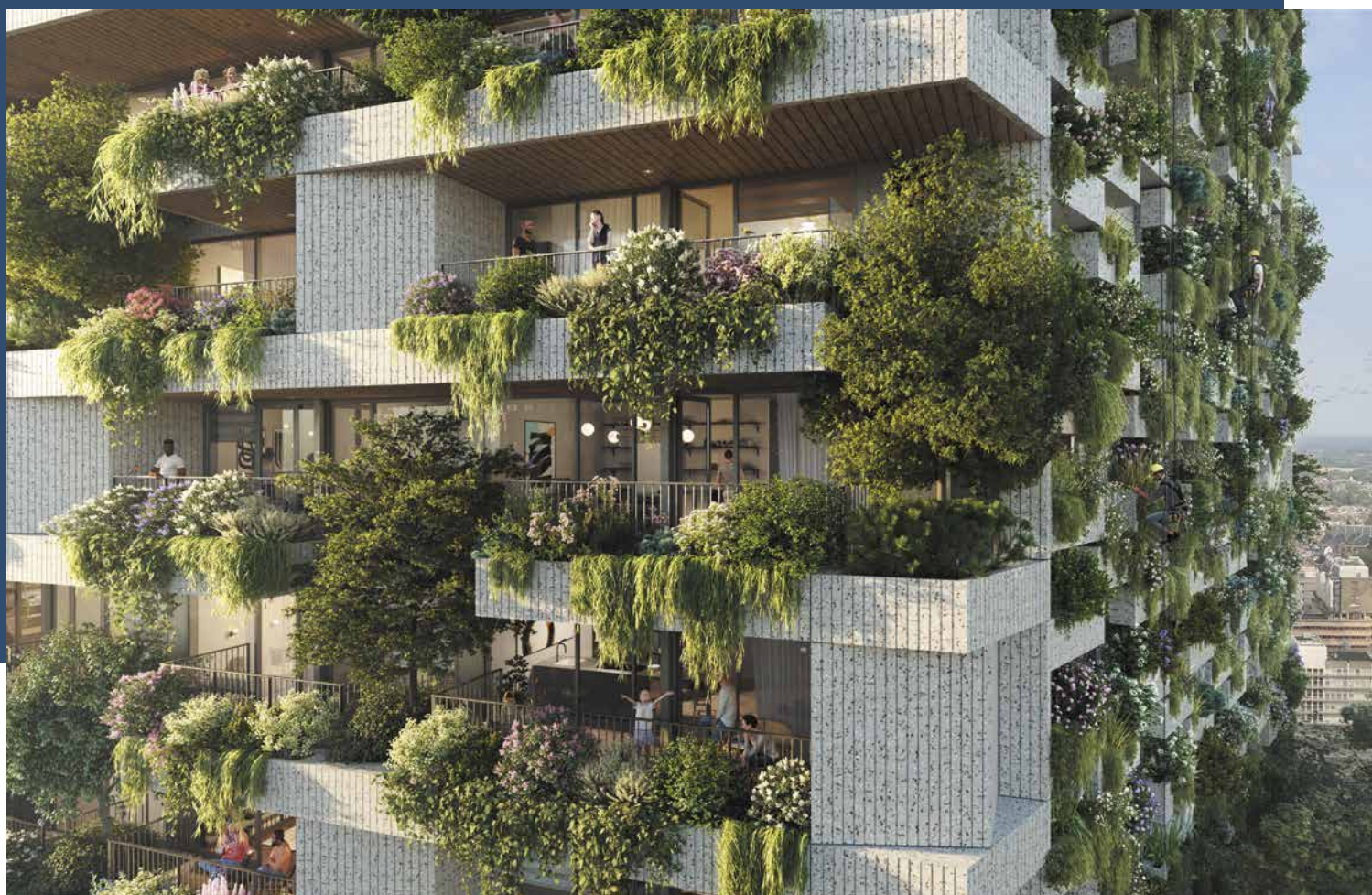


European Platform for Urban Greening

Case Studies from Year One



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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

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 units 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.



CASE STUDY

Czech Republic

Developing a Basic Skills Toolkit for education and training in Urban Greening.

Who are the partners?

