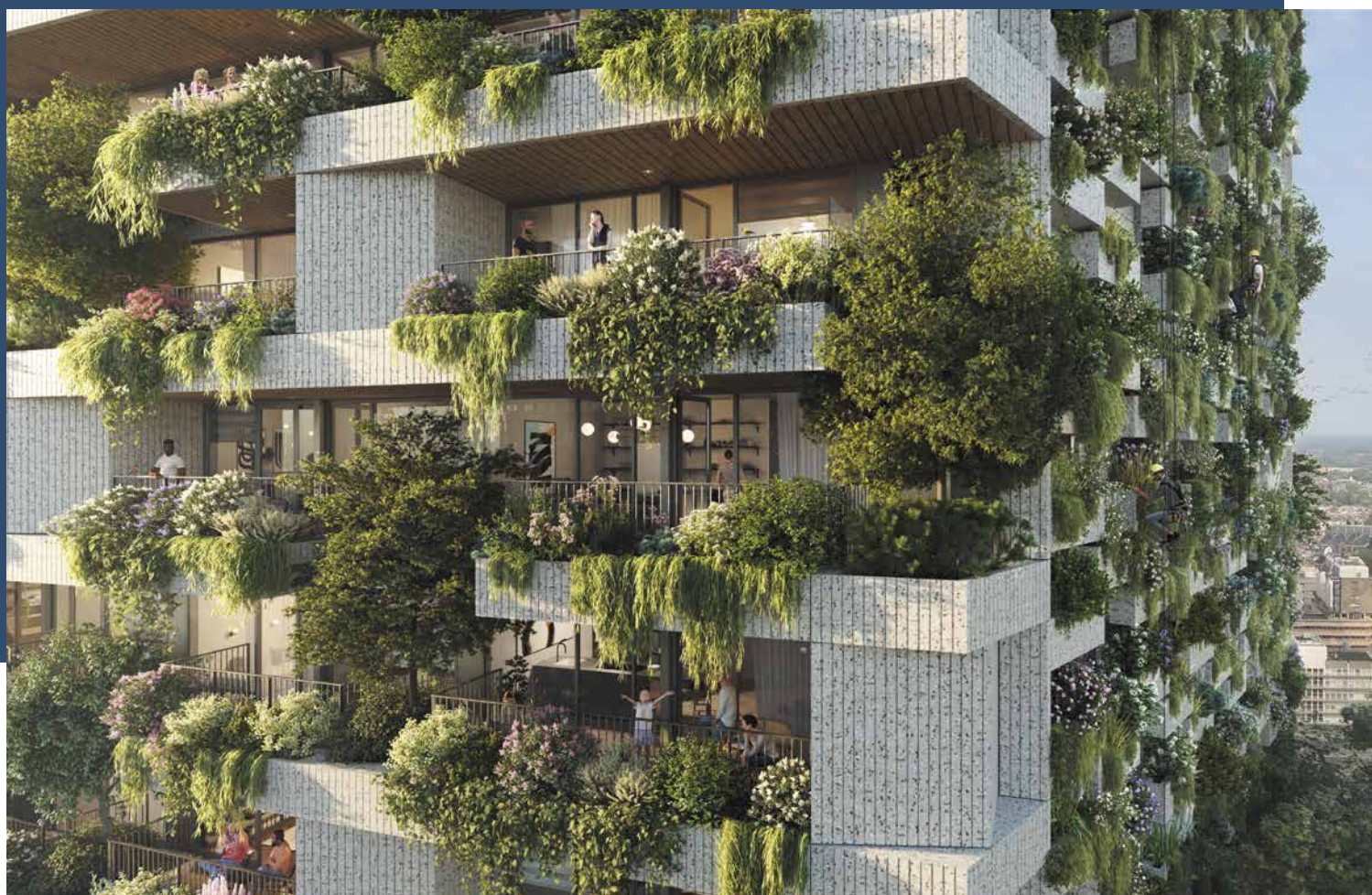


European Platform for Urban Greening

Case Study *Spain*



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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.”

