. By aligning educational programs with industry needs, this initiative demonstrates that even the smallest changes can lead to substantial and lasting impacts.

## Project Highlight

### Green Flag Award

In 2024, AhlmanEdu was awarded the international Green Flag Award for the quality of its green environments for the first time. The Green Flag Award recognises and rewards the maintenance and management of green areas and sets the international standard for first-class recreational outdoor spaces around the world.



The AhlmanEdu campus was one of only three schools in Finland to receive this award, which recognised the incorporation of nature-based solutions throughout its grounds. Based on projects that were developed by students all as a result of the European Platform for Urban Greening, AhlmanEdu is now amongst a select few global examples of best practice when it comes to rain gardens, edible forests, degraded wood gardens, meadow maintenance and compost management.

The annual award aims to promote public access to well-maintained, quality green areas that serve the community. It also seeks to establish standards for these areas and recognise best practices, while honouring the contribution of managers, employees, students, and volunteers who are dedicated to these outcomes.

Judged on a set of 27 criteria, sites are assessed as a whole and take into account everything from sustainability and horticultural maintenance to signage and community involvement. This year, 54 green areas in Europe received the Green Flag Award, a remarkable 21 of which are located in Finland.



In the final year of the Platform project, this award marks the beginning of the next phase of work for AhlmanEdu. In order to retain the Green Flag Award, the school will reevaluate and improve upon its processes and the impact its green spaces have on the well-being of its community on an annual basis.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Green Flag Award and nature-based solutions will form the theme of an International Urban Greening Week, set to be held in Finland, allowing international student participants to gain first-hand experience in the planning, maintenance and management of quality green spaces.

*“Green environments are vital as places to find peace and breathe, serving as homes for many. Let’s protect and nurture all homes, providing sustenance and care for every living being.”*

*– Kaisa Koskelin, International Coordinator, AhlmanEdu*

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## Priorities & Outcomes

Finland has focused on three main priorities:

### Communication

Four years ago, the Platform partners, AhlmanEdu and VRJ Group, in Finland embarked on a mission to enhance open communication between the green industry and other professional sectors, aiming to disseminate information about Urban Greening to a broader audience and accelerate the adoption of best practices.

Over these years, they have significantly expanded their network amongst policymakers, municipalities, tenement foundations, and real estate associations alike, which has created a more collaborative ecosystem that fosters meaningful conversations around Urban Greening and its economic and social benefits. Many of these stakeholders have since started incorporating training and forward-thinking green initiatives into their realms of expertise.



Last spring, AhlmanEdu showcased their new *Vertical Green* virtual reality platform which was developed in a collaboration between the industry and education partners across the European Platform for Urban Greening. It offers users with an interactive way to explore key concepts in vertical greening and demonstrates the power of visual learning for EQF levels 3 and 4. Focused on green roofs and façades, this publicly available platform will be customisable for other Centres of Vocational Excellence and has been translated into six languages in order to reach the widest possible audience.

Creating a visual link for learners and stakeholders has played a fundamental role in communicating the basics and importance of Urban Greening. Whether introducing the *Soil Food Web* methodology to improve the biological balance of soil at the Tampere Wood Nursey or involving residents in a *Meadow Mowing Festivals* that takes them through the various seasons, the Finnish partners have strategically created tangible experiences that impact the participants on a personal level. Moving forward, AhlmanEdu plans to build a green space specifically for young children, to visually stimulate a sense of wonder about the environment and develop channels of communication about the Green Sector at the earliest possible stage.

***“The greatest impact of the project will be the network of knowledge – a wide consortium of green industry experts, from business, education and associations.”***

*– Jenni Arjoranta, Project Specialist, AhlmanEdu*

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### Specialised Short Courses

AhlmanEdu has incorporated insights from industry to develop an impressive array of specialised short courses over the past four years, tailored to meet the expanding knowledge and skills required by the Green Sector. By cementing its network with European Platform industry partners including VRJ Group, AhlmanEdu has been better able to increase its educational offering, introducing some of the most forward-thinking training in Urban Greening. With participants joining from other Centres of Vocational Excellence and beyond, Finland has been setting a high bar for biodiversity training, virtual education, and hyper-local course offerings.

Recently introduced courses and training modules include:

- *LUMOtarihuri*, Biodiversity Gardener – three-month intensive training, EQF levels 2 to 5
- Soil Food Web, EQF level 3
- Edible Forest Garden, EQF level 3
- Stream Restoration, EQF level 3
- Wild Plant Identification – hyper-local training, EQF levels 3 and 4
- Vertical Green – virtual reality training, EQF level 3
- Biodiversity – one day course, EQF levels 3 and 4
- Seed Collection Methodology - seasonal, EQF levels 3 and 4

### Fast & Flexible Training

To provide a more impactful introduction to Urban Greening, AhlmanEdu has also expanded its offerings to include workshops and community events such as *Meadow Maintenance* and *Weeding Festivals* that offer a hyper-local approach to learning. These workshops and events are attracting the public, prospective students, and professionals to AhlmanEdu's Green Flag Award-winning spaces, local ecological initiatives, and providing access to knowledgeable educational practitioners.



Most recently, AhlmanEdu took part in welcoming representatives from ten of Finland's largest cities, including mayors, business leaders, researchers, and civic society members, for the *Urban Nature Forum 2024*. This event served as an important platform for discussing strategies to enhance biodiversity and protect local ecosystems across the country.

By welcoming these guests, AhlmanEdu's vocational educators opened the door to meaningful conversations about the positive impact of Urban Greening, pathways in green education, and the broader blue-green industry. Participants had the opportunity to engage with nature-based solutions on campus, such as the edible forest and rain gardens, gaining valuable insights into innovative approaches to sustainability.

Their workshops and events are creating informal communication channels that are driving change by igniting curiosity and enthusiasm on an individual level, making Urban Greening relevant and accessible to everyone, regardless of their professional background or expertise.

## CASE STUDY

# Netherlands

## Creating Impact through Educating and Empowering Individuals

### Impact Achievement

#### Research Driven Masterclasses

From the outset of the European Platform for Urban Greening, Yuverta established itself as the leading provider of agricultural vocational education and training in Europe, with a clear ambition to become a key partner in lifelong learning within the blue-green sector.

To ensure the highest standards in blue-green vocational education and deliver personalised training that tackles pressing environmental challenges, Yuverta formed close partnerships with industry leaders, including Platform partner Royal Ginkel Groep. These collaborations kept the institution in tune with emerging industry needs and provided the motivation to continually refresh its curriculum in response to evolving demands.

Four years on, Yuverta has successfully woven key themes—such as biodiversity, climate adaptation, and well-being—into the core of its educational offerings. From pre-vocational secondary education to professional training for experienced workers, these themes now permeate all of Yuverta’s courses. Additionally, the institution has launched a series of research-driven Masterclasses, each designed to have a tangible impact on the Green Sector and beyond, ensuring that green education remains accessible and relevant to a wide audience.



One standout example is Yuverta’s *Urban Green Development* Masterclass, which illustrates the far-reaching potential of green education. Annemarie Bergsma, a lecturer in nursing at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, participated in the Masterclass and was inspired to apply its lessons to make nursing more sustainable. Annemarie went on to found *The Sustainable Nurse*, the first environmental nursing organisation in the Netherlands, and now serves as its Chair.

Through her work, Annemarie advocates for the “nurse of the future”—a healthcare professional focused not only on prevention and patient care but also on integrating green healthcare practices that promote recovery and well-being. She highlights the growing evidence that incorporating green spaces and nature-based solutions into healthcare settings can shorten recovery times, boost mental health and brain activity, and even help in the treatment of PTSD.

While there is still great potential for fostering integration between the Green Sector and other professional fields, the success stories emerging from Masterclasses like *Urban Green Development* provide a compelling glimpse into the transformative potential of green education. They also underscore the impact that Urban Greening initiatives could have in the coming years, not just for the Green Sector, but across a wide range of industries.





