BiodiverCity

City of Cieza, Spain, 35.227 inhabitants

Challenge

Cieza's green infrastructure faces structural, cultural and organisational challenges that limit its ability to generate ecosystem services. URBACT BiodiverCity has served to plan and implement integrated responses, based on institutional cooperation, technical training and the active involvement of citizens.

Local heroes

The action relied on collaboration between the municipality, schools, youth & sports associations, companies and citizenship, who have contributed valuable knowledge about the use and perception of green spaces in Cieza.



Lessons learnt

- Urban interventions and planning are only effective when all parties involved are actively engaged in the design.
- Participants are enthusiastic about engaging in co- creation when they know the outcomes will directly benefit them. However, it's more challenging to engage people when the strategy involves long-term goals.
- Convincing the population of the importance of renaturation requires long-term work, demonstrating the benefits over time, and adapting solutions to the demands of the community.

Solution

"Transforming Cieza with easy & quick green solutions"

In 2025, the local action group of URBACT BiodiverCity in Cieza contributed to the codesign of the integrated action plan "Community-based approaches to foster urban biodiversity" and the selection of a testing action. As a result of their efforts, in January 2026, the renaturalization of a central yet narrow street will begin. This pilot project aims to demonstrate a low-cost, quick, and simple intervention that will have a significant positive impact on both citizens and local biodiversity. It will utilize private balconies, small spaces, and mobile green infrastructure, providing a solution that can be easily replicated in other streets within Cieza and beyond.



AI-generated image showing how this street in Cieza will look after the action.

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AYUNTAMIENTO DE Cieza

BiodiverCity

Municipality of Dunaújváros, Hungary
41 193 inhabitants

Challenge

When Dunaújváros joined URBACT BiodiverCity, it faced two key challenges: fragmented green spaces that weaken ecological connectivity and urban biodiversity, and limited everyday environmental awareness with unsystematic organic waste management. These issues are further intensified by the city's industrial legacy and climate extremes.

Local heroes

This would not have happened without the commitment of the Dunaújváros municipality URBACT Local Group and partners in the URBACT BiodiverCity network, the leaders and educators of local kindergartens, and the parents, children who joined the compost challenge. Local green-space managers, community volunteers were also essential to deliver the testing actions and keep residents engaged.





Lessons learnt

- **Start with small, highly visible testing actions (native planting, insect hotels, bird/bat boxes) and explain the benefits in plain language.**
- **Use schools and kindergartens to reach families, gamified compost challenges work well.**
- **Make participation easy with clear routines, basic tools, and assigned responsibility for collection and maintenance.**
- **Link composting and green-waste practices to visible improvements in local green spaces**

Solution

Composting with kindergartens

In response, Dunaújváros began turning biodiversity into a shared community story through practical testing actions. The city trialled nature-based solutions that residents can see and take part in: expanding unmown zones, planting native species, installing insect hotels plus bird and bat boxes, and launching a deadwood programme to enrich habitats and support pollinators. In parallel, it put families at the centre of behaviour change via a kindergarten composting "competition": children bring organic waste from home using small buckets, earn stickers for regular participation, and help transform waste into compost for local garden beds. To widen engagement city-wide, Dunaújváros also strengthened its long-running "Flowery Dunaújváros" competition by adding a dedicated "Biological Diversity" special prize.



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DUNAÚJVÁROS
Megyei Jogú Város

BiodiverCity

Guimarães, Portugal, 156,830 inhabitants

Challenge

Despite strong investment in green spaces (+95 ha since 2013) and rising biodiversity indicators, Guimarães still faces fragmented habitats: with inner city having only 12% of green areas functionally connected and climate pressures continue to threaten urban ecosystems.

Local heroes

Local heroes are citizens, volunteers, schools, NGOs, municipal teams and researchers working together through the URBACT Local Group. By implementing actions, monitoring biodiversity and caring for micro-habitats, they actively support ecological connectivity in everyday spaces.