**VOŠ a SZeŠ Benešov School of Agriculture
ITTEC, s.r.o.**

Celebrating 125 years since its founding, VOŠ a SZeŠ Benešov is an Agricultural College and Agricultural Secondary School offering a range of vocational studies. The Secondary School focusses on four main branches of study: agricultural enterprising, horticulture, veterinary studies and natural sciences and offers three apprentice programs in farming, horse breeding and horticulture. At the Agricultural College there are two branches, which include studies in agricultural enterprising and veterinary care.

In establishing the Czech Republic as a Centre of Vocational Excellence in the field of Urban Greening, VOŠ a SZeŠ Benešov has formed a partnership with green industry leader ITTEC.

Founded in 1995, ITTEC is a private company focused on irrigation systems and turf technologies, specialising in the eco-friendly management of sports fields, golf courses and municipal public parks. As a leader in the Czech Republic and Central Europe in finding solutions around the intelligent use of water and importing eco-friendly machinery and large-scale irrigation systems, they are helping to reduce noise and emissions in cities and municipalities around the country.



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Project Highlight

Green Playground

Following the destruction left by an F4 tornado that struck seven municipalities in the South Moravian Region in June 2021, Platform partners in the Czech Republic came together to reconstruct an elementary school playground for children.

In just under six weeks the collaboration resulted in the donation of expertise, products and labour from industry partner ITTEC, that greened the existing space and restored the environment. The impact of this project has been felt throughout the wider community and has improved the physical and mental well-being of local children in particular.



The tornado was the strongest ever documented in modern Czech history and was the deadliest European tornado since 2001. Urban Greening projects like this one can offer healing and wellness to communities most affected by climate disasters.

The Continental Climate

Covering the central and eastern parts of Europe, the Continental Climate is characterised by cold and long-lasting winters and predominantly warm, humid summers. Surrounded by extensive mountain ranges, the Czech Republic is a landlocked country that has mainly temperate conditions and four distinct seasons.

Features:

- USDA Hardiness Zone 6b – 8b
- Highlands and lowlands with a wide range of precipitation
- Rainwater harvesting
- Green rooftops



Their Top Three Priorities

Raise Awareness

To ensure the Czech Republic stays up to speed with the latest trends in Urban Greening, it is a priority to first raise awareness amongst the country's wider population about key green issues including social responsibility, sustainability, biodiversity and climate adaptation. One way to do this is to implement new projects that garner greater public interest in Urban Greening, such as green facades or rooftop gardens. At the same time, these projects can give industry professionals the opportunity to advance their skills and implement new industry best practice in specific areas such as water management, irrigation and rainwater harvesting.

New Curriculum & Life-Long Learning

Specialised curriculum needs to be created in order to promote knowledge, skills and expertise in Urban Greening. This curriculum must first address specific gaps in knowledge for Horticultural educators, providing them with flexible opportunities to re-skill, in turn, giving them the tools and knowledge needed to continue developing new courses and curriculum in the green sector, particularly in the areas of Ecology and Sustainable Development.

Partnerships & Knowledge Exchanges

The establishment of new partnerships in Urban Greening is a priority across the Czech Republic. Specifically, creating collaborative opportunities for practical training and up-skilling around green roofs and vertical gardening is a key area of focus. Partnerships with industry leaders and educational centres across Europe must aim to provide insights into aspects of green buildings such as energy savings, using heat from waste water, soil and substrates, and long-term management.

“Co-operation with Benešov school and all other partners of the European Platform gives us a great opportunity to help create new curriculum and improve public knowledge about the needs in Urban Greening.”

– Pavel Prucha, ITTEC, s.r.o.



THE YEAR AHEAD

Initiatives for 2022

Basic Skills Toolkit

Through consultation with other Platform partners a Basic Skills Toolkit, that serves as a best practice training guide, will be created for the Czech Republic. This will help train professionals across the sector by allowing them to identify where expertise is lacking and source the right partners from across Europe who can help them develop the skills required to implement new green initiatives.

Public Lectures & Workshops

Public lectures and engaging activities will be created to educate the general public about the value of Urban Greening and what it involves. This includes workshops in areas such as Biodiversity Gardening that explain the benefits of incorporating a diversity of 100% native plant species that support and attract local wildlife such birds and insects, which are key for a thriving ecosystem.

Study Abroad Trips

Opportunities for students to go and study with other vocational centres and Platform partners will be created throughout the year. The Netherlands has already been identified as a key Centre of Vocational Excellence that students and professionals will collaborate with to gain new expertise and experience.



Denmark

Using blended and micro-learning initiatives to educate the landscapers of tomorrow and up-skill today's.