## Project Highlight

### **The Green Roof and Façade Experience Centre**

During the tenth and final transnational project meeting of the European Platform for Urban Greening in Utrecht this October, participants celebrated the inaugural launch of the *Green Roof and Façade Experience Centre* at Yuverta's Green Hotspot.

This significant milestone marks a collaborative achievement, four-years in the making, between Yuverta's Green Hotspot Liveable City and Royal Ginkel Groep. The new multifunctional green experience centre offers pre-vocational and vocational students, teachers, and practitioners with a dedicated space to learn and train in all aspects of vertical and rooftop gardening.

Primarily designed for educational purposes, the centre provides hands-on opportunities for participants to safely install and maintain these green spaces. The green roof also serves as a research platform to monitor biodiversity. Various sensors have been installed by Royal Ginkel Groep to assist with this monitoring, helping to map the impact of environmental factors on the vegetation, and QR codes have been placed across the green roof to disseminate information and create interactive opportunities for visitors to the space.

Spanning 200 m<sup>2</sup> and reaching heights of two to three meters, the planting scheme consists of three distinct sections:

1. An extensive area featuring sedum vegetation
2. A section with sown hemp vegetation
3. An intensive area with composite planting, ideal for roof gardens and offering a more exclusive aesthetic



Both the sown local vegetation and the intensive section attract a variety of pollinators, including wild bees, bumblebees, hoverflies, and butterflies, thereby positively contributing to biodiversity and creating a valuable “living-lab” research location. Strengthening the connection between professional practice, scientific research and vocational education, Practor Heidi Kamerling of the Green Hotspot uses this richly biodiverse space to guide students in practice-based research that encourages innovation and prepares students for the future of urban green landscaping.

In conjunction with the new Experience Centre, a Green Roofs Qualification, developed during the Platform project, focussing on the construction elements of green roofs is being offered. This qualification addresses the technical aspects of green roof installation ranging from health and safety procedures to structural considerations and equipment.

Since the beginning of 2024, Yuverta has become the first VET school member of the National Roof Plan an organisation dedicated to creating as many multifunctional green roofs in the Netherlands as quickly as possible.

As a frontrunner in vertical and green roof education, Yuverta has set the bar and inspired other vocational schools to create similar experience centres. The Green Academy in Denmark already has construction underway for their own *Green Slope Experimental Centre* and industry, practitioners, and vocational schools around Europe have plans to engage in mobility exchanges to learn first-hand at Yuverta’s exceptional new educational space.





## Priorities & Outcomes

The Netherlands has focused on three main priorities:

### Communication

From the outset of the project, the Dutch partners aimed to communicate the value of green to a diverse audience, ranging from elementary school children to professionals and government officials, in order to foster a cultural shift towards Urban Greening. Over the past few years, the Platform partners have embraced storytelling as a powerful tool, discovering that physical examples and first-hand experiences often resonate more effectively than traditional communication methods.

By creating opportunities for interactive participation, they have demonstrated that illustrating the impact of green initiatives yields the greatest results. For instance, Yuverta recently held a working session themed *Biodiversity in Construction and Management* for participants in the PRO Biodiversity research project. In this initiative, restoration measures for biodiversity were applied at 13 pre-vocational and secondary vocational education sites across the Netherlands. During the session, 20 teachers and staff from 10 different schools engaged in site evaluations, learning to see the environment “through the eyes of an insect” to identify potential habitat improvements and how to apply these insights to their schoolyards. Feedback from the participants confirmed that the working session had left a lasting and memorable impression on how they view their local environment.

As a result of storytelling, Urban Greening is becoming more approachable, empowering individuals to integrate basic practices and principles into their daily lives. It has also helped to share knowledge and provide insights on best practices and lessons learned beyond borders, assisting other countries to better understand Urban Greening and how to establish new Centres of Vocational Excellence.

## Recruitment

To meet industry needs, attracting new students to the field of Urban Greening and upskilling green professionals in specialised areas — such as green buildings, applied plant knowledge, and project planning — has been a priority. With the introduction of Masterclasses and the new *Green Roof and Façade Experience Centre*, Yuverta, Royal Ginkel Groep, and their network of partners can now better engage prospective students and retain green professionals in the most relevant and forward-focused areas of the sector.

Masterclasses in *Urban Green Development* cover topics including the Social Value of Green, Biodiversity, and Edible Forests, with two-thirds of participants now coming from outside the Green Sector.

While the *Green Roof and Façade Experience Centre* facilitates training for both students and professionals, covering vertical green safety protocols, installation, specialised plant knowledge, irrigation systems, sensors, and biodiversity monitoring. This facility significantly enhances the continuing education of EQF level 1 and 2 workers, providing a dedicated space to practice essential skills required for maintaining green buildings and rooftops—a rapidly growing area of development in the Netherlands.

## Culture Change

Over the past four years, the Netherlands has experienced a significant cultural shift in attitudes toward Urban Greening and interior green spaces. Urban Greening has become a familiar concept, thanks to highly visible projects in city centres. The nearly completed Wonderwoods building in Utrecht, incorporating a vertical forest into a two-tower residential and office complex with the expertise of Platform partner Royal Ginkel Groep, sets a new standard for

green architecture. Meanwhile, the Central Park building, just a few blocks away, boasts a two-story, 500-square-meter park located 45 meters above ground. Both mixed-use developments exemplify the growing recognition of the value of greenery in daily life, establishing the inclusion of green elements in civic projects as a norm in the Netherlands.

***“The connections and networks we have made as a result of the European Platform for Urban Greening has enabled us at Yuverta to create new opportunities and even more forward-thinking courses for our students. Four years ago, we didn’t think we would have an educational green roof, now we are continually looking forward and thinking bigger to see what we can do next.”***

– Sijtske Ouderkerken, Yuverta

In parallel, Yuverta is actively participating in a long-term initiative, alongside a coalition of

over 30 partners from various sectors, to enhance greenery and the sustainability of industrial estates nationwide. They have also co-created a three-day certificate course with the Royal Association of Gardeners and Green Providers, focusing on *Interior Planting and Landscaping*, EQF level 3. This course aims to shift green projects from being an afterthought to a primary consideration in project planning and management.

On a societal level, a new *Nature Environment Education* program is underway, targeting children ages four to twelve. This initiative introduces concepts such as Biodiversity Climate Change, Edible Forests, and Horticulture through nature walks, inspiring young minds to appreciate the natural world. Community-based nature education is generating interest and demonstrating that Urban Greening offers something for everyone.



## CASE STUDY

# Romania

## Creating Impact through National Curriculum and Green Qualifications



### Impact Achievement

#### Urban Gardener Qualification & Biodiversity Education in Urban Spaces

When the European Platform for Urban Greening began, Romania had no official recognition for landscaping or gardening professions, and Urban Greening was not yet widely prioritised at the national level.

Thanks to the hard work and determination of Romanian Platform partners – Worldskills Romania, Cezar Nicolau Technological High School (LTCN), urban landscape architecture firm RPR, and the Association of Landscape Architects, Bucharest Branch (AsoP Bucharest) – along with a wide range of stakeholders, significant progress has been made. Throughout the course of this European project, they collaborated with various levels of Romanian government to successfully secure the introduction of a new professional *Urban Gardener* qualification. This three-year qualification is a critical step in professionalising and elevating the status of landscapers and gardeners across the country, providing them with the skills, knowledge and training resources they require.

Now officially recognised in the Romanian Code of Occupations by the Ministry of Labour, the “Gardener” occupation and *Urban Gardener* qualification, EQF level 3, establishes a clear pathway for the development of forward-thinking curricula and additional qualifications in green vocational education and training. Helping to address the skills shortage in the Green Sector this new qualification is now available for any VET school in Romania to make it part of their educational offer, ensuring that Urban Greening has a lasting impact on the country’s cities and communities.

