

# European Platform for Urban Greening

Case Study Netherlands



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## FOREWORD

# The Answer is Green

Today over 55 percent of the world's population live in cities and by 2050 it is expected that nearly 70 percent of global citizens will live in urban areas. The question is, what will those urban areas and cities look like and what will our experience be like living in them?

The reality of a changing climate is here. Around the world we are seeing and experiencing the impacts of extreme weather conditions including heat waves, wildfires and droughts, poor air quality, flooding and tropical storms. As these effects of climate change take their toll on our urban and rural environments, affecting everything from infrastructure, plant and animal life, to our mental and physical well-being, what we need are immediate solutions that respond to new climate realities.

The challenge is to re-imagine cities and urban life quickly enough to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change, while adapting to the effects that can't be averted.

Thanks to the quickly evolving field of Urban Greening, this great re-imagining is within reach. In fact, it is happening right now. Cities globally are transforming to become greener and more sustainable, but in order to keep pace with the needs of tomorrow we must continue to innovate, share our knowledge and develop our practical skills today.

Urban Greening, as it is coming to be more broadly understood, is key to the evolution of our urban life. It is a dynamic field that is widely applicable and not only provides abundant economic opportunities, but it gives us a real chance to make cities more liveable and equitable in the 21st century. Without a doubt, the answer to our question is green.



## INTRODUCTION

# What Is Urban Greening?

Up until now, Urban Greening has most commonly been used to refer to public landscaping projects that create a mutually beneficial relationship between city dwellers and their environment, such as the installation of parks and tree-lined streets. However, the scope of Urban Greening today goes far beyond these types of green spaces.

Creative and exciting initiatives including living buildings, indoor landscaping, vertical gardens and green roofs are becoming increasingly sought after by city planners and private developers, particularly as their multitude of benefits become ever more apparent.

Aside from beautifying our cities and improving our well-being, these new green initiatives are helping urban areas have a positive environmental impact and are an essential part of reaching our climate targets. For example, green installations like vegetative roofs or vertical gardens absorb harmful amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere while improving pollution by pumping vast amounts of oxygen into the air.

More greening in the urban environment also creates new habitats for wildlife that had previously been displaced and boosts biodiversity to create thriving eco-systems. It helps to cool cities, prevents flooding and above all, ensures a healthy living environment.

If adaptation is an essential part of our response to climate change then the Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) offered by Urban Greening must become more widely adopted.

As innovations in Urban Greening continue to transform our cities, so too do the professional opportunities, skills and expertise associated with it. Our ability to harness the experience, knowledge and best practices in this field will be fundamental to our successful adaptation to climate change and in the future, greening will be an essential part of a liveable city.





## Examples of Urban Greening

- Vegetative green roofs
- Living green walls and vertical gardens
- Indoor landscaping
- Flowering plants in urban areas
- Creating favourable habitats for pollinators
- Hydroponic plant growth
- Biodiverse gardens
- Rain gardens
- Urban vegetable patches and boxed gardens
- Circular water management
- Sustainable irrigation systems
- Rainwater capture
- Green building design and maintenance
- Eco-friendly machinery for landscaping

## Why is it important?

Adaptation is an essential part of our response to climate change. As such, Urban Greening is a critical field, because it offers tangible solutions and benefits for climate adaptation while combating carbon emissions. In order to meet climate targets, we must start by removing Co2 from the atmosphere and Urban Greening initiatives have an exceptional impact towards this aim.

## Benefits of Urban Greening

- Improves the quality of life for people living in urban environments
- Creates economic benefits, including new jobs and sustainable infrastructure
- Supports existing wildlife and protects biodiversity in cities and urban centres
- Creates new habitats to sustain wildlife and encourage pollinators
- Improves the aesthetics of urban spaces, making them greener and more appealing to the eye
- Provides eco-friendly solutions for improving air quality and oxygen levels
- Combats excess pollution by capturing carbon dioxide
- Improves mental health and physical well-being of urban populations
- Provides immediate solutions for adapting to climate change
- Reduces noise pollution in urban areas
- Creates a cooling effect in cities through green buildings
- Helps prevent flooding

# European Platform for Urban Greening

Creating impact by connecting all aspects of Urban Greening on one platform.