Solution

"Connecting Nature, People and Territory"

Ecological connectivity is being explored through small, concrete experiments developed with the community. Within the Community Gardens area, actions focused on creating urban micro-habitats, including a wildlife pond and habitat improvements, testing how small interventions can support species and ecosystem services. These actions were accompanied by biodiversity monitoring and citizen involvement, allowing residents and volunteers to observe changes and learn together. These actions show how everyday spaces can host life and become stepping stones for biodiversity. This hands-on approach helped build local capacity and place communities at the centre of reconnecting nature within the urban fabric.



Lessons learnt

- **Improving ecological connectivity requires combining technical actions with community engagement.**
- **Small-scale interventions, such as micro-habitats, can deliver visible results when supported by monitoring and shared responsibility.**
- **Aligning actions with existing strategies and involving local actors from the start strengthens long-term implementation.**

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Laboratório da Paisagem

BiodiverCity

City of Limerick, Ireland, 102,287 inhabitants

Challenge

Ireland's fourth National Biodiversity Plan highlights serious nature loss: around 30% of EU-protected species are in unfavourable status, over half of native plant species have declined, more than half of bee species have fallen sharply since 1980 (with about 30% threatened with extinction), and 26% of bird species are of high conservation concern.

Local heroes

Over the lifetime of the project several meetings were held with the members of the Limerick URBACT Local Group. BiodiverCity in the working practices of Limerick could not have been delivered without this core group of key stakeholders, ranging from local authority departments, universities, residents' associations, local hospitals and civic groups.



Lessons learnt

- Simple visual aids are a key learning tool for effective communication, not everyone has the same level of knowledge, start small.
- Crucial to have a shared vision of what the current situation is and where the city wants to get to amongst the ULG members.
- Link actions back to existing policies , The BiodiverCity IAP is closely linked to the Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 - 2030

Solution

Wildflower ID Swatch

Our rationale for this testing action was to create something unique to Limerick to assist LCCC staff and the public identify and record 25 species of native wildflower. The ID swatch is based on 25 species of wildflower found in Corbally Meadow, one of the most botanical species rich sites in the city. It is hoped the local aspect will help raise/educate public awareness around the value of native local wildflower seed as opposed to buying in non-local flowers that would not be as beneficial to local species in their larval and adult lifecycle as a source of food and habitat. The Process involved procuring a local botanist to help determine the 25 species to be included in the swatch and to provide the images and detailed text for the life cycle and interesting species facts for each flower. Our Objectives – that the swatch will be used by local people to start identifying and recording data.



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Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City & County Council

BiodiverCity

Municipality of Poljčane, Slovenia
4.402 inhabitants

Challenge

When joining the URBACT BiodiverCity network, Poljčane faced biodiversity loss caused by intensive agriculture, extensive asphalted urban areas and fragmented green spaces. Despite 60% Natura 2000 coverage, urban pollinator habitats were limited and poorly connected.

Local heroes

The local heroes behind this action are municipal staff, local beekeepers, teachers, environmental experts and engaged citizens. Beekeeping associations provide expertise, schools involve children as future ambassadors of biodiversity, while NGOs and researchers support education and monitoring. Together, they ensure long-term ownership, implementation and care of bee-friendly urban spaces.

Lessons learnt

Start with small, visible pilot actions and build trust through participation. Involve local experts early, especially beekeepers and schools. Adapt maintenance practices before investing heavily. Clear coordination and simple communication help turn biodiversity goals into shared community responsibility.

Solution
"Enhancing Environments for Bees"

To address the decline of pollinators, Poljčane launched a local action focused on transforming underused urban green spaces into bee-friendly habitats. The action combines nature-based solutions such as native flower strips, pollinator corridors, bee hotels and adapted mowing regimes with strong community involvement and education. Public parks, school areas and municipal land are gradually enriched with pesticide-free vegetation that provides food and nesting opportunities for bees throughout the year. The action also strengthens cooperation with local beekeepers and schools, raising awareness among residents. The expected impact includes improved habitat connectivity, increased pollinator presence, enhanced biodiversity and more attractive, climate-resilient public spaces.