Furthermore, with the support of the European Platform for Urban Greening, the Romanian Platform partners have additionally integrated key themes of Urban Greening into Romania’s education system. Since 2023, the *Biodiversity Education in Urban Spaces* initiative has introduced essential concepts such as biodiversity, climate adaptation, and urban well-being to students across the country during Romania’s Green Week National Programme. The initiative has grown to reached more than 23,000 students annually, helping to inspire the next generation of green practitioners and embed a major cultural shift in the Romanian population.

This 40-hour educational initiative, a direct outcome of the European Platform project, has been implemented by nearly 300 teachers across Romania. With educational resources like the *Catalogue of Pollinators* and two *Biodiversity Guides* now core to the curriculum, students at the middle school and high school level are gaining a deeper understanding of green principles and vocations, preparing them to understand the importance and value of Urban Greening and green vocations on a national scale.

The impact of the new national vocational qualification and green curriculum cannot be overstated. This Centre of Vocational Excellence has made significant strides, demonstrating that persistence and grassroots efforts can lead to meaningful change on a large scale.





## Project Highlight

### Romanian Green Registry

Another of the most impactful achievements of the Romanian Centre of Vocational Excellence has been the development of a comprehensive training project for public administration officials and practitioners on Urban Green Space Maintenance.

Launched in 2020, during the first year of the European Platform for Urban Greening and made possible with the support of the Municipality of Bucharest, Raiffeisen Bank, the Administration of the National Cultural Fund, and the Association for Community Relations, this initiative led by the Association of Landscape Architects, Bucharest Branch (AsoP Bucharest) has adapted global best practices to create a *Green Registry* for over 3,000 Romanian localities. The registry follows the 3-30-300 rule, which promotes urban liveability: each resident should be able to see three trees from their home, live in a neighbourhood with 30% tree canopy, and be within 300 meters of a quality green space. This rule guides green area planning and maintenance, providing a data-driven basis for deciding where and what to plant.

To implement the *Green Registry*, AsoP Bucharest has introduced *TreePlotter*, an app developed by the U.S. company PlanIT Geo. The app's ease of use has enabled partnerships with NGOs to collect and map data on urban greenery in historic gardens and parks, creating a tool that can be adopted by local public administrations in Romania. Data collection is underway to eventually make the information public, raising awareness about the ecological and cultural value of urban trees.

The *Green Registry* project includes a model for best practices in urban park and green space management, as exemplified by a pilot registry for Bucharest's Kiseleff Park, one of Romania's oldest public gardens. Since maintenance is the longest phase in the life of a green area, having accurate data and specialised skills is essential. For instance, at 150 years old, Kiseleff Park requires careful management to preserve its heritage. Other key registry sites include Kiseleff Boulevard, Unirii Boulevard, and Bucharest's Botanical Garden.

The project also introduces a shift in perspective, training practitioners and officials to go beyond traditional assessments of trees as commercial or aesthetic resources and consider their ecosystem and public value. This approach supports more informed decisions, such as the placement of amenities like green bins, irrigation, or lighting, to avoid harming tree roots. The registry includes all vegetation types, from trees to shrubs and perennials, enabling a holistic view of urban greenery.

As part of the *Green Registry* initiative, maintenance training will be provided, equipping landscapers with essential skills to care for trees, including proper pruning techniques to promote health and prevent disease. Addressing the need for more trained specialists, the Romanian CoVE is collaborating with the National Centre for the Development of Professional and Technical Education (CNDIPT) to establish a specialised gardening program at the Cezar Nicolau Technological High School (LTCN) near Bucharest. To expand the reach of this initiative, training is being offered to over 12,500 architects and landscape architects to familiarise them with the *Green Registry* and its data tools.

This long-term project exemplifies the broad impact the Romanian Centre of Vocational Excellence is having on Urban Greening practices nationwide, setting a standard for sustainable urban development and green space management in the country.

## Priorities & Outcomes

Romania has focused on three main priorities:

### Develop a Talent Pipeline

In addition to national programs like the *Biodiversity Education in Urban Spaces*, which promotes green vocational education among middle and high school students, Romanian Platform partners have become frontrunners in hosting an International Urban Greening Week. The inaugural event held in April 2024, brought together students and experts from the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, the Czech Republic, and Finland to tackle Urban Greening challenges in Bucharest.

Over five days, participants explored the diverse 6th Sector – an area known for its blend of residential, commercial, and green spaces developed in the communist period – interacting with local residents and studying the relationship between urban development and green areas. Guided by experienced professionals, including urban planners, environmentalists, and policymakers, participants gained insights and identified unique challenges posed by the communist period Sector – a notable difference from other European CoVEs – such as green space management, sustainable urban planning, and community involvement. Working in mixed-nationality teams, participants developed innovative solutions to these challenges and presented their ideas at the week’s end.

Attracting international students to Romania and creating exchange opportunities for Romanian students to attend International Urban Greening Weeks with Centres of Vocational Excellence abroad has broadened awareness of the career possibilities within this field. By providing hands-on international experiences, the program effectively builds a talent pipeline, showcasing the depth and diversity of Urban Greening as a profession across Europe.



*“The European Platform for Urban Greening project enhanced exponentially the impact of our efforts in developing the Green Sector in Romania. Together with our partners, we benefited from the expertise provided by the international group of professionals brought together by this project and we also received a lot of resources needed to develop strategic directions that will allow us to establish a lasting framework for green education and sustainable urban development in Romania. This collaborative effort not only laid the foundation for a professionalised Urban Greening sector, but also fostered a cultural shift toward prioritising biodiversity, climate adaptation, and green vocational education at a national level.”*

*–Diana Culescu, Landscape Architect, Vice-President of AsoPBucharest*



### Specialised Qualifications

The Centre of Vocational Excellence in Romania has achieved significant advances in national specialised qualifications. With the recent approval of the three-year *Urban Gardener* qualification – now recognised in the Romanian Code of Occupations by the Ministry of Labour – vocational teachers gained opportunities to retrain and up-skill. Since 2022, Romanian teachers have engaged in mobility learning exchanges, traveling to other CoVEs across Europe to study the latest methodologies and best practices in Urban Greening.

Many Romanian teachers have visited partner CoVEs, including Denmark, where they participated in a 40-hour blended teaching qualification on *Urban Greening* at Green Academy. This exchange with Danish Platform partners provided essential knowledge on topics like Agriculture, Green Construction, Biodiversity, and Environmental Protection.

In addition to mobility learning opportunities for teachers and students, as a result of the new qualification, the Romanian Platform partners have devised a scalable model for developing the region's capabilities using Outdoor Training Areas (*InoVerde*). The first *InoVerde* is being built on the grounds of Cezar Nicolau Technological High School (LTCN), where students will gain practical training in nature-based solutions and practice a variety of gardening specialisations including food landscaping, planting and maintenance of aesthetic green spaces, and biodiverse flower gardens. To further strengthening green education, the scalable model of these outdoor classrooms will soon be replicated in regions across the country ensuring they have the widest possible impact.

### Increase Demand for Urban Greening

A standout example of how the Romanian Centre of Vocational Excellence, has raised public awareness and increased demand for Urban Greening is the *IKEA Pallady Biodiversity Garden*. Located on a plot beside the main IKEA warehouse in Bucharest, this pilot project was launched in 2023 as an educational initiative to promote biodiversity among IKEA employees. The *Pallady Biodiversity Garden* has flourished, entering its third year as a vibrant, interactive space for biodiversity education.

Students from Cezar Nicolau Technological High School (LTCN) play an active role in maintaining and studying the garden, using it as a “living lab” for hands-on training in biodiversity. A dedicated group of volunteers – including students, IKEA employees, and members of the public – also participate, gaining first-hand experience of the benefits of Urban Greening.