**The European Platform for Urban Greening is the first platform of its kind in Europe and it is fast becoming a world-class reference point for all aspects of Urban Greening.**

Funded by the European Commission, the Platform aims to increase the knowledge and skills required to address biodiversity, climate adaptation and well-being in urban areas and to broaden the expertise in Urban Greening practices among students and professionals.

The Platform brings together educational institutions from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Romania, and Spain, that are working together with leading industry partners and governments to form a network of Centres of Vocational Excellence across Europe.

Having commenced in January 2021, these Centres of Vocational Excellence have identified the regional priorities that need to be addressed in order to advance curriculum and training in the field of Urban Greening.

By intensifying collaborations within regions and between countries, the expertise and challenges faced by different climates represented across the Platform can be shared to boost the pace of innovation and create better training and impactful green solutions everywhere.

Each Centre of Vocational Excellence has outlined actionable initiatives that will address their top priorities; exciting projects are already underway for the year ahead.

***“Public-private partnerships can catalyze a skills ecosystem that is required for a thriving, future-proof society. With the Centres of Vocational Excellence on Urban Greening we aim to contribute to the green transition we are currently embarking on.”***

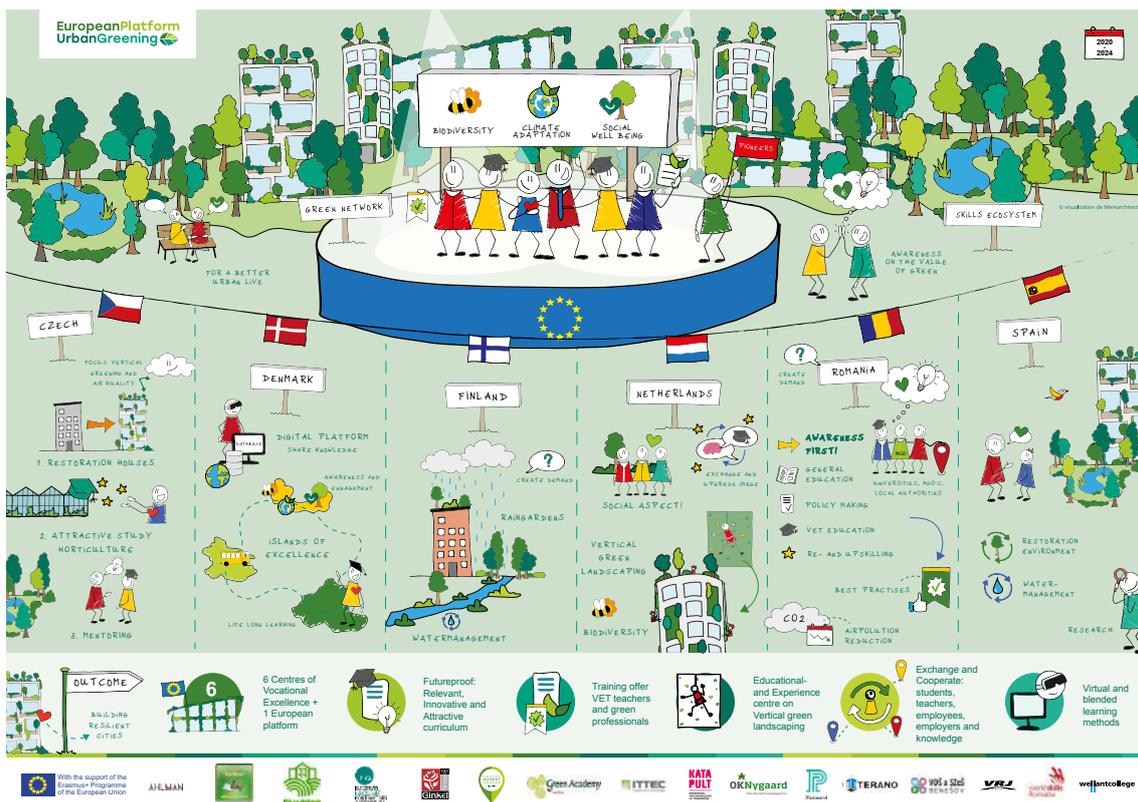
*- Jan Jeronimus, Project Leader,  
European Platform for Urban Greening*





## Shared Priorities Across Centres of Vocational Excellence

- Raising greater awareness about Urban Greening
- Recruiting for the new Green Labour Market
- Creating meaningful opportunities for knowledge transfer
- Developing high-quality curriculum and educational activities



# Netherlands

Placing Greening at the forefront of the urban project planning processes.

