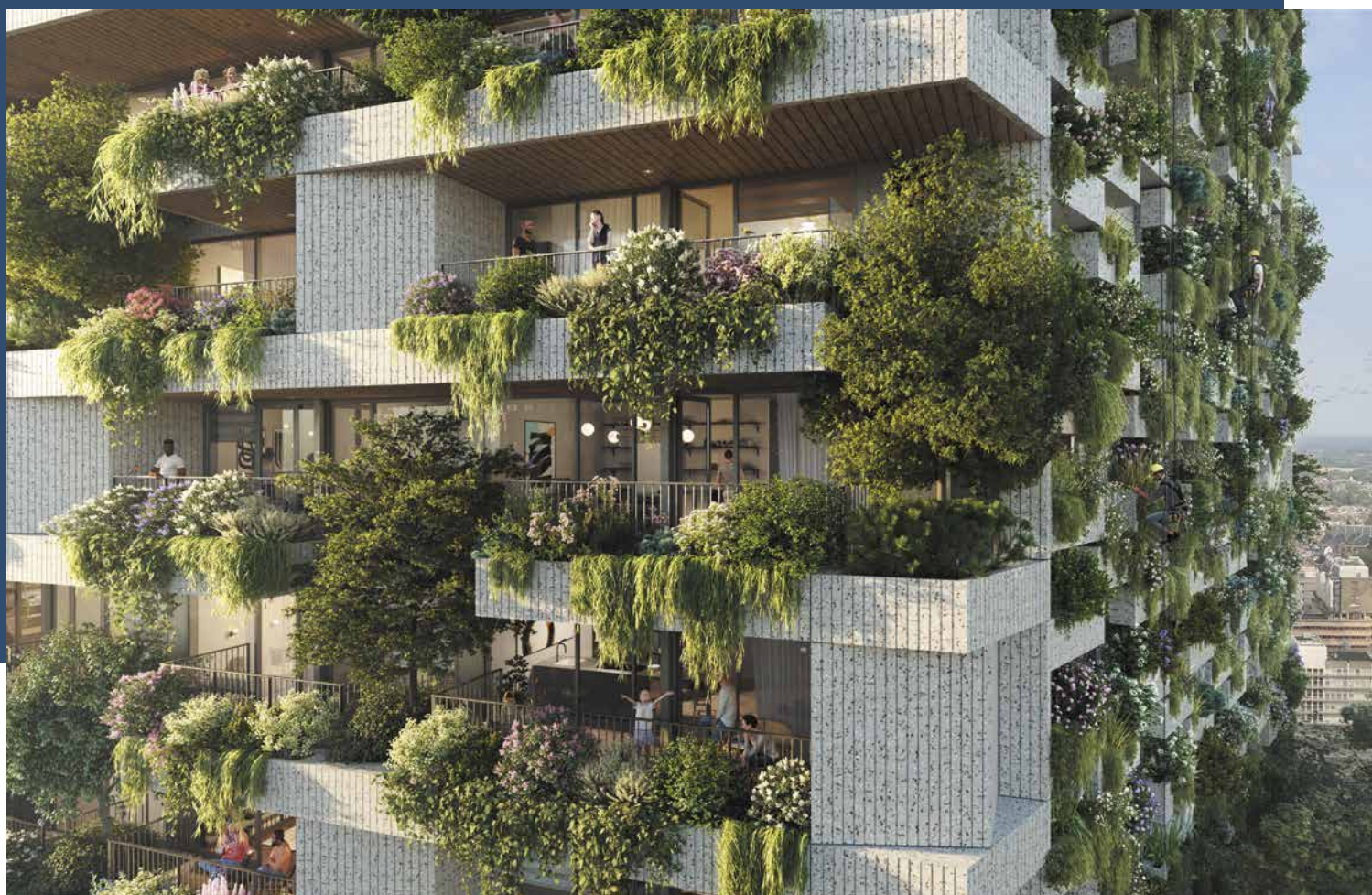


European Platform for Urban Greening

Case Study *Romania*



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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*



CASE STUDY

Romania

Assembling an Atlas of Professions & Competencies in Urban Greening.