The *IKEA Pallady Biodiversity Garden* serves as a public venue for practical workshops, engaging events, and discussions on the impact of biodiversity in urban spaces. What began as an empty plot of land is now a thriving green space, featuring fences covered in perennials and annuals, a small shed for small fauna, and a thriving bio-diverse urban environment. With thousands of weekly visitors to IKEA, the garden has attracted considerable public interest, illustrating the value for Urban Greening in everyday life.



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## CASE STUDY

# Spain

## Creating Impact through Stakeholder Engagement and Spin-Off Projects



### Impact Achievement

#### **New Professional Qualifications & Innovation Project**

At the start of the European Platform for Urban Greening project, Spanish Platform partners EFA La Malvesía, PAIMED and Projar undertook a comprehensive survey to identify key gaps in the Green Sector's education and training landscape. Drawing insights from a wide array of stakeholders – industry leaders, municipal officials, and policymakers – the survey highlighted the most urgent needs in Spain's Green Sector.

In 2022, workshops were held in partnership with The Commonwealth of La Ribera Municipalities, representing 40 townships in Valencia. These sessions brought together technical experts, public administrators, mayors, and industry professionals to reimagine public green spaces and explore solutions to critical environmental and social challenges in urban areas.

The discussions revealed two vital but underdeveloped areas of expertise: urban tree and palm management and turf installation and maintenance. A lack of formal qualifications in these fields was slowing Spain's ability to better address biodiversity, climate adaptation, and urban well-being effectively.

Over the next two years, the Spanish Platform partners successfully applied for official recognition of two new training qualifications in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications: *Urban Tree & Palm Tree Management* and *Professional Turf Installation & Maintenance* and have been awarded funding for a related innovation project: *URBAN TREE 5.0 – Technological and Methodological Innovation in Training for Urban and Peri-Urban Tree Management*.

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### **Urban Tree & Palm Tree Management Qualification**

To address the growing demand for skilled arborists and tree care specialists in urban development, landscaping, and gardening, this 510-hour programme focuses on building core competencies. Students gain expertise in:

- Planning, planting, maintaining, and conserving ornamental and palm trees
- Evaluating tree health and understanding fertilisation, aeration, and pruning techniques
- Identifying and managing pests, diseases, and other harmful agents
- Ensuring tree safety protocols, including working at height

This qualification reduces the required years of professional experience needed for tree management from four years to one, accelerating the availability of skilled practitioners at a time when Urban Greening projects are expanding nationwide.

### **Professional Turf Installation & Maintenance Qualification**

With urban green spaces like sports fields and public parks requiring careful turf management, this 520-hour programme prepares students for the complexities of turf installation and upkeep. Key areas of training include:

- Interpreting maps and topographical plans
- Utilising topographic equipment and conducting field surveys
- Supervising grass installation and managing lawn irrigation and fertilisation
- New innovations and turf health management (including the use of nematodes)
- Operating and maintaining gardening machinery

This program is particularly critical in Spain, where water scarcity and droughts present unique challenges for urban greenery. The qualification ensures that future professionals can balance sustainability with functionality in maintaining urban green spaces.

*“At EFA La Malvesía, our commitment to vocational excellence bridges education with real-world challenges, equipping future green professionals through innovative certifications and industry collaborations to lead sustainable urban transformations.”*

– Catherine Bravo, Coordinator for Erasmus Projects, EFA La Malvesía

### **URBAN TREE 5.0**

Addressing innovation and best practices in training for *Technological and Methodological Innovation in Training for Urban and Peri-Urban Tree Management*, this newly awarded project represents a strategic collaboration between Spanish Platform partners EFA La Malvesía,

PAIMED and Projar and new vocational education partner INS Montsià. Running over the course of the next two years and funded by the European Union, this partnership between industry and education will advance critical areas of tree management within the European framework of the Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan.

These new qualifications and innovation project mark a significant leap forward, equipping a new generation of green practitioners with the skills and knowledge needed to meet Spain’s Urban Greening demands while addressing pressing environmental challenges.



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## Project Highlight

### BreatheGreen – Urban Tec Roc

Based on a 2022 pilot project initiated by Spanish CoVE partners EFA La Malvesía, PAIMED, and Projar, which involved installing and testing an innovative bioengineered prototype for an urban vertical garden system with students and practitioners at EFA La Malvesía, the latest spin-off project from the European Platform for Urban Greening is BreatheGreen – Urban Tec-Roc.



Following two years of testing, data collection, and applied research to ensure the viability of the new system – including components such as the anchoring structure, volumetric Trinter geogrids, substrate, planting pallet, plant stratification, and irrigation system – and further enhancement during a European Platform partner Innovation Dive, the project is now ready for wider implementation. Over the next year, six *Urban Tec-Roc* green wall systems will be installed across each Centre of Vocational Excellence.

At EFA La Malvesía, this project will result in a monitoring dashboard to compare real-life data with sensor readings, with the next step being the integration of green facades into the curriculum to teach skills in irrigation, biodiversity, maintenance, and foster digital and research competencies.

Running through 2026, BreatheGreen will evaluate the performance of the *Urban Tec-Roc* system in different climate zones and provide comprehensive training on the system's construction, installation, and maintenance to professionals and students alike.

#### The impact of Urban Tec-Roc is multi-faceted:

- **Economic Efficiency:** A lower-cost alternative to traditional green walls, *Urban Tec-Roc* requires significantly less water and maintenance without compromising its environmental benefits.
- **Environmental Gains:** By bringing greenery to urban spaces in a scalable and sustainable way, *Urban Tec-Roc* addresses key challenges in climate resilience, biodiversity, and urban well-being.
- **Educational Value:** Students and professionals will gain hands-on experience in an innovative green technology, enhancing the talent pipeline for the Green Sector.

During the European Platform for Urban Greening's final Transnational Project Meeting in the Netherlands, partners discussed the system's technical details, including the geo-textile layers used to build the walls, methods for seeding and spraying substrate, and preparation steps for anchoring and installing the walls in each location.

This initiative highlights the strength of the European Platform for Urban Greening in fostering open-source innovation and building a robust skills ecosystem. Thanks to this collaboration, PAIMED and Projar is poised to introduce the *Urban Tec-Roc* system to European markets in the coming years, bringing sustainable and cost-effective Urban Greening solutions to cities across the continent.



## Priorities & Outcomes

Spain has focused on three main priorities:

### New Sources of Funding

The Centre of Vocational Excellence in Spain has achieved remarkable success in securing new funding streams throughout the European Platform for Urban Greening project. By actively participating in and leveraging spin-off initiatives such as BARCOVE, GREENVEU, and BreatheGreen, the Spanish CoVE has demonstrated its commitment to advancing Urban Greening education and innovation.

In addition to tapping into these projects, Spanish Platform partners have secured substantial support from government bodies like the Spanish Ministry of Education, the European Union, and the Erasmus+ programme. This funding underpins the development and delivery of their two new qualifications – *Urban Tree & Palm Tree Management* and *Professional Turf Installation & Maintenance* – as well as their Urban Tree 5.0 spin-off project.

The impact of this funding cannot be overstated. In the short term, it ensures the sustainability of the CoVE's Urban Greening initiatives, including the latest education, training, and innovation efforts. Long-term, this investment will transform Spain's Green Sector by cultivating a highly skilled workforce, driving innovation, and supporting green practitioners in adopting the latest techniques for green space maintenance and management.

To further solidify its position as a leader in Urban Greening and attract additional funding opportunities, the Spanish CoVE has launched a dedicated website, [greeningspain.org](http://greeningspain.org). The site serves as a dynamic hub for updates, event promotion, and training opportunities, ensuring that the CoVE's work reaches a wide audience both within Spain and across Europe.