Who are the partners?

Green Academy
OKNygaard

Based in the heart of Denmark, Green Academy, founded in 1889, is one of Europe's first vocational schools dedicated to the green sector. Offering a range of degrees and courses, Green Academy encourages life-long-learning and study abroad knowledge exchanges in all green areas including landscaping, gardening, floristry, forestry, farming, and animal care and nursery.



In partnership with Denmark's leading landscape design and maintenance company OKNygaard, that works with over 600 landscape gardeners and climate specialists, they are fast-tracking the country's Urban Greening initiatives and using the Platform's network to make advances the field.

Known for being a frontrunner in creating climate adaptation solutions, ranging from climate protection construction projects to creating new biodiverse green spaces in urban environments, OKNygaard's collaboration with Green Academy ensures that Denmark is in the vanguard of Urban Greening.

The Oceanic Climate

Influenced by the Atlantic Ocean, North Sea and Baltic Sea, Denmark's Oceanic climate region generally experiences mild, wet winters and cool humid summers. 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 – 9b
- Long growing period
- Heavy precipitation
- Rainwater collection





Project Highlight

Biodiversity Training Course

In the first year of working together, Green Academy and OKNygaard collaborated to develop a one-day training course on Biodiversity. The course aimed to share the perspectives and knowledge of landscape practitioners and provide them with expertise on how they can better approach biodiversity when it comes to the management and maintenance of green spaces.

With over a dozen management level employees from OKNygaard participating, the course presented the latest thinking around biodiversity, covering topics ranging from ecosystems that supply oxygen and clean air in urban environments to the pollination of plants and pest control.



Using the resources and expertise available through the Platform, a specialist in Biodiversity from Yuverta college in the Netherlands was invited to speak to the best practices in biodiversity management.

This course used a blended learning approach that incorporated classroom teaching with writing exercises that could help participants reflect on their learnings and offered a podcast to allow them to revisit the expertise. Based on the outcomes from the first year, this training course is further being development in order to reach a wider audience.

“By working together, we speed up the process of developing new courses within the field of Urban Greening. Together we are making the transformation faster.”

– Jakob Vest Artler, OKNygaard

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Their Top Three Priorities

Recruitment

Starting with primary school students, it is a priority across Denmark to develop stronger recruitment techniques in the field of Urban Greening. As part of the solution to climate change, Urban Greening must become an area of focus within education at every level, including being seen as an area for life-long learning that attracts new professionals to the sector. This will require stakeholders from across the industry to help demonstrate the variety of new career paths and highlight exciting aspects of Urban Greening that have a real impact on climate change.

Continuous Education

In order to meet the needs and demands of their clients and communities, across Denmark it is a priority to help professionals such as landscape architects, gardeners or civil servants up-skill and retrain quickly and flexibly as new information, techniques and innovations in Urban Greening emerge. To keep pace with the latest trends, the creation of specialised courses must be developed between education providers and industry that offers continuous education opportunities which are easily accessible to a wide range of learners.

"We are very proud to be the first vocational institution in Denmark to participate in a European-wide platform for Urban Greening. By collaborating with OKNygaard we are bridging the gap between education and industry and creating a meaningful exchange of knowledge and skills in the green sector."

– Karolina Sikala, Green Academy Aarhus

Virtual Learning & Exchanges

To harness the opportunities provided by the digital realm for knowledge exchange, regionally, nationally and internationally it is a priority to get new curriculum and courses online. The more Denmark can create virtual exchanges amongst other vocational schools, the more it can ensure its education in the field of Urban Greening is up to speed with the latest thinking in areas such as biodiversity, climate adaptation and well-being in the urban environment.



THE YEAR AHEAD

Initiatives for 2022

Youth Engagement Events & Internships

New collaborations with industry will be implemented to create events and internships that enhance early recruitment. This involves co-creating an elective course on Urban Greening within elementary schools that offers opportunities to gain practical experience and insights for students. Industry internships will aim to showcase some of the real-world applications for Urban Greening and highlight new career paths that are emerging in the sector.

Blended & Micro-learning Resources

To help professionals across industries and sectors up-skill and retrain in Urban Greening, flexible and customised learning opportunities will continue to be developed. For example, micro-learning resources could include courses delivered via podcasts that cover specific topics such as Biodiversity that can be listened to in short burst of time on a drive to work. Using blended learning methods that integrate technology and digital media into traditional instructor-led classroom activities, can help remove barriers to continuous-education and make professional development more accessible.