Who are the partners?

Cezar Nicolau Branesti Technological High School
Terano Construct SRL
Worldskills Romania Foundation

Worldskills Romania Foundation builds partnerships and facilitates collaborations between the education sector and labour market that support professional development. Focussed on technical and vocational professions, Worldskills Romania aims to provide relevant learning experiences for young people that offer support, guidance and training and create job opportunities in sectors such as Urban Greening.

Coming together through Worldskills Romania, Cezar Nicolau, a technological high school in Branesti, and Terano Construct SRL, a private construction company based in Bucharest, will build on their existing vocational partnership and over the coming years, will further Romania's position as a Centre of Vocational Excellence in Urban Greening in Europe.

Founded in 1952, Cezar Nicolau Technological High School is dedicated to improving the quality of continuous education and preparing its students for vocational work in the European market. With a high percentage of students coming from under-privileged families or representing the Roma community, who may be lacking literacy abilities or identity papers, the school is placing an emphasis on social responsibility and the technical skills needed for the Green Economy.

Alongside Worldskills Romania and Cezar Nicolau, Terano Construct offers industry experience and insights into the construction, management and maintenance of civic buildings, industrial construction, landscaping, public parks and playgrounds. Incorporating the latest best practice in Urban Greening, Terano Construct's collaboration as part of the Platform ensures that vocational training in this field results in a strong talent pipeline of green professionals in Romania.





Project Highlight

Atlas of Professions & Competencies in Urban Greening

Led by Worldskills Romania, over the last year an 'Atlas' has been assembled that identifies the various professions and competencies that currently exist in the field of Urban Greening in Romania. The Atlas provides a clearer picture of the future qualifications and training programmes needed to further develop the field and meet the objectives of Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030.

Developing this Atlas has been the first step in starting a discussion around the Urban Greening sector in the country and will lay the foundation for the long-term establishment of a fully specialised qualification that provides the necessary skills, occupational training, and curriculum relevant to the field.



The Subcontinental Climate

Facing hot, dry summers similar to the Mediterranean region, but with cold winters and frost more like the Continental climate areas, Romania sits within a transitional zone representative of a Subcontinental Climate. A combination of climate features resulting from four distinct seasons and a topography of mountains and hill to flat plains, makes for a more complex range of biodiversity and requires a creative mix of adaptation strategies that allows Romania to share its learnings with a wide range of partners in neighbouring climates.

Features:

- USDA Hardiness Zone 5a – 10a
- Four distinct season
- Wide range of natural resources management
- Green building maintenance for all seasons



