

Celebrating urban biodiversity
that provides great benefits for cities and citizens

The learning journey of the
“BiodiverCity”
URBACT Action Planning Network
between April and June 2025

Quarterly Network Report 6
Ferenc Albert Szigeti



GARDENFUTURA
URBAN GARDENS OF PARADISE



**THE SPONGE CITY
IN PURSUIT:
A NEW HARMONY
BETWEEN NATURE AND CITY**

**STATIONS
OF THE WALK**

**BAKÁTS SQUARE
BAKÁTS STREET
ARANY JÁNOS STREET**

BUDAPEST TREE FESTIVAL

23 MAY 2025 17:00-19:00



The 1st Budapest Tree Festival

Spring was loud in BiodiverCity partner cities as they organised **BiodiverCity Festivals** celebrating urban biodiversity. Our ad-hoc expert, **Rita Szerencsés**, facilitated partner cities to activate residents during those festivals and raise awareness about the magnificent ecosystem services that green areas provide for us.



Tree plantations, guided tours, promotion of monumental trees, forest bathing, craft workshops, art exhibitions, cultural programmes and interactive activities promoting biodiversity were organised for all generations in 10 corners of Europe. Urban green areas are indeed great assets to engage residents and explain the **benefits of nature** (the so-called **ecosystem services**). However, while thousands of residents actively participate in tree plantations, which is great, fewer people are aware that most of these ecosystem services are provided by mature trees. And in many parts of Europe, they face serious challenges like never-before-seen droughts, increased pollution (traffic, dogs, humans) and neglect by public utility companies when earthworks are needed.



Read the summary of the festivals
and the report on the Veszprém and Budapest case!



The 1st Budapest Tree Festival

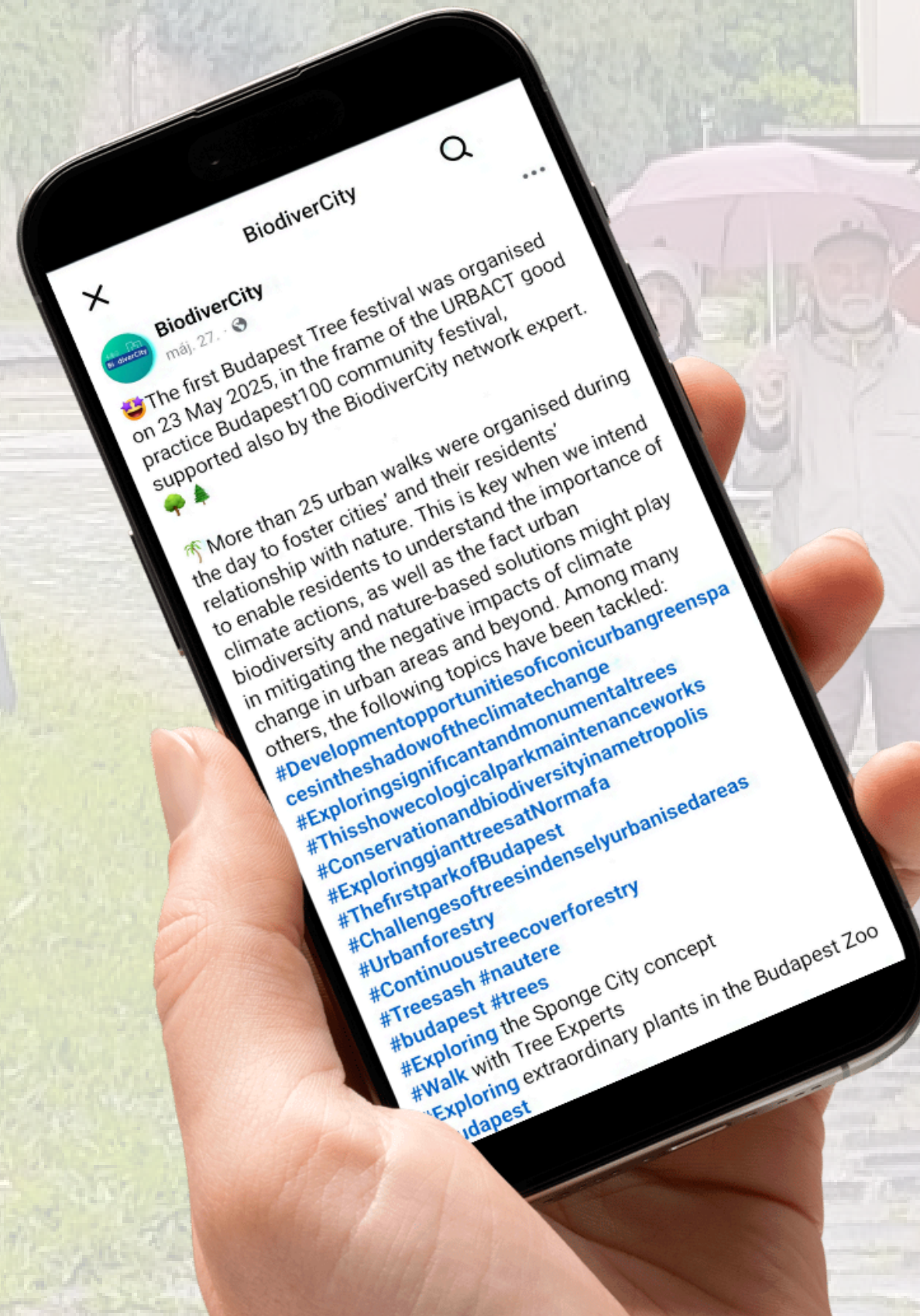
The UK-based Urban Tree Festival was my main source of inspiration to launch those festivals. It is an annual community celebration of trees, including their benefits, beauty, majesty, and magic, in cities, towns and all urban environments. Events, celebrations, walks, talks and storytelling are held across London and the UK, bringing all communities together to educate, inspire and share their enjoyment of trees. The festival is organised by a **Community Interest Company** which is run by a group of passionate volunteers and staff, working with event organisers who include artists, meditators, ecologists, urban planners and everyone who is inspired to love trees!