### **Collaborations**

To foster a robust talent pipeline for Spain's Green Sector, strengthening collaborations between industry and vocational education has been a key focus. Over the past four years, the Spanish Platform partners have successfully engaged over 50 entities, with 15 formalising their involvement in this Centre of Vocational Excellence through signed Memorandums of Understanding, including:

#### **Industry & Government**

- Jardines Con Vida (Landscape design studio)
- Vialterra Medio Ambiente, SL (Gardening and Urban Greening)
- Hunter Industries (Irrigation experts)
- Fundación ASFPLANT (professional Nursery and Florists Association)
- Jardinería Artística Babilon, SL (Vertical Green experts)
- Las Naves (Valencia City Hall)

#### **VET Schools**

- CIFEJA Jumilla
- CIFEJA Torre Pacheco
- CPIFP San Blas
- Escuela De Capacitación Agraria De Tacoconte
- EFA Boalares
- EFA Oretana
- Escola Agraria d'Amposta
- IES Luces
- Escuela De Capacitación Agraria De Arucas

*“Urban Greening bring us an enormous amount of challenges. Only with well-trained professionals, companies will we able to boost innovation and face them.”*

*– Jorge Fort, Director, PAIMED and Projar*

The scope and breadth of these partnerships demonstrates the impact that this Centre of Vocational Excellence is having on green education and recruitment in Spain. Particularly with regard to the increasing collaborations with other VET schools across the country. Strengthen their position as a leading reference for Urban Greening the Spanish CoVE produced and is disseminating a *Best Practices Manual*, using the learnings from the European Platform for Urban Greening project. VET partners are now able to benefit from the new professional green qualifications, incorporate best practices and innovations in Urban Greening into their curriculum, and pursue more knowledge exchange opportunities as a result of the European Platform.

### Knowledge Transfers

Knowledge transfers have been a cornerstone of the Spanish CoVE, accelerating meaningful and lasting momentum in Urban Greening across Spain. From students and teachers to green practitioners, industry leaders, and municipal governments, these efforts are reshaping the innovation and skills ecosystem for a wide range of stakeholders. Opportunities to up-skill, participate in international events, and exchange best practices have strengthened capacity and elevated Urban Greening education and practices.



Collaboration with industry has also been pivotal. For example, PAIMED has used its partnership with La Malvesía to provide hands-on knowledge transfer opportunities. Over the past few years, PAIMED employees participated in more than 18 sessions on campus to retrain and up-skill. Developing practical skills with green machinery, including chainsaw operation, has been essential to training beyond the theoretical. Likewise, La Malvesía students completed internships at PAIMED to gain practical experience alongside seasoned professionals.

Beyond Spain, the CoVE has embraced international opportunities to drive innovation through knowledge exchange, with Spanish Partners participating in *The Blue-Green Innovation Challenge*, in the spin-off project BARCOVE, aimed at tackling challenges in Urban Greening and Water Management, and GREENVEU a spin-off project to enhance the attractiveness of vocational education and training in the Green Sector.



# Summary of Activity

## Impact Highlights

### PoVE

- Survey Analysis – Assessing Needs Platform-wide
- Creation of a Platform for Vocational Excellence
- Uniform Training Offer
- Facilitating Mobility Learning Exchanges between CoVE Participants
- Urban Greening Metro Map
- Virtual Green, Virtual Course for Green Walls and Vegetative Roofs
- BARCOVE, Spin-Off Project
- GREENVEU, Spin-Off Project
- BreatheGreen – Urban Tec-Roc, Spin-Off Project
- International Urban Greening Weeks
- Open-Source Innovation Network & Skills Ecosystem
- Innovation Deep Dive on Urban Water Management
- Innovation Deep Dive on Vertical Green Technologies
- Innovation Deep Dive on Urban Biodiversity

### ELCA

- Stakeholder Survey Analysis
- Establishing ELCA as an Honorary Platform CoVE
- European Qualifications Framework (EQF levels), Workshops
- Sustainable Development Goals, Workshops
- International Expansion of ELCA
- Nature Restoration Law, Passed with the Inclusion of Urban Greening
- Member of Expert Sub-Group – Nature Restoration Regulation
- SoGreen Alliance & Proposal for an EU Green Deal 2.0
- The Present and Future of Urban Landscaping, Masterclass
- EPLUG Knowledge Hub, Online Platform
- ELCA Exchange Programme for Employees
- ELCA 'Think Green First' 60th Anniversary Seminar
- Promotion of Urban Greening at EU Green Weeks & High-profile Industry Events
- ELCA Trend Award

### Czech Republic

- Stakeholder Survey Analysis
- Establishing Czech CoVE – Green Cities 2030+
- Basic Skills Urban Greening Toolkit
- Urban Areas Maintenance Showcase
- Project Days in Biodiversity Workshops, Primary Schools
- Solutions for Green Cities of the Future, Conference
- Design of Urban Greening, New Four-Year Programme, EQF level 4
- Creation & Maintenance of Greenery, New Course, EQF level 3 and 4
- Introduction to Biodiversity, New Online Course, EQF level 3 and 4
- Advanced Smart Irrigations System Innovations, ITTEC



## Denmark

- Stakeholder Survey Analysis
- Establishing Green CoVE Denmark
- Islands of Excellence Model
- Living-Labs & Mobile Living-Labs To Raise Awareness
- Rainwater Management, Workshop
- Vertical Urban Drainage Solutions, Workshop
- Green Slope Experimental Centre, In Development
- Virtual Green Academy
- Virtual International Exchange Meetings
- The Biodiversity Podcast
- Adaption of Cities to Climate Change, Short Course, EQF level 4
- Biodiversity Training, New Course, EQF levels 3 and 4
- Biodiversity With A Purpose, New Course, EQF levels 4 and 5
- Mentor Programme, New, EQF level 5
- Climate Adaptive Gardener, New Course, EQF level 4
- New Trends in Urban Greening, New Course, EQF levels 4 and 5
- Urban Greening – Principles and Maintenance, New Course, EQF level 4
- Urban Greening Events for Primary and Secondary Schools
- Grey Water Recycling Innovations, OKNygaard



## Finland

- Stakeholder Survey Analysis
- Establishing Finnish CoVE
- Biodiversity Gardener, LUMOTarhuri, New Course, EQF levels 2 to 5
- Soil Food Web, New Course, EQF level 3
- Edible Forest Garden, New Course, EQF level 3
- Stream Restoration, New Course, EQF level 3
- Ecological Compensation Calculation Models, New Course, EQF level 3
- Biodiversity, One Day Short Courses, EQF levels 3 and 4
- Wild Plant Identification, New Course, EQF levels 3 and 4
- Seed Collection, Seasonal Workshop, EQF levels 3 and 4
- Nature-Base Solutions (NBS) Green Structures
- Green Flag Award
- Vertical Green, Virtual Course for Green Walls and Vegetative Roofs, EQF level 3
- Meadow Mowing Festivals, Civic Participation
- Weeding Festivals, Civic Participation
- IKEA Tampere Insect Hotels
- Biochar Applications and Innovation Solutions, VRJ Group





### **Netherlands**

- Stakeholder Survey Analysis
- Establishing Dutch CoVE
- Urban Green Development, Masterclass, EQF level 5
- Green Roof and Façade Experience Centre
- Green Roof Qualification, New National Skills Training, EQF levels 1 to 5
- Green Liveable Cities Practorate, Living-Lab
- Biodiversity in Construction and Management, Workshop, EQF levels 4 and 5
- Interior Planting and Landscaping, Three-Day Certificate, EQF level 3
- The Value of Green, Four-Day Workshops, EQF levels 4 and 5
- Nature Environment Education Programme, Primary School
- Working Landscapes of the Future – Transforming 3,000 Industrial Estates
- Water Retention Roof Innovations, Royal Ginkel Groep