## Who are the partners?

**Yuverta**  
**Royal Ginkelgroep**  
**Katapult**

Leading the European Platform for Urban Greening, the Netherlands has three key partners working closely to coordinate the efforts of the Platform's collective participants and establish its Centres of Vocational Excellence.

Using the tools and guidance of Katapult, a learning network that creates and supports mutually beneficial public-private partnerships in vocational and professional education, Yuverta, Royal Ginkelgroep and Katapult aim to establish a strong European-wide network of best practice that will benefit students, educational institutions, industry and society across the field of Urban Greening.



As Europe's largest vocational education and training provider in the 'blue-green' domain, Yuverta offers pre-vocational secondary education and vocational development opportunities for professionals. It is dedicated to high-quality, personalised education that tackles the most pressing 'blue-green' issues, such as: making agriculture more sustainable, improving biodiversity, increasing animal welfare, creating sustainable urbanisation, improving water management and adapting to the changing climate.

Alongside Yuverta and Katapult, Royal Ginkelgroep is a company that has been a pioneer in the green industry and boasts over 100 years' experience in the sector. Royal Ginkelgroep are leaders in providing advice, project planning and after-care of green spaces to ensure cities are green, attractive and future-proof. Focused on areas such as sustainable greening, maintenance free gardens, and innovations in green living spaces they continue to be at the cutting-edge of the Urban Greening sector.





## Project Highlight

### Interior Gardening

Showcasing one of the latest areas of innovation in Urban Greening, Platform partners in the Netherlands have been focussed on an Interior Gardening project with The European Medicine Agency. Using more than 52,000 plants and stretching 22 metres in width and 60 metres in height, the ambitious art of greening a building's interior was realised. Using all of the latest technology and expertise in Urban Greening, this project confronted the challenges of how to cost effectively maintain living green interiors, how to do so without sunlight, and how to facilitate a sustainable water cycle for the plants.

Recognising that we spend around 80 to 90% of our time indoors, this project highlights the positive effects that green interiors can have on our mental and physical health. Research has shown that interior gardening can improve thermal comfort, as well as air quality and natural ventilation, while also having a positive impact on our productivity, learning capabilities and creativity. Green buildings are no longer just exterior projects; they are now interior ones too.



## The Oceanic Climate

Influenced by the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean, The Netherlands shares an Oceanic Climate with Denmark, which features humid yet cool summers and mild, wet winters. Characteristically avoiding winters with a long harsh frost as well as really hot summer periods provides countries in this climate zone with longer growing periods and a wide variety of Urban Greening opportunities.

### Features:

- USDA Hardiness Zone 7b – 10a
- Long growing period
- Interior gardening and green building maintenance
- Circular water management



## YEAR ONE

### Their Top Three Priorities

#### Communication

Including everyone from young students to professionals in municipalities and government planning, it is a priority to effectively communicate the value of the natural environment and demonstrate the advantages of greening urban spaces. Communications around Urban Greening in the Netherlands must aim to have both short- and long-term impacts to help create a cultural change in attitude and promote the career opportunities and economic benefits that result from the growth of this sector.

#### Recruitment

Across the wider field of Urban Greening in the Netherlands there is currently a lack of a specialised knowledge in the workforce. To address the needs of the industry, it is a priority to attract new students to the sector and retrain experienced professionals by creating broader awareness and specialised courses in areas such as green buildings, applied plant knowledge and project planning.

#### Culture Change

To shift greening projects from being an afterthought or a 'nice to have' in the creation and construction of new civic spaces, it is a priority to create a culture shift when it comes to thinking about Urban Greening. To ensure the successful implementation and maintenance of a green projects, such as a living wall or interior garden, expertise and practical considerations must be integrated into the first phases of the planning process. More generally, a cultural change needs to be adopted amongst all stakeholders when it comes to the inclusion of green or retention of the existing natural environment in project planning and management.