An existing URBACT Good Practice, the Budapest100 was the other. This architectural-cultural festival is a celebration of communities and the city, a weekend that brings city dwellers and neighbours closer together and draws attention to the built values around us. It was my idea, inspired by the BiodiverCity project, to (voluntarily) organise the **1st Budapest Tree Festival on 23 May 2025**. It was a living example of the above concepts presented to the BiodiverCity partnership, aimed at potential adaptation as a simple yet remarkable way to promote biodiversity.






The 1st Budapest Tree Festival



The first Budapest Tree Festival debuted as part of the Friday walking day that has been organised for years within the framework of **Budapest100**. On the two dozen urban walks covering much of the city, the country's leading experts explained why urban trees deserve to be celebrated — and, of course, protected. We take for granted what is sadly no longer guaranteed, even though urban green spaces are among our best tools for mitigating the impacts of global climate change. It is simply good to exist under and among the trees, as countless poets have sung. This too will be part of the conversation, but the main goal of the walks is to **rethink our relationship with trees** — something climate change urges us to do across all areas of life.



The case of the “other” (the unknown, green) Siena



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The BiodiverCity URBACT network met in Siena on 17-19 June 2025, within the 6th Core Network Meeting. Originally, the meeting was planned around “**university partnerships**” as universities and research centres can be valuable resources for cities working on **urban biodiversity** and **nature-based solutions**. Yes, it is a core topic to explore in Siena, which works successfully not only with universities but also with local NGOs. However, this amazing city offers many more important themes to explore.

Scientists are perhaps the best positioned to raise awareness of the importance of **soil diversity** and the **degradation of the quality** as well as the **quantity of soil**. This leads to an evergreen issue of the BiodiverCity partner cities: community engagement, since Siena’s systematic support for community gardens (having 5 within the city and 80 in the Province of Siena) is a clear strength in this field. In addition, it was also showcased how to use art to raise awareness of biodiversity.

The case of the “other” (the unknown, green) Siena

Regarding engagement, it is also worth mentioning the world-famous fresco in the iconic building of **Piazza del Campo**, in the **Palazzo Pubblico**: **The Allegory of Good Government** was painted by Lorenzetti in **1338** and it draws attention to the interactions between **climate, biodiversity, land use, social sciences and economic models**, describing for example how urban and rural areas should live together in harmony. Renaissance Ecology provides a great opportunity to talk about how a municipality can support **pro-environmental behaviours**. Regarding this, we will also learn about the details of how the Province of Siena has become the **first ISO (14064-1) certified carbon-neutral province in Europe**.