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OBČINA POLJČANE

BiodiverCity

City of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 348,404 inhabitants

Challenge

Fragmented green spaces and rapid urban growth that is accelerating the loss of urban biodiversity in Sarajevo, demanding urgent nature-based solutions rooted in local action.

40% decline in native bee populations since 2010.

62% of green spaces are fragmented and ecologically disconnected.

Local heroes

Local schools & teachers – enable daily use of green spaces as living classrooms and ensure long-term care and learning impact.

University experts & students – provide scientific knowledge, monitoring, and hands-on engagement, turning sites into living laboratories.

Local community & youth – ownership, participation, and continuity beyond the project lifecycle.



Solution

Giving nature a place in the city

Sarajevo introduced targeted nature-based solutions by transforming underused urban spaces into biodiversity-rich micro-habitats. Insect hotels and Peace Circles were implemented as low-cost, replicable interventions supporting pollinators, environmental education, and community engagement. The solutions combined scientific guidance, citizen participation, and symbolic green spaces to strengthen both ecological resilience and social cohesion.

3 insect hotels installed at schools and the University campus to support pollinators and serve as educational tools.

2 Peace Circles created as biodiversity-rich green spaces combining ecological restoration and social cohesion. Targeted impact by 2027: up to 30% increase in pollinator sightings and long-term community stewardship of green spaces.



Lessons learnt

Our experience shows that starting with small, well-chosen places makes a real difference. Work closely with schools, universities, and local communities, link biodiversity actions with learning and everyday use of space, and allow pilot actions to grow gradually into long-term, locally owned solutions.

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Služba za održivi razvoj
Grad Sarajevo

BiodiverCity

‘s-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands
162.272 inhabitants

Challenge

The biggest challenge is to realize biodiversity and climate adaptation together with the community: from residents to schools and organziations, everyone must become co-owners of the green transition.

Local heroes

The action relied on collaboration between the municipality, nature organizations, academia, the private sector and, volunteers. They played a central role in identifying the key challenges and co-developing solutions.



Lessons learnt

- **Citizen science is a powerful entry point for engagement**
- **Collaboration with (nature) organizations and citizen ambassadors strengthens reach and quality**
- **Interactive and practical elements promote learning experience and engagement.**
- **Long-term involvement requires repetition and structure.**

Solution

“Biodiversity Week”

From May 18-24 2025, a Biodiversity Week was launched as a community-focused pilot to strengthen citizens’ connection with local nature. Through a citywide BioBlitz, residents recorded 1,166 species, contributing 6,493 observations by 308 participants, demonstrating strong public engagement. Guided walks, and hands-on workshops encouraged learning, curiosity, and collective stewardship. Which not only increased awareness of local ecosystems but also provided valuable data and insights into which approaches best motivate residents. The pilot’s success now informs future programmes, showing that accessible, participatory activities can create lasting community involvement in biodiversity and climate resilience.



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’s-Hertogenbosch

BiodiverCity

City of Siena, Italy
54.000 inhabitants

Challenge

Siena has an extensive network of urban green valleys that reach into the historic city and link it to the surrounding countryside. These areas are major reservoirs of urban biodiversity and cover over 40% of the city, but they are fragmented and poorly connected. As a result, they function weakly as biodiversity corridors and provide limited ecological continuity.

Local heroes

At the heart of Siena's BiodiverCity journey is a strong and highly engaged URBACT Local Group (ULG), acting as a key interlocutor for the Municipality and a bridge between institutions, expertise and citizens. The ULG brings together associations, universities, museums, NGOs and civic actors, combining scientific knowledge, practical experience and community representation in the co-design of actions. This contemporary network meets and connects with Siena's historic and identity-based system of the Contrade, creating a unique dialogue between long-standing civic traditions and new forms of collaborative urban governance.