### **Romania**

- Stakeholder Survey Analysis
- Establishing Romanian CoVE – Landscape Factory
- Atlas for Professions and Competencies in Urban Greening
- Gardener Occupation, New Professional Occupation, EQF level 3
- Urban Gardener Qualification, New Three-Year Programme, EQF levels 3 and 4
- Biodiversity in the Urban Environment, New Course, EQF level 3
- Peri-Urban and Agro-Tourism Garden, New Course, EQF level 3
- Landscaping and Urban Greening, New Short Courses, EQF level 3
- Arboriculture, New Short Course, EQF level 3
- Outdoor Training Areas (InoVerde), Nation-wide
- IKEA Pallady Biodiversity Garden
- Green Registry
- Catalogue of Pollinators
- Biodiversity Guides
- Atlas of Emerging Trends in Urban Greening

### **Spain**

- Stakeholder Survey Analysis
- Establishing Spanish CoVE, Greening Spain
- Urban Tec-Rock Green Wall System
- Urban Tree & Palm Tree Management, New Qualification, EQF level 3
- Professional Turf Installation & Maintenance, New Qualification, EQF level 3
- Urban Greening Best Practices Manual
- Urban Tree 5.0 Spin-Off Project
- Smart Green City 4.0, Indus Park Project
- Urban Greening Ideas Competitions
- Dressing the Urban Landscape – Transforming the City, Workshop
- Naturalisation of Buildings, New Course
- Arboriculture, Pruning and Tree Management, New Course
- Urban Social Gardens, New Course
- Artificial Wetlands Treatment Solutions for Wastewater Innovations, PAIMED

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# The Story of Our Work



**To accomplish the ambitious objectives of the European Platform for Urban Greening and foster transnational collaboration, Platform partners structured their work around nine interconnected Work Packages. These served as the foundational pillars of our initiative, providing the framework to create a unified Platform and a dynamic Urban Greening movement across Europe. This structure enabled us to accelerate vocational education, foster innovation partnerships, and promote excellence in Urban Greening on a continental scale.**

Below is a summary of each Work Package, its implementation, and some of the results achieved.

### **Survey Analysis** **Work Package One (WP1)**

The first step toward achieving the vision of the European Platform for Urban Greening was to understand the challenges, needs, and priorities of each participating region. At the project's outset, WP1 conducted surveys involving all project partners and their associated stakeholders. This helped define the project's direction and structure over its four-year duration.

The survey findings informed the creation of an action plan connected to WP4 PoVE and CoVE Creation, outlining the Work Packages and establishing 10 criteria for each. Feedback from over 100 relevant organisations confirmed the survey results, setting clear objectives for the Platform and identifying the top needs and priorities for each region.

This initial survey enhanced collaboration and alignment amongst partner organisations, and emphasised the importance of an on-going analysis to adapt to the swift evolution of the Green Sector. The survey also highlighted knowledge and skills gaps in the sector and provided a roadmap for developing curricula and forming public-private partnerships to address these gaps effectively.

## Project Management

### Work Package Two (WP2)

Providing governance for the European Platform for Urban Greening, WP2 adopted a formal yet flexible approach to project management, fostering a creative and resilient framework for exchanging knowledge, skills, and expertise. Working closely with the other Work Packages, primarily WP4, WP2 managed budgets, timelines, and ensured milestones were met.

Overseeing the establishment of a structured process to address the needs and priorities of Platform partners, WP2 ensured that shared and thematic challenges across regions, educational institutions, and industries were identified. These insights became guiding principles, for the project, facilitating the strategic integration of VET schools and industry partners.

In collaboration with WP4 PoVE and CoVE Creation, Transnational Project Meetings were established to shape the Platform for Vocational Excellence (PoVE). These meetings, alongside Innovation Deep Dives, developed as part of WP4, addressing critical themes like Urban Water Management, Vertical Green Technologies, and Urban Biodiversity, helped establish an open-source innovation network and a robust skills ecosystem for Urban Greening. Transnational Project Meetings were particularly significant, offering Platform partners the chance to visit each region and experience first-hand the challenges, opportunities, best practices, vocational education approaches, and infrastructure initiatives implemented by each Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE).

These visits not only reinforced a sense of shared purpose but also renewed collective motivation to build a unified Urban Greening movement across Europe. Notably, it was through the differences from region to region that true inspiration and motivation to collaborate and exchange knowledge across CoVEs became most apparent.

CoVEs were given the flexibility to implement the objectives of the Platform in ways tailored to their unique contexts. While operating within a clearly defined framework and reporting system, they held regional meetings, organised multiple annual gatherings to pursue national initiatives, signed Memorandums of Understanding, welcomed new partners, hosted International Green Weeks, and disseminated information about their activities and achievements. These initiatives also sparked spin-off projects and enhanced knowledge-sharing efforts.

WP2 provided oversight for all budgetary concerns and created a fully functional online workspace to facilitate ongoing collaboration and communication between partners across all regions. Their methodology was instrumental in achieving both the initial goals and responding to evolving priorities, with this Work Package playing a pivotal role in maintaining alignment with project objectives.

Key milestones overseen by WP2 included holding 10 Transnational Project Meetings – far exceeding the original target of four – and supporting the introduction of Innovation Deep Dives and International Urban Greening Weeks as additional achievements. These initiatives went beyond the initial scope outlined for the project, reflecting the Platform’s dynamic and adaptive approach.

The governance of WP2 underscores the importance of collaboration, shared purpose, and innovation in advancing the goals of the Platform. By building a strong foundation and flexible work model, WP2 sustained a path for Platform partners to create lasting impact and turn the project into a growing movement in Urban Greening.



## Quality Monitor

### Work Package Three (WP3)

Ensuring effective implementation and high-quality standards across all activities of the European Platform for Urban Greening, WP3 Quality Monitor devised a clear strategy and robust feedback tools during the project's first year.

Evaluating the quality of the Work Packages, rather than the activities of each CoVE, customised tools and internal feedback loops were developed, incorporating indicators tailored to each Work Package. Measurables included outputs, outcomes, and processes, all aimed at collecting hard data that would support the achievement of quality benchmarks. Annual reports assessed satisfaction levels and the overall value delivered by each Work Package initiative.

This Work Package adopted the Deming Cycle methodology—plan, do, check, adjust—to drive continuous improvement. During the initial two years, efforts were primarily focused on planning and implementation, with measurable results becoming evident in the latter half of the project. This methodology allowed for the emergence of new initiatives that enhanced the Platform's impact, ensuring it became a world-class reference point for skills development.

One standout example was the mid-project quality assessment of WP6 Educational Activities, which led to a strategic adjustment that produced the *Urban Greening Metro Map*. This innovative tool became one of the Platform's most significant achievements, offering an interactive framework that organises the extensive range of PoVE trainings and courses. For each thematic area, the *Metro Map* defines specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria, providing a structured pathway to navigate Urban Greening curricula across Europe.

By the end of the project, the overall satisfaction rate across all Work Packages was reported at 80%, reflecting the Platform's success in achieving its goals and delivering meaningful results.



## CoVE and PoVE Creation

### Work Package Four (WP4)

In alignment with the outcomes of the WP1 Survey Analysis and the Project Management structure established in WP2, WP4 facilitated the establishment of a European-wide Platform of Vocational Excellence (PoVE) and six Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Romania, and Spain. The European Landscape Contractors Association (ELCA) was recognised as an honorary seventh CoVE, representing industry only.

During the first year of the European Platform for Urban Greening, efforts were centred on building the CoVEs. Platform partners were introduced to the concept of Centres of Vocational Excellence and what forms they could take, while highlighting how public-private partnerships could be harness for education, recruitment, and innovation goals.



Working individually with each CoVE, WP4 conducted Business Model Canvas workshops in tandem with the WP1 Survey Analysis. These sessions helped create tailored implementation roadmaps, outlining structures, processes, and strategies for CoVE development. This included drafting Memorandums of Understanding, letters of intent, to expand and formalise partnerships within their respective regions.

Throughout the second year, WP4 oversaw visits to each CoVE helping them build their network, identify additional sources of funding, and plan their activities in line with the objective of WP2 according to their unique needs and priorities. Through the introduction of in-person Transnational Project Meetings, a blend of formal and informal channels were used to gather ongoing feedback as the needs of partners evolved.

