

# Barriers and enablers in local NbS governance in Europe

## Policy Recommendations

- NbS offer multifunctional solutions to major climate and environmental challenges e.g. flooding, heat effects, water quality, health and wellbeing.
- NbS uptake requires resources, political support and alignment with strategic priorities. Key enablers for NbS uptake include:
- Ensure openness to working across policy areas / silos and with wider stakeholders
- Foster policy champions within local governments and actors to enable collaboration across science-policy-practice boundaries
- NbS requires adequate and longer term funding

Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) target and can address major challenges of our time – climate change, disaster risk reduction, food and water security, human health, biodiversity, sustainable development etc. (<https://www.iucn.org/our-work/nature-based-solutions>).

NbS are on national and local agendas in the EU. However, despite often being very beneficial to society when implemented, it can be difficult at local level to move NbS beyond the idea stage. NbS ideas require time and resources invested in them, along with adequate political and institutional support, to move them from the idea stage to policy/decisions and implementation.

NbS agenda-setting and decision-making often demand more integrated approaches to local policy-making than other types of policy solutions, since these solutions are complex and multi-functional. NbS are therefore often designed and negotiated across different sectors in local administration which may otherwise be compartmentalized, each in their silo and with different agendas.

In the Horizon 2020 project REGREEN, governance barriers and enablers in NbS governance in urban areas in Europe and China were analysed through case studies in Aarhus (DK), Beijing (CN), Ningbo (CN), Paris Region (FR), Shanghai (CN), and Velika Gorica (HR). Below, we present findings from the European cases.

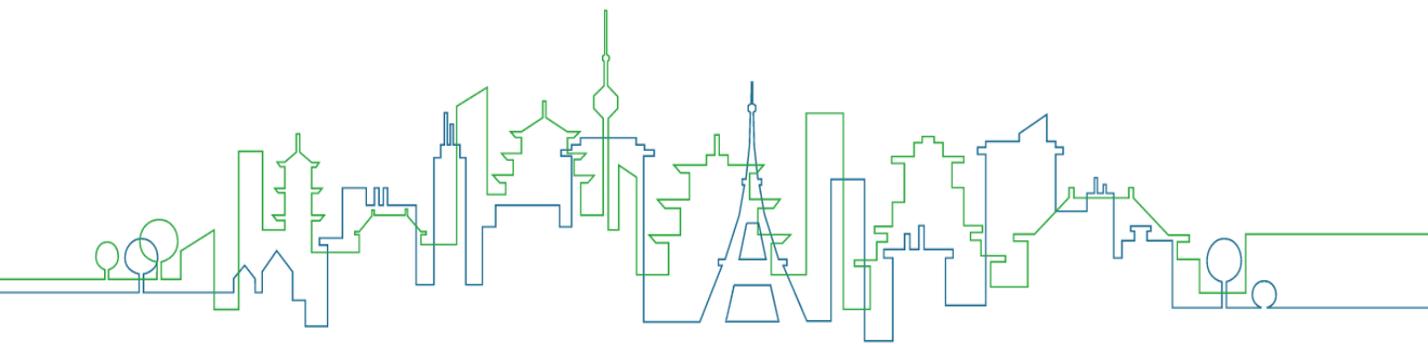
*This brief provides information about the outcomes of REGREEN research on governance barriers and enablers in three European Urban Living Labs (Aarhus, Paris Region & Velika Gorica).*

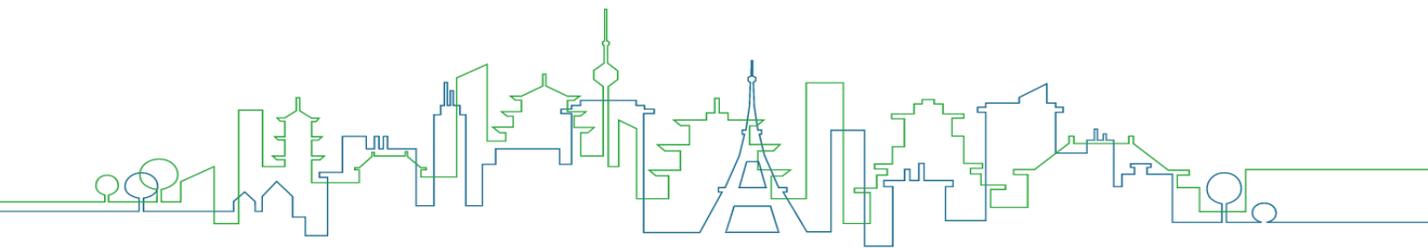


Depaving, Paris Region © Yann Laurent ([Grandin et al. 2022](#))



The Bièvre restored at Igny, Paris Region © Hervé CARDINAL, SIAVB ([Grandin et al. 2022](#))





## Relevance and need

Increasingly, urban governance and planning studies have focused on the inclusion of urban nature as part of the solution to a wide array of problems. Consequently, there is a need to understand barriers and enablers for NbS uptake.

## Approach

We used document analysis, qualitative interviews with stakeholders, and walkable floormap policy workshops. During the analysis of the data we drew on the concept of networked 'governance architectures' – paying attention to institutional structures, cultures and practices and acknowledging the role of non-governmental stakeholders and networks in policy making.



Discussion, Aarhus Municipality floormap,  
© Anders Branth Pedersen

## Do you know that...

... the REGREEN project used walkable floormaps (see photo below) to facilitate discussions between different offices in local administration in the European cases. See also policy brief #9 "Meeting on the map".

As part of the REGREEN work package on 'Governance and Planning of Urban Nature-Based Solutions', 'guidelines for urban and territorial NbS land use planning', were developed – <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10707827>

## Enablers for successful local NbS implementation in Europe

A number of differences were identified in the three European ULLs, but common NbS enablers found include:

- openness to transversal and collaborative interaction with stakeholders, especially with those who are likely to maintain and use green/blue spaces
- existence of a policy champion entrepreneur (e.g. within local government) having the power/ability to influence decision-making and/or implementation
- involvement of boundary actors with expertise and ability to fulfill a role as coordinators or advisors
- external policy drivers in combination with public awareness (creating windows of opportunity). Policy drivers can both be sudden (e.g. flooding events or deaths during heatwaves) or gradual (e.g. increasing average temperatures)
- coherence of NbS initiatives with government strategies – this tends to be connected to availability of funding
- adequate enforcement of targets and regulations for green space to avoid land take as part of urbanization
- availability of funding – preferably strategic and long-term.

If enablers are not present, their absence may instead constitute barriers for local NbS uptake.

## Authors

Anders Branth Pedersen, Carolyn Petersen, Anne Jensen, Duncan Russel, Gwendoline Grandin, Marc Barra, Kelly Dai, Richard Hardiman, Ingrid Kaltenegger

## You want to know more?

REGREEN webpage  
[www.regreen-project.eu](http://www.regreen-project.eu)

REGREEN repository zenodo  
<https://zenodo.org/communities/regreen>



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no.821016 This document reflects only the author's view and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