Lessons learnt

Start from existing green spaces and recognise them as urban biodiversity corridors, not residual areas;
Build a strong local group that brings together institutions, experts and citizens from the start;
Combine scientific expertise with community-based knowledge and stewardship;
Connect new governance networks with historic and identity-based civic structures, when present
Invest in continuity: small pilot actions can grow if supported by long-term policy integration

Solution

Community-based approaches to foster urban biodiversity

Through the BiodiverCity network, Siena developed an Integrated Action Plan to reconnect its urban green valleys into a coherent system of urban biodiversity corridors. Starting from existing landscapes, the city built a strong collaboration between the Municipality, experts and citizens, co-designing a shared ecological vision rooted in local identity. The action focused on linking fragmented green areas through biodiversity-friendly practices, citizen science, and participatory governance. New tools helped embed NBS into everyday policies and practices. Siena strengthened ecological connectivity, reinforced community stewardship, and laid the bases for a Green Plan: biodiversity, heritage and everyday life are treated as common goods.



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COMUNE DI SIENA

BiodiverCity

City of Veszprém, Hungary
55.910 inhabitants

Challenge

City main challenge: mitigation and adaption to the adverse effects of climate change, maintain the long-term sustaiability and resilience of Veszprém . The city plans to meet this challenge through various measures, strategies and programmes, like actions developed in our BiodiverCity IAP.

Local heroes

A dedicated ULG suggesting the action, enthusiastic beekeepers and their hard-working bees to ensure the professional performance, cooperative media to prepare the locals for the novelty and regular reporting on the developments, supportive city leadership.





Lessons learnt

- Good preparation is essential, take your time!
- Be aware of the legal requirements!
- Learn from existing best practices, don't be afraid to ask those who have gone before you.
- Involve professional beekeeper!
- Prevent the misunderstanding from the side of resident (fear of bees), communication is crucial (articles, social media, events, presentations).
- Involve as many stakeholders as possible.

Solution



"Urban beekeeping test on the housing estate"

Biodiverse grasslands in the city's public parks, perennial beds adapted to local climatic conditions, rich tree population all over the city can create ideal conditions for urban beekeeping. The practice is increasing its popularity worldwide, and our ULG members felt it's high time to test its feasibility in Veszprém. With the help of professional beekeepers, we have set up a list of criteria against the most suitable location, explored the legal requirements and studied working examples in Ljubljana and Budapest. After the long preparatory phase (started in May 2024) two bee families moved in April 2025 next to an extensively maintained green space in the high-density residential area and produced approx. 120 kg of high-quality of mixed-flower honey in the season.



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VESZPRÉM
THE CITY OF QUEENS

BiodiverCity

Vratsa, Bulgaria, 50 012 inhabitants

Challenge

Urban pressure is a challenge, but green walls and green roofs are a real untapped potential. Awareness was low, participation uneven, and practical know-how on nature-based solutions limited. We had to learn, test, and act all at once.

Local heroes

This green journey was powered by amazing local partners: the Regional Environmental and Water Inspection – Vratsa, Directorate of Balkan National Park, Youth Center – Vratsa, Municipal Enterprise Sport and Tourism – Vratsa, Regional Economic Development Agency – Vratsa, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Vratsa, together with dedicated municipal experts turning green ideas into reality.



Lessons learnt

We learned how to plant and care for a Miyawaki forest and saw how quickly nature responds. Most importantly, we rediscovered that urban biodiversity matters and that people protect what they understand and help create.

Solution

Nature-based solutions implementation and community engagement to restore biodiversity and boost climate resilience in Vratsa

BiodiverCity brought nature back into Vratsa through bold nature-based solutions, including a fast-growing Miyawaki forest. Citizens, schools, and local partners joined forces to co-create greener spaces, while URBACT exchanges helped turn ideas into tested, scalable action.



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