

Have you ever met a biodiversity officer? Have you ever tried the beehive therapy? Do you know how and where to use biodiverse urban green space management?

Learn with us!

The learning journey of the  
“BiodiverCity”  
URBACT Action Planning Network  
between July-September 2024

Quarterly Network Report 3  
Ferenc Albert Szigeti



Be inspired with us!





## Meet Sinead Mc Donnell, one of Ireland's Local Authority Biodiversity Officers!



**Biodiversity loss** is the single planetary boundary where current extinction rates put the Earth system furthest outside the safe operating space. According to the World Bank, over half of the global GDP is directly dependent on nature. As a new policy, **Biodiversity Officers** are employed by local authorities in some countries. In Ireland for instance, in collaboration with the Heritage Council and supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Local Authority Biodiversity Officers started the work at the beginning of 2024. They work at the city and county levels, collecting data on biodiversity, carrying out conservation projects, developing policies, providing advice and information and raising awareness. The BiodiverCity partnership met Ireland's one of the newly appointed Biodiversity Officers in Limerick, Ms Sinead Mc Donnell.

Get to know how Biodiversity Officers work in Ireland, read the full [case study](#)!



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Hundreds of European cities are experimenting with **biodiverse grassland management** and/or **pollinator-friendly initiatives**. Engaging residents is an - evergreen – challenge in these sensitive, often culturally-driven questions. For them, operating a **beehive therapy** house in a controlled way can be an interesting and rather attractive engagement tool, getting people closer to nature.

## Have you ever tried beehive therapy?

A few of BiodiverCity partners met in **Poljčane, Slovenia** on **25-26 September 2024**, to get to know more about this great approach highly relevant for example in Siena or Veszprém since they have been experimenting with urban beekeeping already.

Get to know how beehive therapy works, and what the pros and cons of using it in the city are: read the [full article!](#)



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When we talk about nature-based solutions in cities, we often tend to mention “new places” such as green rooftops, green walls, rain gardens and ponds. But “restoring” natural or modified habitats is also a nature-based solution. **Public parks** are the window to nature for many people, and due to climate change, it is time to view urban parks differently as well since their management has to adapt to the changes. In addition, building on the significant awareness-raising and innovation potential of cities, public parks are great places to nurture citizens and communities to understand, valorise and measure biodiversity and related ecosystem services and foster pro-environmental behaviours.



## How Public Park 2.0 should look like?

### A case study about Biodiverse Urban Green Space Management

Read the full [case study](#), highlighting so many interesting practices from Budapest and beyond!



Does your city have a tree and park cadastre highlighting ecosystem services of trees? Do you have Miyawaki forest in public areas? Do you know what is the difference between a bee pasture and an (urban) wildflower meadow? Do you use pesticides in public green areas? Do you have community composting in public green areas? Does your city use organic waste locally? Have you heard about hedgehog hotels? Do you have orchards in parks? And what about shrubs? Are branches collected to form a natural hedge?



Within the **3rd Core Network Meeting**, the BiodiverCity partnership tested **Limerick's first Natural Play Area**, which opened in 2022 at the Castletroy Urban Greenway. The easy-to-adapt tool inspired all network partners. Limerick City and County Council created the Natural Play Area for an urban greenway incorporating **nature-based solutions** (e.g. rain gardens, wildflower meadows) and **recycled felled trees**.

The mini hills, created by machines, are connected by beams and other chunks of the enormous, dried-out trees once standing here. The beams and tree chunks are excellent tools for balancing. The dead trunks provide space for spectacular sculptures. Unused parts of the field host wildflower meadows. It is not a formal playground, but a great place to get some of our connection to nature back, the connection which has been dramatically lost over the last centuries. Limerick's initiative is a great experiment and very much welcomed by visiting partner cities.



Read the full [case study!](#)



**Get to know Ireland's first Natural Play Area!**



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During the **first Peer Review Meeting on 25-26 September 2024 in Poljčane**, a few of BiodiverCity partners met professor **Ana Vovk**, founder and owner of the **Dole Self-Reliance Training Ground**, a permaculture garden with educational facilities in Poljčane to learn about **urban permaculture**.

According to its three pillars, permaculture highlights the **importance of soil diversity, puts humans' well-being in the centre and boosts community action**.