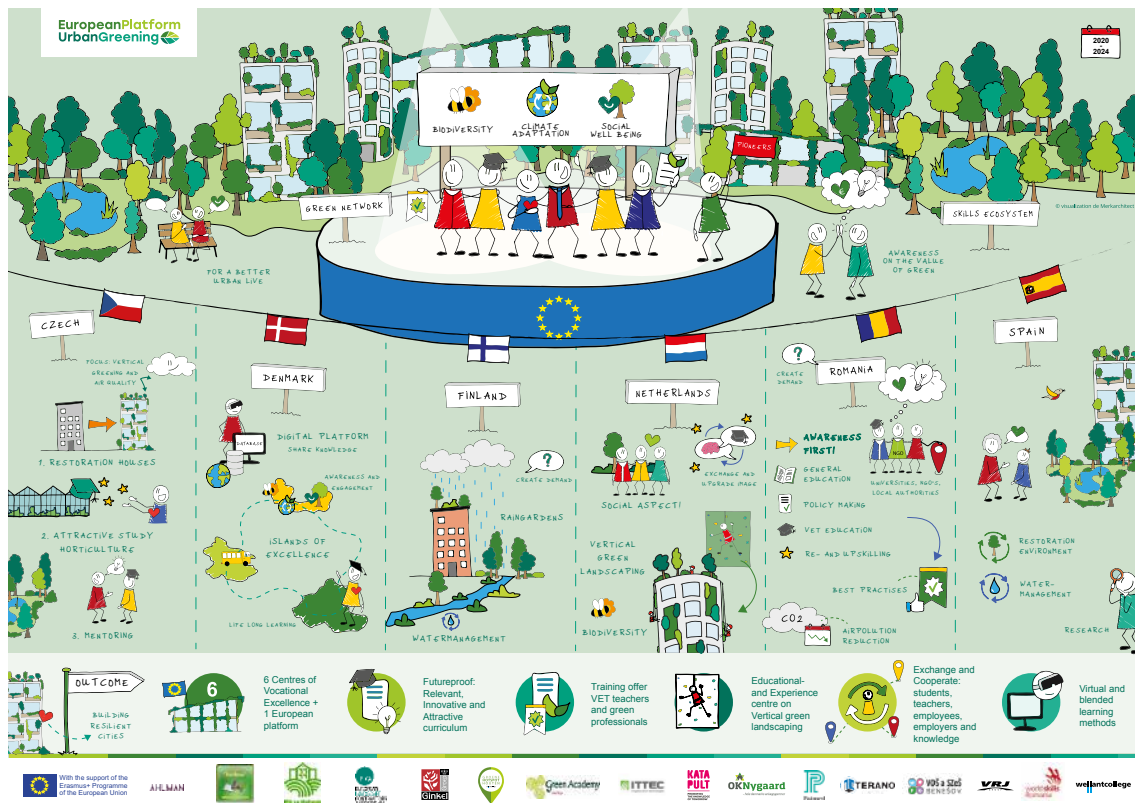
*- Jan Jeronimus, Project Leader,
European Platform for Urban Greening*





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



CASE STUDY

Spain

Applying best practices in Urban Greening everywhere, from small rural communities to big cities.

Who are the partners?

EFA La Malvesía
Paimed

Situated 40 minutes from the 2000-year-old city of Valencia is EFA La Malvesía, a school dedicated to the professional, cultural and social promotion of agriculture, forestry and the rural environment. Placing and emphasis on collaborations with local schools and municipal government bodies, La Malvesía is creating a model of best practice for Urban Greening in rural communities and laying the foundation in Spain for the advancement of vocational education and training in this rapidly evolving sector.

In partnership with Paimed, an industry leader in the fields of Urban Greening, landscape design, environmental restoration and bioengineering, over the coming years these two organisations aim to increase the technical knowledge and skills required to implement innovative and practical climate change adaptation measures, increase regional biodiversity and improve the health and well-being of citizens living in both large urban environments and in smaller urban communities.



“Our collaboration with vocational schools such as La Malvesía, gives us an exceptional opportunity to keep up to date with the latest trends and technologies in Urban Greening and recruit highly motivated new talent who come with fresh ideas for the industry.”