The case of the “other” (the unknown, green) Siena

Siena is well-known for its built heritage, but the urban area within the medieval walls consists of large green areas too (40%). This extraordinary natural asset within the world-famous city walls is great for creating **green corridors** - another important topic of our meeting. Green corridors are planned or unplanned linear landscape elements that allow multiple ecological, social, cultural and other uses compatible with sustainable land use. The objective of a green corridor is always to link important natural areas in a city using a strip or corridor characterised by rich vegetation.

Within this framework, recreational areas, cultural spaces, sports facilities and urban gardens can be developed. The benefits of green corridors are various, of course: increased biodiversity, promotion of non-polluting mobility, reduced air/noise pollution, helping prevent heat islands, and better water retention. They also generate social, cultural and economic benefits. In Siena, we will seek answers related to how to create a good green corridor.



Read the full Siena case study
entitled “*Creating urban wildlife and
green corridors for the benefit of
nature and people*”!



Finalisation of the Integrated Action Plans

- Have a clear intervention logic in place (resources, actions, outputs, results)
- Design your indicators and a simple monitoring framework
- Monitor the implementation

Politicians or the public need to see the results, not the details

You need a functioning monitoring system for that...



During the **Mid-Term Review** process, partners identified some, mainly methodological fields, that they would like to learn more about. A **series of online workshops** has been organised to help partners find solutions to their questions.

Within the current period, on **14 May 2025**, the session organised was dedicated to the theme of **“Aligning specific objectives and results indicators”**, which seems an important challenge for partner cities, parallel to how to finance the IAP.

Welcome to the city's first Biodiversity Office!

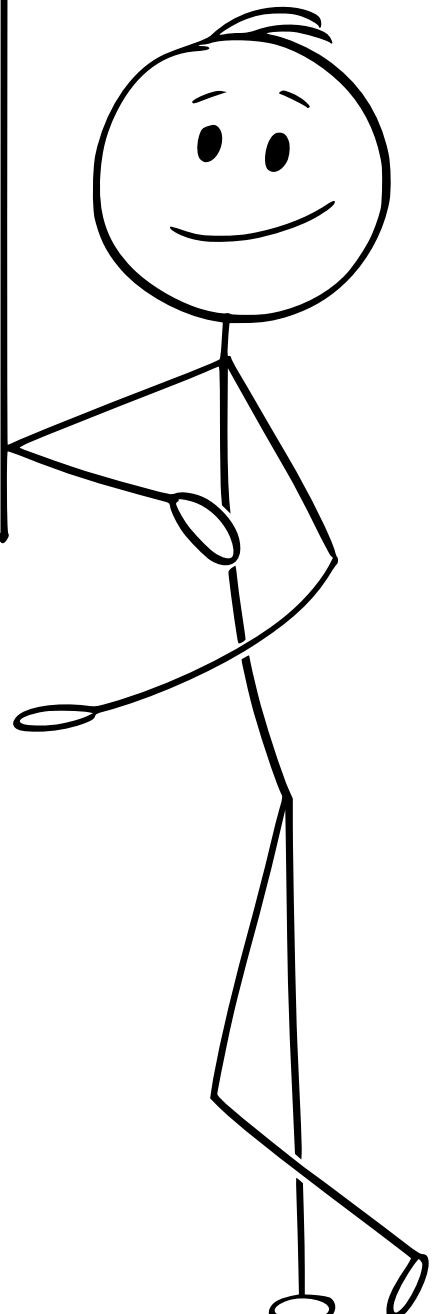
On **28 May 2025**, partners put together the main keywords related to the **Network Result Product**, the final outcome of the project. This will be a **guidebook** on how to support urban biodiversity, inspired by the **Nordic Guidance for Nature-based Solutions**.



The Network Result Product will be published on 8 October 2025, during the BiodiverCity final event.

Based on the first online ideation workshop, the below main categories will be explained in the guidebook through concrete examples (case studies) from the partnership and beyond:

- Urban Trees and Forests
- Wildflower Meadows
- Nature inclusive buildings
- Sustainable Urban Drainage systems and other blue infrastructure
- Green Corridors
- Soil
- Biodiversity
- Inclusive Urban Parks
- Private Gardens
- Community Gardens
- Protected Areas
- the Pollinator Friendly City concept
- Bird and Bat-friendly City concept
- Green Schoolyards
- Awareness-raising and communication
- Urban Biodiversity Strategies
- partners' Integrated Action Plans



Promoting BiodiverCity on the programme level