There is a misconception that permaculture is only for people who live in the countryside. Contrary, some of the most effective and innovative permaculture gardens can be found in cities! Urban permaculture is thus a valid expression, and the same permaculture principles apply in urban environments too, even in the smallest plots and backyard gardens. Since permaculture is a design philosophy, urban permaculture is also very much **linked to sustainable urban development and climate resilience**.

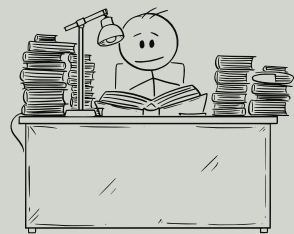
**Urban permaculture:  
helping residents reconnect to nature!**

However, some of the features of permaculture are more important in cities than in rural areas, since in urban areas perhaps not food production is the priority. However, community resilience and collaboration can be more in the spotlight in the dense urban fabric, because permaculture is about growing thriving communities who work together for the benefit of the planet and each other.





**Urban permaculture:  
helping residents reconnect to nature!**



Read the full [case study](#) to learn about urban permaculture which seemed inspirational even for Guimarães, which became the European Green Capital 2026!



## Network activities: bilateral meetings linked to local progress

**Integrated Action Plans (IAP)** are the main tools in partner cities' hands to make their cities more liveable. The IAP is not a report about the URBACT experience, but a **community-sourced answer to a specific urban challenge**. Partners are working on their IAPs, by the end of the year they must set a clear vision with specific objectives, intervention areas and actions to solve those challenges. The **basic structure** of the IAPs will be presented in **Guimarães in late October**, while during a series of bilateral sessions in **September 2024**, **local activities**, including the also planned **Testing Actions** were discussed.

# Vision

A climate-resilient city where people actively contribute to environmental sustainability and biodiversity, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility for creating a thriving, green urban environment.



## Education

Increase knowledge and awareness about climate and biodiversity among residents, visitors, organisations and businesses.



## Participation

Increase local community involvement in nature restoration and greening efforts.



## Health & recreation

Improve quality of living environment by preventing water nuisance, retaining water, decreasing impacts of drought and heat, increase biodiversity and experience. We aim to create green and water structures that offer space for experience, meeting, playing, recreation and exercise and sports.



# Network activities: bilateral meetings linked to local progress

<b>The Challenge</b>	<b>What if...</b>	<b>We want to test if...</b>
Enhancing the positive role of pollinators in urban space. Raise the citizens awareness focusing on urban biodiversity.	What if citizens were aware of the benefits of NBS ?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We can create a shared protocol for managing greenery with a view on protecting pollinators (selective mowing,etc);</li> <li>2. We can develop a shared community awareness focused on urban greenery as a source of well being, that considers urban biodiversity (pollinators above all) as a value.</li> </ol>
<b>Our IDEA</b>		<b>Measurement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping urban green valleys to select suitable areas for testing actions and analyse already existing activities and NBSs. Connect them with a “green corridor” in Siena’s urban area and consolidate the stakeholder network.</li> <li>• Carry out a communication campaign to increase the citizen awareness through informative/educational graphic material and events and on-site activities.</li> <li>• Draft a protocol in agreement with the administration.</li> </ul> <p>A shared community awareness on biodiversity issues would allow for more widely accepted policy and land management choices, directed towards the enhancement of green corridors within urban spaces, as a vehicle for community well being.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative preliminary analysis (interview) and questionnaire;</li> <li>• citizens feedback (on line surveys and interview) ex ante and ex post;</li> <li>• n° of participants involved in proposed activities;</li> <li>• n° of stakeholders involved in working groups.</li> </ul>

<b>When</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Target group</b>
Actions will be carried out for more than a year, and they will conclude in May 2025 (with Biodiversity Festival).	The ULG coordinator will manage the working group made up of ULG members who have given their availability to work on the testing actions. (there is a small group with a specific responsibility on these actions)	The target is the community, from kids to elderly. A sub-target is also the municipality's environment and maintenance staff.
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Documentation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analysis of existing actions and actors involved</li> <li>• participation of schools</li> <li>• definition of a sub-group with specific competencies to follow these issues</li> <li>• drafting a protocol to be shared with the administration</li> <li>• creation of informative signage</li> <li>• implementation of a communication campaign (on line and off line) on the theme of urban biodiversity</li> </ul>		<p>Municipality communication channels, stakeholder networks (ULGs) and project fb and ig pages.</p> <p>Photo/video documentation during events (provided by the municipality or ULG).</p>



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Testing Action Canvas from Siena