YEAR ONE

Their Top Three Priorities

Develop a Talent Pipeline

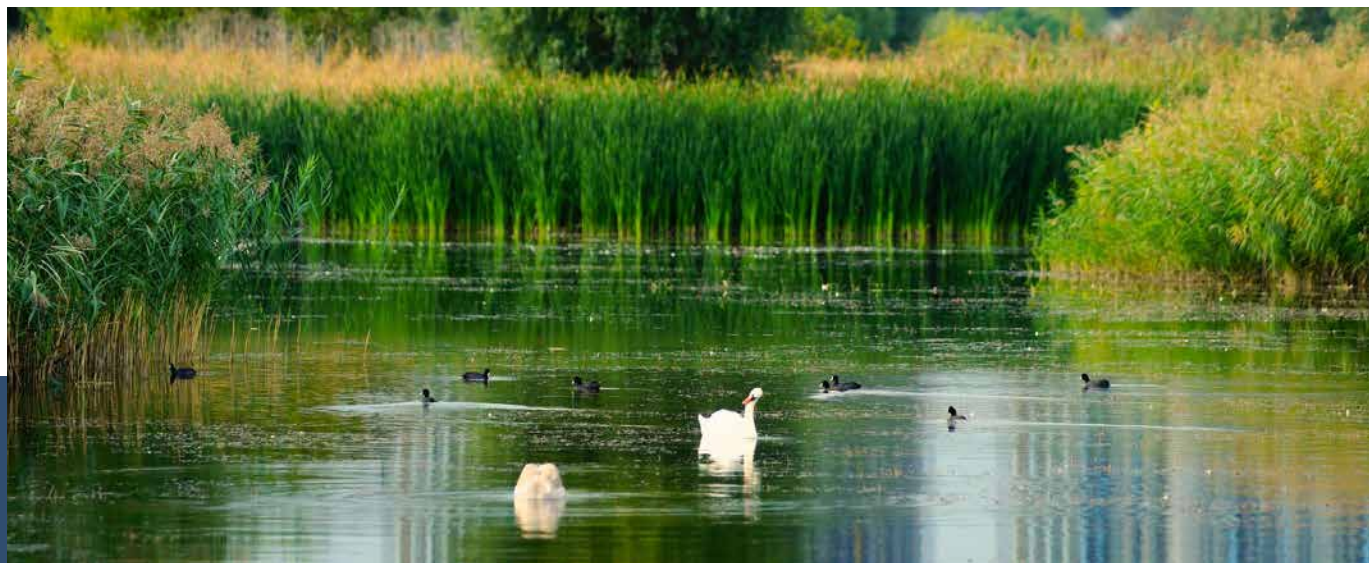
To begin to develop a strong talent pipeline of green industry professionals, it is a priority to first improve a basic understanding around social responsibility, climate action and biodiversity amongst youths in Romania. Across the younger population, it has been identified that there is a disconnect from nature particularly in urban areas. The knock-on effect of this is the lack of knowledge around career opportunities in the green sector. By creating more initiatives for youth to connect with nature and understand the value of Urban Greening, the recruitment needs of industry can be met and clearer picture of career paths in the green sector can be demonstrated.

Specialised Qualifications

To ensure that professionals working with public green spaces or the management of construction projects, such as maintenance contractors, have the knowledge and skills they need to incorporate best practices into their work, it is a priority in Romania to create new professional qualifications in Landscaping and Urban Greening. In order to develop these new qualifications, vocational teachers must retrain and up-skill through exchanges with other Platform partners to make certain they have the latest thinking around agriculture, green construction and environmental protection.

Increase Demand for Urban Greening

From civic city planners to private developers, it is a priority to raise awareness around the social and economic benefits that Urban Greening offers in Romania. By creating a culture shift when it comes to thinking about biodiversity, climate adaptation and well-being when planning for the construction, management and maintenance of public spaces, it is anticipated that there will be an increased demand for Urban Greening projects across the country.



THE YEAR AHEAD

Initiatives for 2022

Atlas of Emerging Trends in Urban Greening

Following on from the Atlas of Professions and Competencies in Urban Greening, a new study will be undertaken in the coming year to create a vision for what the future of the sector should look like in Romania. This Atlas of Emerging Trends will identify areas including what new occupations are needed, how they can be introduced into legislation and what standards and training programmes need to be developed in order to support trends in Urban Greening practices.

Short Course Qualifications

Vocational educators will commence knowledge exchanges with other partner schools across the Platform in order to develop curriculum and short course qualifications in Landscaping and Urban Greening. The target audience for these short courses will include contractors, landscape gardeners and other professionals already working with the management and maintenance of civic spaces and public buildings. These short courses will have a particular focus on Urban Greening practices related to agriculture, green construction and environmental protection and lay the foundation for the development of a larger qualification in Urban Greening in the years to come.

Community Activities & Media Campaign

To raise awareness and increase demand for Urban Greening from both the public and private sector, community-based initiatives will be implemented. These will include the creation of a social media campaign targeted at the younger generation, summer school activities to help youths reconnect with nature, educational projects within primary schools to build awareness, and targeted public relations that can aid in gaining coverage around Urban Greening in state and local media, such as television or print news.

“For us, the next step is organising sessions to identify what the future of Urban Greening will look like. The output of these sessions will be an Atlas of Emerging Trends in Urban Greening – a “guide book” for changes in the sector, such as new occupations that need to be introduced into legislation, new occupational standards to be developed, and new training programs that support the emerging trends in the sector.”

– Georgiana Mincu, Program Director, WorldSkills Romania



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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