

## Greening horizons: transformative insights and collaborations celebrated at the "Re-greening Cities" conference

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Photo: REGREEN



*Photo: CLEARINGHOUSE / REGREEN*

More than 120 participants, 56 speakers from 3 continents and 10 inspiring sessions: the culminating event “Re-greening Cities with Nature-Based Solutions in Europe and China – Bridging science, policy and practice” was a testimony to transformative collaborations and inspiring outcomes. Organised jointly by the Horizon 2020 projects [REGREEN](#) and [CLEARING HOUSE](#), the conference celebrated four years of dedicated efforts in advancing sustainable urban development through Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and fostering significant impacts on city plans and systems across Europe and China.

The two-day conference served as a platform to showcase tangible progress and a burgeoning movement towards de-paving, renaturing initiatives, and fostering a greener future. Several key learnings and insights emerged, signalling a promising path for regreening and NbS in sustainable urban development.

**Educational empowerment and awareness:** A pivotal revelation was the essential role of education and awareness in securing the success of transformative endeavours. Highlighting the importance of citizen support and investing in educational initiatives, particularly targeting children, aims to nurture a sustainable mindset among future policymakers. Tools like the CLEARING HOUSE educational package, [REGREEN educational platform](#) and [NbS EduWORLD resources for NbS education](#) stand as valuable aids in this mission.

**Breaking silos for collaborative integration:** Effective NbS integration into urban planning demands breaking down silos and fostering cross-sectorial collaboration. Experts emphasized embedding NbS into various departmental agendas, heightening its priority within municipal frameworks, and streamlining financing mechanisms. This collaborative approach magnifies the potential for impactful actions.

**Challenges in knowledge dissemination:** Transitioning into the practical implementation phase has revealed challenges in effectively conveying knowledge to local practitioners, necessitating context-specific tools and translations. Initiatives like [NetworkNature EU](#), uniting 75 NbS projects, offer promising avenues for global collaboration and knowledge sharing.

**Call for accessibility and action:** The need to make NbS knowledge universally accessible, beyond researchers and practitioners, has been underscored. Initiatives like establishing an NbS Hub in Croatia aim to meet this need by translating information into multiple languages and engaging industries and policymakers for implementable solutions. Urgency in action, strong leadership, and substantial funding are pivotal elements in this pursuit.

**Europe-China Partnership:** Both projects have led the way to innovative approaches through their urban living labs in Europe and China. The case studies serve as dynamic platforms and interactive spaces where researchers, city officials, and practitioners from both regions collaborate to address the challenges posed by urbanization. By sharing experiences, expertise, and best practices, the REGREEN and CLEARING HOUSE have not only strengthened the bonds between Europe and China but has also facilitated the understanding of how NbS can be effectively tailored to diverse urban contexts.

**Future endeavours and financing:** Dr. Marianne Zandersen (Aarhus University, coordinator of REGREEN) highlighted the European Investment Bank's interest in investing in NbS projects, stressing the necessity for projects to be financially viable and the significance of forthcoming nature restoration laws. Dr. Rik De Vreese (European Forest Institute, coordinator of CLEARING HOUSE) emphasized the importance of cross-disciplinary collaborations, announced a new project agreement focusing on urban greening, and highlighted the potential for creating a network of urban field stations in Europe, akin to those in China. The launch of the NbS Hub in Croatia, an outcome of the European Forum on Urban Forestry, marks a significant milestone.

These key takeaways signify a growing momentum in understanding and implementing NbS in sustainable urban development, underscoring the necessity for continued collaboration, accessibility, and concerted action to realize a greener, more sustainable future. The impact of REGREEN and CLEARING HOUSE are influencing policies, inspiring education, and making a tangible difference in communities. Real change is evident in city plans and systems across Europe and China, a testament to the collective effort of the two projects.

For more information about the discussion and the key outcomes of the above-mentioned topics, read the full document available here: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10582234>

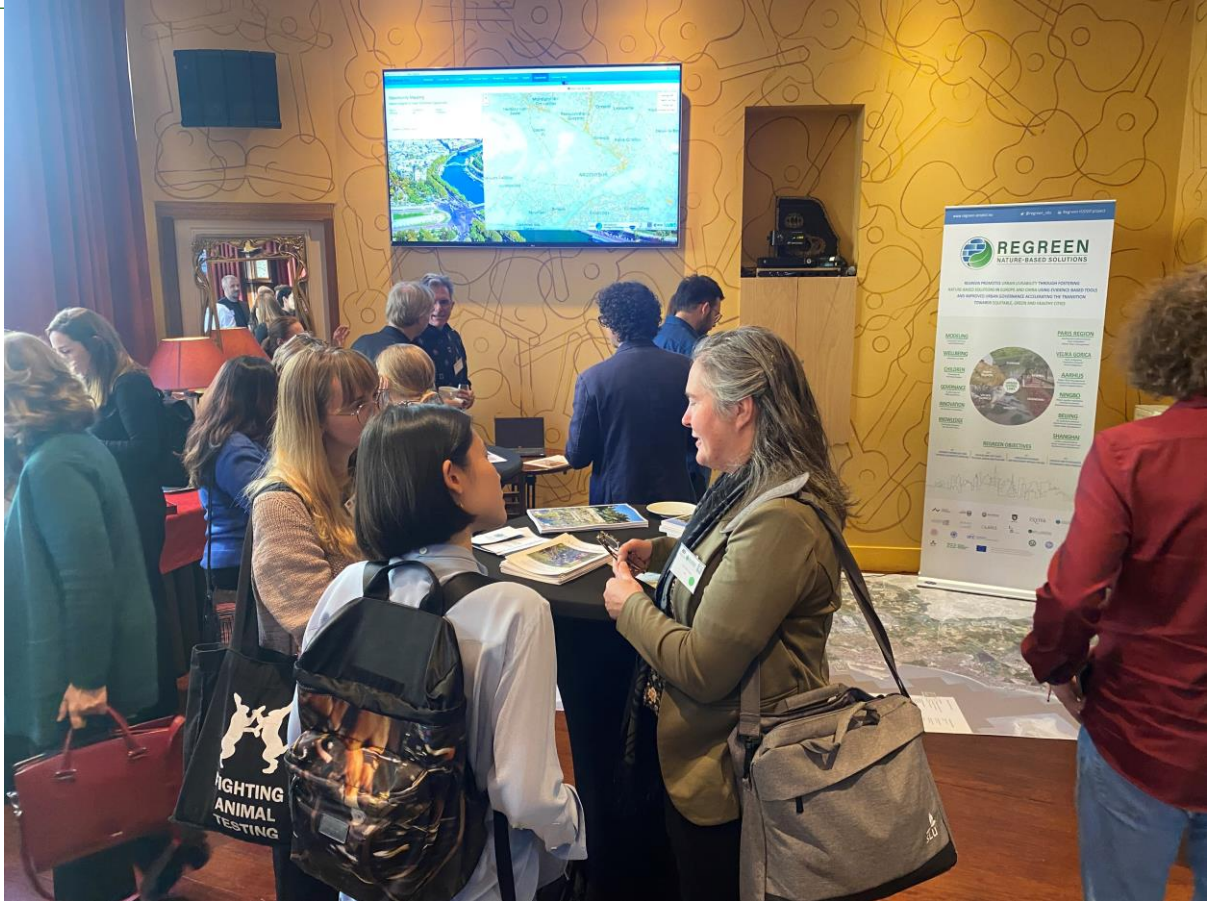


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