By year three, the focus shifted to relationship-building and formalising a unified Platform of Vocational Excellence at the European level. Spin-off projects, Innovation Deep Dives and International Urban Greening Weeks, that used challenge-based learning, were introduced to facilitate Platform-wide collaborations and advance knowledge exchanges. Alongside the Transnational Project Meetings, these efforts cultivated a culture of trust and innovation amongst participants.

Innovation Deep Dives, initially developed in response to the needs of the Platform's industry partners, were a creative strategy for incorporating a "think tank" mentality to approach some of the most pressing and critical issues in Urban Greening. Topics ranged from *Urban Water Management* and *Vertical Green Technologies* to *Urban Biodiversity*, resulting in white-papers, new innovations, and reimagined approaches to Urban Greening challenges.

International Urban Greening Weeks brought together students, educators, and industry professionals in cooperative learning environments to address real-world Urban Greening challenges. These mobility-learning opportunities have been hosted in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and Romania, with participants from all CoVEs actively engaging.

The combined efforts of spin-off projects, Innovation Deep Dives, and International Urban Greening Weeks strengthened the PoVE, resulting in the emergence of an open-source innovation network and a robust skills ecosystem in Urban Greening. The fourth year of the project focused on further honing this network and skills ecosystem and growing a stronger connection with WP9 Follow-up.

## Knowledge & Skills Transfer

### Work Package Five (WP5)

Complementing WP4 CoVE and PoVE creation, WP5 focused on facilitating the exchange of knowledge and skills amongst Platform partners while providing external training opportunities for VET school teachers and the wider public.

In addition to the knowledge-sharing opportunities provided by Transnational Project Meetings, Innovation Deep Dives, Spin-off Projects, and International Urban Greening Weeks, WP5 emphasised blended learning content, digital tools, and leveraging new technologies to enhance the Platform's ability to disseminate information broadly.

Key initiatives under WP5 included Showcase Sessions, *The Virtual Green Academy*, *Vertical Green*, *The Biodiversity Podcast*, Proven Practices, and VET Teacher Mobility Training.

#### Showcase Sessions

Showcase Sessions served as an effective medium for sharing expertise amongst Platform partners and external stakeholders. Delivered as recorded online webinars, these sessions allowed CoVEs to present specialised topics such as *Edible Forest Gardens*, *Soil Food Web*, *Eco-Neighbourhoods*, *Explorative Learning*, *Nordic Green Walls*, *Nature-Inclusive Building*, *Biodiversity* and *Elements of Well-Being in Urban Greening*. A total of 15 hour-long webinars were produced, offering a flexible resource for CoVEs to stay updated on the latest Urban Greening advancements while fostering cross-platform learning.

#### Virtual Green Academy

With funding from the European Commission, two virtual reality digital platforms were developed to support WP5 objectives. The *Virtual Green Academy*, created by the Green Academy in Denmark, functions as a virtual campus, offering a 3D experience where users can explore school grounds, facilities, time-lapse videos of plant life, and access online courses. Accessible in Danish and English via mobile phones, computers, or VR headsets, the platform has gained significant traction, with 141,391 views on Google Maps and 189 complete tours on the 3DVista platform.

#### Vertical Green

Developed by AhlmanEdu in Finland in collaboration with industry and educational Platform partners, *Vertical Green* introduces the core principles of green walls and vegetative roofs. Covering foundational knowledge for EQF levels 3 and 4 in five key areas, it is available in six languages. This interactive VR tool, amongst the first of its kind, delves into vertical greening elements such as construction and maintenance, making it publicly available to share best practices with the next generation of green practitioners and vocational educators.

#### The Biodiversity Podcast

Accessible through the *Virtual Green Academy*, *The Biodiversity Podcast* was designed to offer micro-learning opportunities for green sector workers, such as landscapers and gardeners, enabling them to up-skill on-the-go. This podcast series has had a significant impact not only in Denmark but globally, reaching listeners on every continent. Featuring guests from across the Platform and an episode with Copenhagen Business School, the podcast highlights the social and economic benefits of Urban Greening in a convenient, accessible format.

#### Proven Practices

Under WP5 leadership and in collaboration with WP7 Dissemination, an internal document titled *Proven Practices* was developed and shared through the online partner platform. Containing over 100 examples of successful Urban Greening initiatives from all CoVEs, the document serves as a valuable resource, offering practical examples and detailed documentation that can be referenced as a "how-to" guide.



### **VET Teacher Mobility Training**

WP5 was additionally responsible for ensuring a minimum of four training sessions for VET teachers during the Platform project. By hosting four training sessions for vocational educators within the PoVE and two external sessions for VET teachers, a total of 100 VET teachers were upskilled in the most forward-thinking and innovative topics offered across the European Platform.

## **Educational Activities**

### **Work Package Six (WP6)**

Encompassing all of the shared priorities of the European Platform for Urban Greening, WP6 focussed on developing high-quality curricula and educational activities that would help recruit for the new Green Labour Market, raise greater awareness around Urban Greening, and create meaningful opportunities for knowledge exchanges.

Based on insights from WP1 Survey Analysis, WP6 identified learning goals tailored to regional needs. Recognising challenges in comparing existing curricula, it aimed to establish a uniform training offer across the Platform, aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Training each Centre of Vocational Excellence on EQF standards, provided the basis of understanding for what to teach, how to teach and assess the curricula, and how to meet the training needs of the Green labour force. Adopting EQF standards successfully enabled the alignment of curricula across each CoVE and fostered greater transparency and collaboration between vocational institutions and industry partners.

The alignment of new and existing curricula was achieved through defined learning outcomes and corresponding assessment criteria in Urban Greening for each EQF level 1-5. Curricula were categorised into thematic areas: Water, Soil/Substrates, Vegetation, Materials, Energy Saving/Machinery, and Well-Being. Each category was assigned clear learning outcomes and assessment criteria, ensuring a standardised training offer across all CoVEs.



WP6 used the Deming Cycle methodology to check and adjust its progress, and what resulted from the adoption and application of EQF level learning outcomes and assessment criteria, was the creation of the *Urban Greening Metro Map*. This interactive tool uses the same thematic areas making the navigation of Urban Greening curricula across Europe accessible and easy to follow for every EQF level.

In alignment with WP5 Knowledge & Skills Transfer, and WP1 Survey Analysis, blended and virtual learning were a key focal point in the creation of new educational activities. Essential for EQF levels 3 and 4, which represent the majority of learners across the Platform's educational institutions and industry partners, great attention was given to the learning outcomes of new initiatives that addressed these levels, such as the *Vertical Green* virtual platform that introduces the core principles of green walls and vegetative roofs to learners.

Over the course of four years an impressive array of new, innovative, or hyper-local curricula was developed by all CoVEs, both in collaboration with other CoVEs and with input from industry partners. This includes the landmark qualifications and significant training courses, that have elevated the professional status of the landscaping and gardening fields writ large as a result of this Work Package.

Notable new qualifications and training courses include:

- The recognition of the Gardener occupation and creation of an *Urban Gardener qualification* in Romania, EQF levels 3 and 4
- The Netherlands' pioneering *Green Roof Qualification*, EQF levels 1 to 5
- Spain's *Urban Tree & Palm Tree Management* and *Professional Turf Installation & Maintenance* Qualifications, EQF level 3
- The Czech Republic's *Design of Urban Greening* four-year training program, EQF level 4
- Finland's *LUMOtarhuri* Biodiversity Gardener course, EQF levels 2 to 5
- Denmark's *Virtual Green Academy* and *The Biodiversity Podcast*, EQF levels 3 to 5

Achieving another major indicator, WP6 facilitated the establishment of an innovative experience centre for vertical green. Launched in the final year of the project, the *Green Roof and Façade Experience Centre* at Yuverta's Green Hotspot in the Netherlands is a multi-functional centre that offers pre-vocational and vocational students, teachers, and practitioners with a dedicated space to learn and train in all aspects of vertical and rooftop gardening.

