

European Platform for Urban Greening

Case Study European Landscape Contractors Association



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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.”

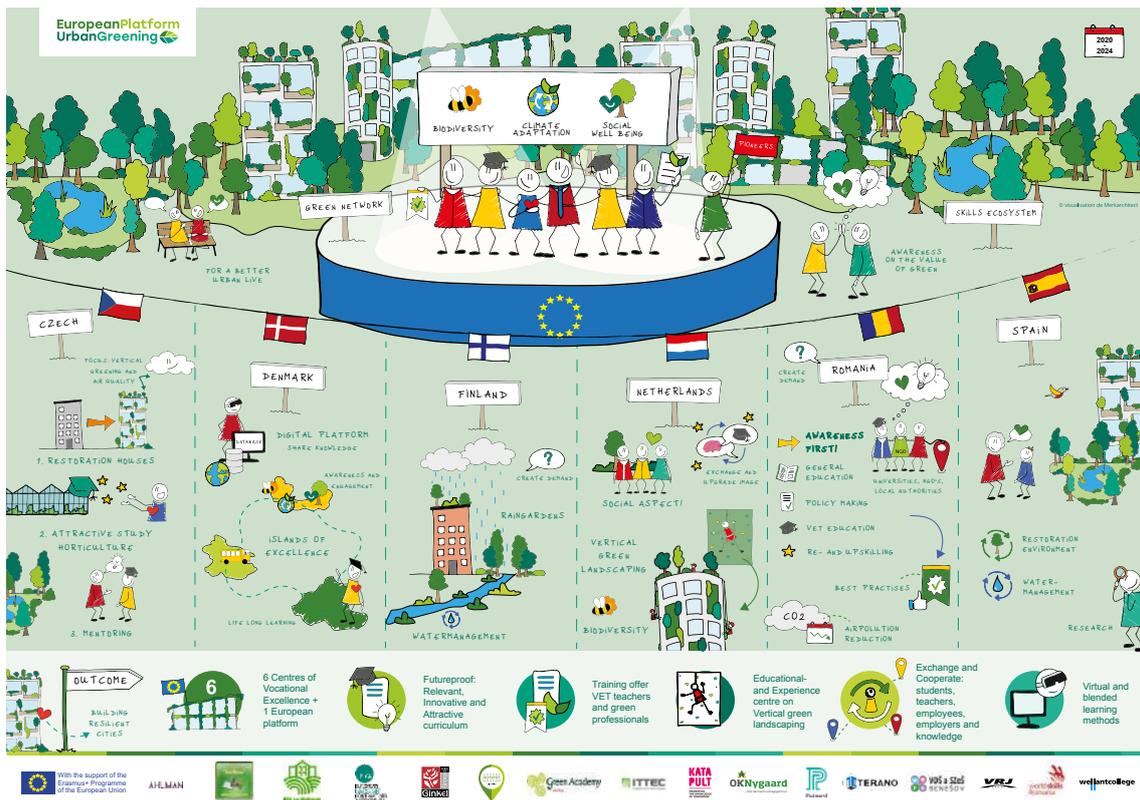
*- Jan Jeronimus, Project Leader,
European Platform for Urban Greening*





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

European Landscape Contractors Association

Accelerating a movement for change and innovation across the Green Sector.

Founded in 1963, the European Landscape Contractors Association (ELCA) is the world's largest professional organisation of landscape contractors. Promoting cooperation as well as the exchange of information and experience between member organisations, ELCA is increasing awareness around the wider Landscaping Industry in Europe and around the world.

As a primary organising partner for the European Platform for Urban Greening, ELCA aims to connect industry stakeholders with vocational education institutions and harness the momentum generated by their activities to accelerate a movement for change and innovation across the Green Sector.

In order to transform the Green Sector, effective exchange and accessible training at every level is fundamental. Whether between employees, company owners, or larger ELCA member associations, knowledge transfer and education around best practice is of paramount importance.