Virtual Courses & Exchanges

In the year ahead, key courses at Green Academy will start to be made available online for a wider audience of potential students. Invitations to participate in these courses or create exchanges will be sent to other vocational schools and key industry representatives both nationally and internationally.



CASE STUDY

Finland

Finding economically beneficial solutions that meet the needs of industry.

Who are the partners?

Ahlman School Foundation
VRJ Group

With over 100 years' experience, Ahlman is a private vocational college dedicated to meeting the needs of its community. Ahlman prides itself on upholding strong Finnish values and championing the development of its rural businesses, including promoting local produce. The college offers vocational education in specialised areas of the green sector including, agriculture, floristry, and nature and environmental based services.

In establishing Finland as a Centre of Vocational Excellence in the field of Urban Greening, Ahlman has formed a partnership with VRJ Group, Finland's leading construction enterprise offering building services related to land and water construction, renovation, landscaping, environmental building and municipal engineering,



Together this team is focused on addressing the educational needs of the rapidly changing green sector and finding innovative, immediate and economically beneficial solutions that keep pace with the demand for industry best practice when it comes to climate adaptation, biodiversity and health and well-being.

"We need to change the way we approach our work and co-create educational courses for the specialised skills and training our workforce needs to meet today's rapidly evolving climate adaptation demands."

- Henrik Bos, Managing Director of VRJ Group

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Project Highlight

Nature-Based Solution Green Structures

In collaboration with students, easily accessible Nature-Based Solution (NBS) Green Structures, that benefit local biodiversity and support the ecosystem, are being built on the grounds of the Ahlman School. These Green Structures are used as a teaching tools, are often the focus of short courses and can be used to disseminate information about Nature-Based Solutions. Ahlman's NBS Green Structures are examples of what a dense and compact city should have; structures such as these should be close to every building, home and workplace.

Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) are solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more diverse nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions.



The Nordic Climate

The climate of the Nordic region is generally characterised by humid, cold winters and mild, humid summers. Spanning an Arctic polar zone in the northern part of the country to a more temperate climate in the southern part, Finland has an intermediate climate. Known for its snow and freezing temperatures over the winter months, Finland is developing innovative strategies to adapt to its changing environment, including managing excess water coming from melting snow.

Features:

- USDA Hardiness Zone 3b – 8a
- Long winter dormancy
- Short growing season
- Water management



Their Top Three Priorities

Communication

It is a priority across Finland to create more opportunities for open communication and joined-up thinking when it comes to Urban Greening and implementing Nature-Based Solutions. It is crucial to share information not only around best practices but also lessons learned, for example, between the construction sector and green industry professionals. By creating open channels for communication and opportunities to share practical experiences, initiatives in Urban Greening can advance at a more rapid pace. Faster dissemination of knowledge and information across Europe and internationally will help the sector evolve and will go a long way in communicating the economic benefits of Urban Greening solutions to private investors and government bodies alike.