– Juan Manuel Mondéjar, Paimed

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Project Highlight

Smart Green City 4.0

Focussed on incorporating Nature-Based Solutions and new technologies into the planning of green infrastructure, Smart Green City 4.0 is the latest initiative born out of a collaboration between La Malvesía, Agrària d'Amposta School and Torre Pacheco, the Integrated Centre for Training and Agrarian Experiences. Together with industry leaders in landscaping Paisajistas del Mediterraneo and Comercial Projar, a manufacturer of substrates and supplies for agricultural gardening, this project aims to exchange knowledge between vocational schools and commercial enterprises in the Green Sector.

To prepare new and existing professionals for the planning, management and maintenance of green cities of the future, Smart Green City 4.0 sets out to create higher level training in Landscaping and Urban Greening practices for both rural and urban environments.

Professional training will emphasise the economic, social and environmental impacts of green infrastructure and provide students with opportunities to practically apply knowledge and gain experience with the latest innovations and technologies including green roofs, vertical gardens, sustainable drainage systems for rainfall management, and the use of drones and irrigation control equipment.

The Mediterranean Climate

With characteristically hot dry summers and mild wet winters the Mediterranean region sits at crossroad between latitudes. This beautifully complex topographical region of Southern Europe, North Africa and Western Asia shares a climate with other Mediterranean zones around the world including California, South Africa and parts of Australia. Spain is perfectly positioned to share its learnings, innovations and climate adaptation strategies across Europe and beyond.

Features:

- USDA Hardiness Zones 6b – 8b
- Experiences drought
- Dry gardening
- Water and forest management



YEAR ONE

Their Top Three Priorities

New Sources of Funding

In order to develop initiatives that ensure the social value of Urban Greening is best understood by the public and its impacts felt on their health and well-being, it is a priority to secure greater investment from both the public and private sectors. More specifically, new sources of funding are needed in Spain to implement rurally based projects that demonstrate the value of Urban Greening practices within smaller urban environments.

Collaborations

The best way to generate a strong talent pipeline for the Green Labour Market is to create closer collaborations between industry and education sectors. It is a priority to ensure that major industry leaders in Spain are providing ongoing input into evolving curriculum that will support professional development, up-skilling and highlight the career opportunities for young students. Developing new and ongoing collaborations in Urban Greening are necessary to clarify and align the needs of these two sectors.

Knowledge Transfers

Professionals working in the rural environment such as farmers have invaluable regional knowledge that can benefit the field of Urban Greening and in turn, have a greater impact on local communities. It is a priority to create more opportunities to exchange this type of specific expertise, which could include planting vegetable gardens that enhance local biodiversity and protect endangered local plant varieties, as well to create more opportunities to share knowledge about Urban Greening in rural communities more widely across the Platform.

“By sharing expertise between farmers and landscapers, vocational educators and green industries we are identifying gaps and advancing our understanding of best practices in Urban Greening in both rural and urban environments.”

– Ignacio Hernández Visier, Principal EFA La Malvesía



THE YEAR AHEAD

Initiatives for 2022

Co-Create New Curriculum

Together, La Malvesía and Paimed will start to develop an engaging new curriculum to bolster the talent pipeline for the Green Industry in Spain and prepare students for future career opportunities in the field of Urban Greening. In the short-term, this will involve the creation of specialised short courses that will aid in the professional development of educators and existing industry professionals, while in the long-term the aim will be to create a new post-graduate degree in Urban Greening.

Public Relations & Events

To generate more investment and support for Urban Greening, site visits and information sessions for public officials will be held throughout the year, alongside an 'Ideas Competition' to encourage new innovations and secure funding for specific projects in rural communities. To further raise awareness and garner public support for these initiatives, activities that promote health and well-being for the general public, such as planting vegetable gardens in schools and urban communities, will be implemented to demonstrate the tangible benefits of greening projects.

Seminars & Video Conferences

In order to increase the opportunities for knowledge exchange amongst community stakeholders, industry leaders and Platform partners, seminars and video conferences will be organised throughout the year. The aim will be to increase awareness around current Urban Greening project across Europe.



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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