With training available for all CoVEs, this experience centre provides a base for mobility learning and serves as a model for the creation of vertical green experience centres in each region. CoVEs in Denmark, Czech Republic, Finland, Romania and Spain already have plans underway for their own green roofs and experience centres. Additionally, green walls are being installed in all regions as part of the *BreatheGreen Urban Tec-Roc* spin-off project, which will run through 2026.



## Dissemination

### Work Package Seven (WP7)

To raise greater awareness around Urban Greening, promote vocational education and showcase the annual activities of the European Platform for Urban Greening, WP7 focussed exclusively on the dissemination of the project's outcomes and communicating how those outcomes would benefit the wider public. The dissemination strategy targeted diverse stakeholders, including VET educators and students, green industry professionals, practitioners, government officials, and the general public.



At the heart of the dissemination strategy, that went through multiple iterations, was the project website, which has served as a centralised resource hub for sharing the scope of the European Platform's activity. The website offers a wealth of materials, such as whitepapers, educative articles, strategic guides, and practical roadmaps, accessible through sections like *Inspiration* and *Results*, which have been instrumental in sharing knowledge and fostering collaboration, with many resources adopted by similar initiatives.

The strategy has also effectively utilised a mix of digital channels—social media platforms, email newsletters, webinars—and a structured content calendar aligned with eco-conscious digital marketing practices. The dedicated social media team for WP7 has ensured consistent and impactful engagement, while a dissemination log provided ongoing evaluation of outreach effectiveness.

This comprehensive strategy delivered successful results, surpassing the initial goal of 100,000 engagements to reach over 400,000 by the project's fourth year. Focussing on dissemination amongst practitioners, Platform partners were invited to informal leaning sessions on LinkedIn and YouTube, while vocational students were invited to more formal learning on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. Additionally, target groups were reached regarding research on VET levels via LinkedIn and X (Twitter).

Social media metrics as of 2024 demonstrated significant growth:

- LinkedIn: 2,000 followers
- Twitter/X: 347 followers
- Instagram: 431 followers
- Facebook: 620 followers
- YouTube: 81 subscribers and 4,205 total views
- Newsletter: 245 subscribers

Since tracking began in December 2021, the project website recorded 10,000 users by October 2023, almost doubling the 5,400 users reported previously. The *Results* section and *Inspiration* posts were among the most visited pages. Visitor data revealed growing international reach, with the United States ranking third among top countries, alongside non-project European nations such as the UK, Germany, France, and Austria.

In 2024 a new brochure, *Case Studies from Year Three*, was developed in response to positive feedback from earlier editions. Made available in regional languages across CoVEs, this publication further broadened outreach, increasing accessibility and audience engagement. The publication has also maintained a strong presence at high-profile events over the past year, including:

- Congreso Internacional de Innovación Aplicada (IMAT) in Spain
- Conference of the Romanian Association for Landscape Gardeners in Romania
- SERE Conference on Ecological Restoration in Estonia
- 3rd Forum on Vocational Excellence of the CoP CoVEs in France
- Future Green City World Congress in the Netherlands
- Cities of the Future Conference in the Czech Republic

Further dissemination efforts targeted prominent Green Sector trade fairs, including:

- Viherpäivät: The National Landscapers Conference 2024 in Finland
- Deltaland 2024 Fair in Spain
- PARJAP 2024 in Spain
- Seminar on Green Roofs and Facades hosted by EMBUILD and BFG in Belgium

The dissemination efforts of WP7—bolstered by strong partner collaboration and multi-channel outreach—have achieved exceptional audience growth and impact. The expansion of online engagement, along with recognition in key forums, underscores that the European Platform for Urban Greening is a world-class reference point.



Looking ahead, the Platform will build on its successes by continuing to utilise its website, social media platforms, and emerging spin-off projects to sustain momentum and expand its reach. These ongoing efforts will ensure the European Platform for Urban Greening remains a key driver of innovation and education in the Green Sector.

### **Impact Evaluation Work Package Eight (WP8)**

To produce a comprehensive final Impact Evaluation for the European Platform for Urban Greening project, annual reports were gathered from project partners through a formal

strategy. WP8 consolidated objectives and indicators across all Work Packages, presenting a detailed assessment of the project's impact at personal, organisational, regional, national, and international levels.

On a personal level, the European Platform project had a significant effect on the personal and professional growth of its partners. Stimulating a change in mindset, educators and industry partners adopted new teaching and training methodologies and have reshaped the way they think about collaborations, vocational education, and approaching innovations and best-practices in Urban Greening.

The project has seen a profound effect on the Platform's partner organisations, particularly with regard to the formal development of regional Centres of Vocational Excellence. Each taking a unique approach to the development of their CoVE, the partners have gained a true sense of pride in leading the Green Transition, understanding their value and contribution as they evolve into hubs of innovation and life-long learning in the Green Sector. Facilitating collaborations between educational institutions, industry, and government bodies their individual and creative approaches to addressing local and regional environmental challenges has made an impact and has spurred knowledge exchange and skills development on a broad scale.

Strengthening regional ecosystems by addressing the critical issues of biodiversity, climate adaptation, and well-being in the urban environment, the Platform has benefited municipalities and cities across the continent. Reframing and enhancing vocational education and curricula on a national level, establishing new professional qualifications, promoting policy changes, and integrating Urban Greening best practices into infrastructure projects and urban planning strategies, the long-term impact of this project will have ripple effects for years to come.

Internationally, the European Platform for Urban Greening has set a benchmark for green education, and has become a world class reference point for Urban Greening and public-private partnerships in the Green Sector. Exemplifying a model for an open-source innovation network and robust skills ecosystem, the project has created a foundation for future collaboration, innovation, and education that will continue to drive a movement towards more sustainable green cities across Europe and beyond.

To capture the remarkable impact the project has had across the Platform, a collection of videos representing each CoVE are available on the Platform's YouTube channel. Highlighting the achievements of all project objectives and indicators, these videos demonstrate the transformative changes that have surpassed the initial objectives of this project, leaving a profound and lasting impact on everyone involved.

### **Follow-up** **Work Package Nine (WP9)**

The Follow-up Strategy for the European Platform for Urban Greening focused on ensuring the sustainability of each Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) and underwent several iterations throughout the project's duration.

Through the development of six CoVEs, a shared framework was created to identify and address the unique challenges faced by each region effectively. This framework, used in collaboration with WP4 CoVE and PoVE Creation, enabled regions to pinpoint promising opportunities, forge partnerships, and outline long-term goals and project ideas.





By the project's conclusion, the Platform achieved remarkable results:

- 239 new partner organisations joined the initiative
- 10 spin-off projects received awards
- Over €3.8 million in co-funding was secured from public and private sources, ensuring the sustainability of each CoVE, the PoVE as a whole, and the broader Urban Greening movement

These accomplishments solidify the Platform's role in advancing vocational education, fostering innovation partnerships, and promoting excellence in Urban Greening across Europe.

### **Sustainability Overview by Region:**

- Czech Republic: 38 new partners – €368,026 secured in funding
- Denmark: 21 new partners – €417,917 secured in funding
- Finland: 26 new partners – €313,558 secured in funding
- Netherlands: 89 new partners – €1,08,865 secured in funding
- Romania: 22 new partners – €935,956 secured in funding
- Spain: 27 new partners – €695,874 secured in funding
- ELCA: 16 new partners – €17,200 secured in funding

Looking ahead, the European Platform for Urban Greening has also drawn interest from 10 parties exploring membership in the PoVE or the creation of their own CoVE. Furthermore, four ongoing projects are set to continue for up to four years, extending the impact and momentum generated by the Platform.

This follow-up strategy underscores the Platform's enduring legacy in driving sustainable development, fostering collaborative partnerships, and championing innovative green practices across Europe and beyond.