Specialised Short Courses

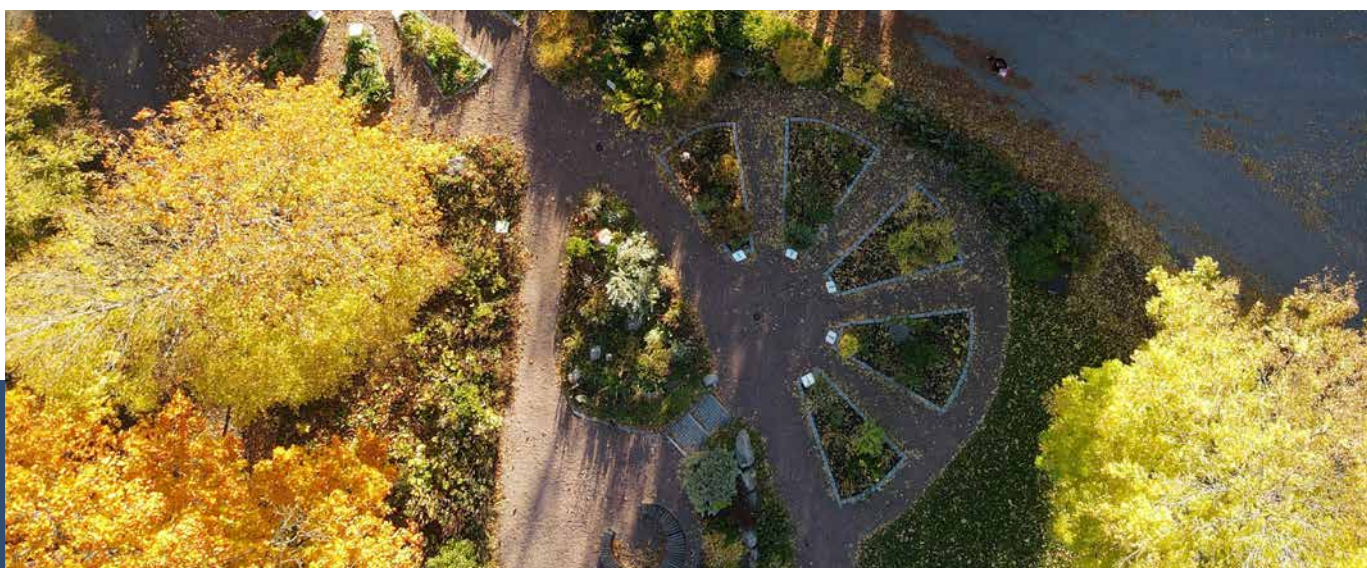
To meet the current needs of industry in Finland, it is a priority for vocational educators to co-create new specialised short courses that keep professionals up-to-speed with the latest training in areas such as soil biodiversity and water management. Whether targeted to the general public, students, educators or industry professionals courses must address the skills and knowledge that are needed right now in order to have the greatest impact.

Fast & Flexible Training

With the rapid advances in the Green Sector, it is a priority to make training both fast and flexible. Bearing in mind the various educational levels and professional development stages of those undertaking training, teaching methodologies must be targeted and approachable.

“Climate change is changing everything, and new skills are needed in the Green Sector so that we can transform urban green spaces towards more sustainable and diverse environments. The Green Sector needs a renaissance to restore its value. We are no longer planting plants; we should be creating urban ecosystems.”

– Kaisa Koskelin, Project Manager, Ahlman School Foundation



THE YEAR AHEAD

Initiatives for 2022

Bio-gardening Course

A Bio-gardening Course has been piloted in 2021 with students and industry professionals alike. This course offers training and education that responds to the quickly evolving needs of industry and covers local issues in biodiversity management, urban ecology and new approaches across the Urban Greening sector in Europe. Students will learn to identify habitat types and understand the effects of plant stratification, while also learning to take account of soil quality and water management, ensuring ecological sustainability and nutrient cycles.

Ambassador Program

Biodiversity Ambassadors will be identified to initiate key activities that push the Urban Greening and Biodiversity agenda forward. For example, these Ambassadors will work with schools to provide educational talks and encourage the creation of 'Biodiversity Clubs' that help students learn about Nature-Based Solutions.

Ambassadors will coordinate informative site visits that showcase the latest Urban Greening projects and work together to lobby government to create legislative changes that support investment and best practice.

Highlight Events

Key to raising awareness around the benefits of Urban Greening will be the creation of a national Urban Greening Day that will run alongside the annual EU Green Week. Events that highlight the latest trends and industry innovations such as rain gardens, decaying wood gardens and vegetated roofs will be incorporated and presented at Ahlman campus garden.



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.

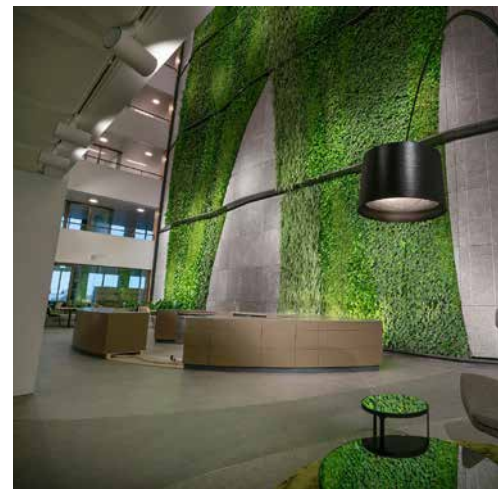




Project Highlight

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’