By promoting the initiatives of its members through events, including workshops in Brussels, ELCA is able to highlight the latest technologies and professional advancements in the Landscaping Industry and identify key issues that need to be brought to the attention of policy makers. Through their network, working groups have been established to tackle topics ranging from Green Infrastructure and Invasive Species, to Green Waste Regulation and Education & Training in the Green Sector.





Project Highlight

European Qualifications Framework Workshop

Bringing together Platform partners from both the education and industry sectors, ELCA hosted a three day workshop in Finland to discuss the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Through practical exercises and group work, participants learned about the EQF levels, professional behaviour, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria in order to reach a common understanding around how, and for whom, to design specialised training programmes in the field of Urban Greening.



The EQF is a translation tool developed by the EU to make national qualifications easier to understand and more comparable between countries. The Framework seeks to support the cross-border mobility of learners and workers and promote lifelong learning and professional development at every level, across Europe.

ELCA's workshop emphasised the importance of creating EQF standard training programmes and certificates that are interchangeable between project partners. By creating trust, transparency and recognition between the labour market and educational institutions, partners of the European Platform for Urban Greening are now better equipped to advance the development of curriculum and training across the continent.

“Through the European Platform for Urban Greening, ELCA is facilitating the unified development of training and exchange programmes that are interchangeable between educators and industry partners at every level.”

- European Landscape Contractors Association

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Their Top Three Priorities

Development of Education & Industry Networks

To keep pace with the rapid changes in the Landscaping Industry, it is critical to develop specialised training and life-long learning opportunities for industry professionals. Companies need to up-skill their workers in-line with market demands and educators need to provide the most up-to-date curriculum to support them. As such, it is a priority to create stronger communication channels between educators and industry and build a network of educational institutions that are working towards the same EQF standards.

Industry Feedback & Impact

To accelerate development of new curriculum and training in the Green Sector, direct feedback from the field is a priority. Understanding what kinds of specialised knowledge and skills are needed by industry right now, will support the creation of relevant curriculum in Urban Greening. Using the European Platform for Urban Greening to help streamline this feedback loop between industry and educators, will have the greatest immediate and long-term impact on the sector.

Dissemination of Information

In order to boost recognition around the value of the Green Sector across Europe and around the world, dissemination of information is of principal importance. By uniting stakeholders through the Platform and promoting their activities, expertise, skills, and innovations, greater awareness around the benefits of Urban Greening will be created. Only by sharing knowledge and information on a global scale can climate adaptation and mitigation strategies have the greatest impact and shift the political and policy landscape.



THE YEAR AHEAD

Initiatives for 2022

Using the strength of its platform, network and resources, ELCA is working hard to raise the profile of the Green Sector and champion the progress being made by the partners of the European Platform for Urban Greening. Throughout 2021, ELCA played a significant role in more than half a dozen major Green Industry events and will continue to promote the Platform and disseminate information in 2022.

Highlights of these events include:

GaLaBau

The leading International Trade Fair for Urban Greening held in Nuremberg, Germany.

Iberflora

The largest professional Gardening Fair in Spain held annually in Valencia.

Paysalia

The leading Landscaping Industry Trade Show in France.

SoGreen Symposium

The umbrella organisation and global stakeholder group that unites Green Industries.

BUGA Gartenschau

A leading Fair for the Outdoor Landscaping and Gardening sector, held biannually in cities across Germany.

Floriade Expo

An International Horticultural Exhibition held once every 10 years in the Netherlands. In April 2022, the exhibition will showcase and celebrate Green Living Solutions.

EU Green Week

Europe's largest annual Environmental Conference.

ELCA Presidium

An annual gathering of members and international associated members.

ELCA Trend Awards & Green Awards

Presented every two years to projects that meets the highest professional standards in the landscaping sector.

ELCA Committee of Firms

Provide professional excursions across the continent.



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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