*“Every meeting is an opportunity to learn something new about Urban Greening. We are all learning as we go and it's exciting to be a part of such a dynamic European-wide platform that is having real impact.”*

*– Sijtske Ouderkerken, Yuverta*



# THE YEAR AHEAD

## Initiatives for 2022

### 'The Value of Green'

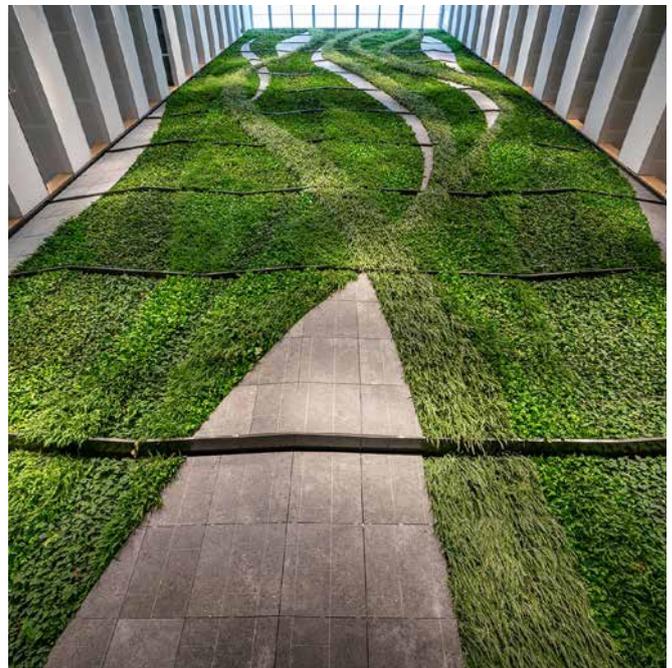
New events such as workshops and site visits that emphasise 'The Value of Green' will be created throughout the year. These initiatives will showcase the social and economic benefits of green projects and the impact that they have. For example, incorporating a living wall into a meeting room can not only create a more aesthetically pleasing space to gather, but can also improve the acoustics when conducting conference calls and virtual meetings.

### Activate Lobbyist Group

An influential team of stakeholders has been identified and will aim to generate greater attention for Urban Greening in the Netherlands. In order to bring about the support, policy changes and funding needed for Urban Greening from government bodies, this group will create opportunities to exchange knowledge and lobbying strategies across Europe to establish the most effective ways to create proposals that express 'The Value of Green'.

### Interior Planting & Landscaping Course

Co-created by Yuverta and the Royal Association of Gardeners and Green Providers (VHG), this three-day certificate course has recently been developed to respond to the needs of Green Industry professionals in the Netherlands. Training covers topics including interior landscaping, plant stratification, artificial plants, plant nutrition and care, pruning and maintenance and culminates in a short theory exam. Courses will be offered in 2022 and will be developed for a wider audience in the coming year.



*“As Urban Greeners we are not the solution to climate change, but we are definitely making sure we are creating impactful and innovative solutions to adapt to it.”*

– Lars van Ginkel, Royal Ginkelgroep

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# Summary of Activity

In the past year, partners of the European Platform for Urban Greening have created partnerships and knowledge exchanges that are having real-world impact across the continent. Their activities have resulted in the implementation and planning for a wide range of green initiatives, highlights of which include:

- A Bio-gardening course
- A Biodiversity course
- An Interior Planting & Landscaping Course
- A European Qualifications Framework Workshop
- Virtual courses and exchanges
- An Ambassador Program
- Activation of a Lobbyist Group
- The creation of an Urban Greening Day
- 'The Value of Green' campaign
- An Ideas Competition
- Youth engagement activities and internships
- Summer camps
- Study abroad trips
- The creation of blended and micro-learning resources
- The co-creation and development of new curriculum
- Short course qualifications in Urban Greening and Landscaping
- Public relations and events
- Media and social media campaigns
- Public lectures and workshops
- Seminars and video conferences
- Planting vegetable gardens in schools
- A Basic Skills Toolkit for best practices in Urban Greening
- An Atlas for Professions and Competencies in Urban Greening
- An Atlas of Emerging Trends in Urban Greening

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