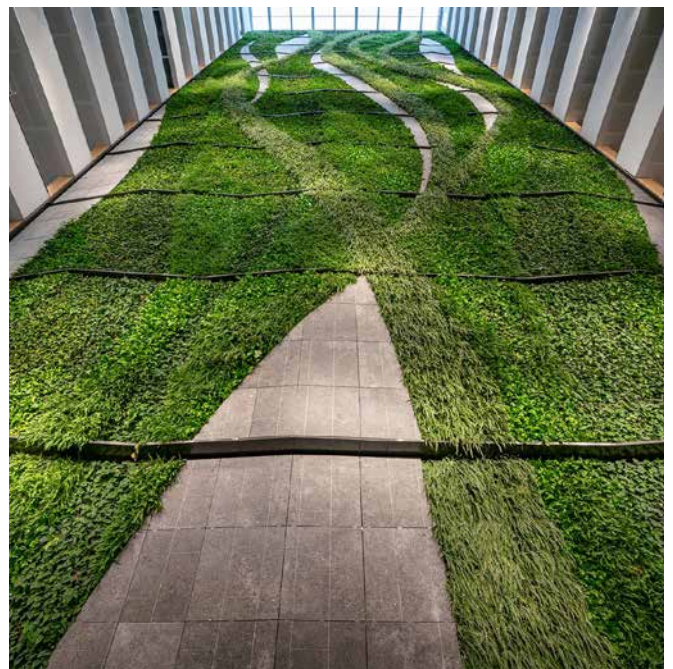
New events such as workshops and site visits that emphasise ‘The Value of Green’ will be created throughout the year. These initiatives will showcase the social and economic benefits of green projects and the impact that they have. For example, incorporating a living wall into a meeting room can not 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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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



Their Top Three Priorities

Develop a Talent Pipeline

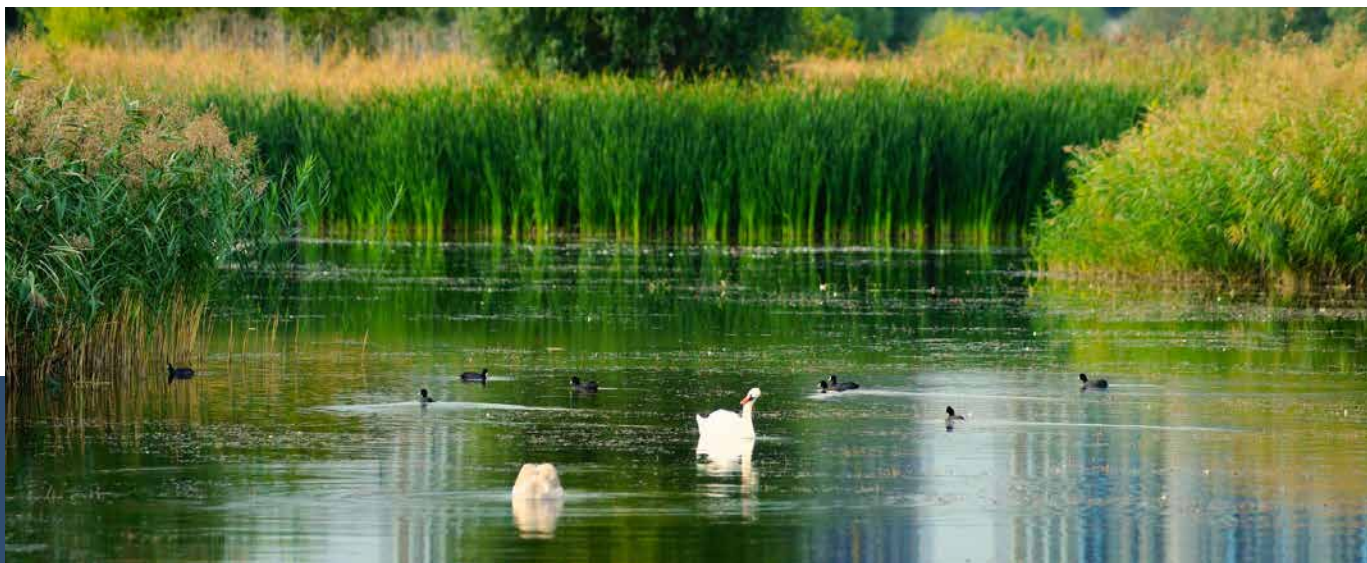
To begin to develop a strong talent pipeline of green industry professionals, it is a priority to first improve a basic understanding around social responsibility, climate action and biodiversity amongst youths in Romania. Across the younger population, it has been identified that there is a disconnect 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



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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