



REGREEN
NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

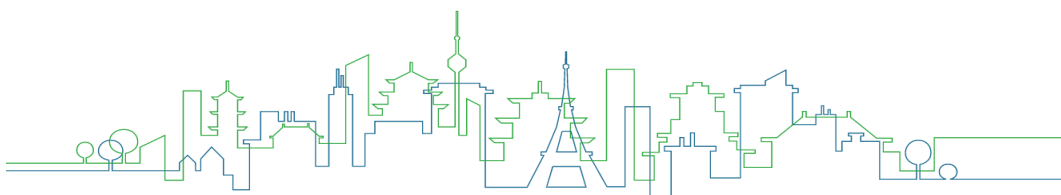
Fostering nature-based solutions for smart, green and
healthy urban transitions in Europe and China

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WP 8 Innovation and impact creation

REPORT ON START-UP ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the outcomes of the ideation events and the accelerator program within Task 8.1 Innovation and Business Incubation of the REGREEN project. It emphasizes the increasing awareness of climate-resilient cities and the European Commission's commitment to sustainable urban development. The REGREEN project seeks to establish evidence supporting nature-based solutions (NBS) by integrating ecosystem services and biodiversity into urban planning to address challenges like climate resilience, public health, and social inclusion.

The previously carried out market research, D8.2, detected emerging business models in the NBS market. It identified two main models: hybrid business models and private investment, recognizing the challenges like policy constraints and financial barriers. Organizations are shifting focus from merely addressing costs to embracing environmental and social advantages of NBS. However, the study highlighted the need for recognizing NBS, higher funding rates, and learning from best practices.

The ideation events across Aarhus, Paris, and Velika Gorica Urban Living Labs (ULLs) encountered adjustments due to COVID-19 restrictions. Despite challenges, Aarhus ULL engaged citizens in reimagining urban spaces, focusing on introducing more NBS. Paris ULL delved into micro urban forestry, advocating for an ecological approach. Velika Gorica witnessed a successful convergence of stakeholders promoting solutions beneficial to people, society, nature, and the climate.

Additionally, the accelerator program spotlighted the business potential of NBS, aiming to empower small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs), practitioners, and municipalities, enabling knowledge exchange, innovation, and NBS implementation. In Aarhus, an accelerator workshop was organized to address barriers to NbS implementation and emphasize the importance of urban space management, financial support, and ecosystem awareness for successful NbS projects. In Paris, a training course brought together landscape and ecological professionals to discuss promoting biodiversity in urban green spaces. In Velika Gorica, a start-up accelerator event focused on inclusive finance and green infrastructure co-development. The event facilitated knowledge exchange, showcased NbS projects, and provided opportunities for stakeholders. Discussions addressed national challenges, emphasized the role of public funding, and outlined strategies for fostering innovation in NbS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
LIST OF FIGURES	5
LIST OF TABLES	5
LIST OF ACRONYMS	6
1 INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Purpose of the document	7
1.2 Scope of the document	7
2 IDEATION EVENTS	9
2.1 Aarhus ULL	9
2.1.1 Follow-up event in Aarhus ULL	11
2.2 Paris Region ULL	12
2.3 Velika Gorica	13
2.4 Learnings from the ideation events	15
2.4.1 Learnings from Aarhus	15
2.4.2 Learnings from Paris	16
2.4.3 Learnings from Velika Gorica	17
3 START-UP ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME	20
3.1 Aarhus Accelerator event: “Knowledge sharing for high quality urban NBS – an inspirational workshop in Aarhus”	20
3.1.1 Opportunities for stakeholders	21
3.1.2 Enabling framework	21
3.1.3 Integration of NBS into urban planning	24
3.1.4 Results and learnings	24
3.1.4.1 Key takeaways	25

3.2 Paris Region Accelerator Event: “Ecology and landscape: a meeting of landscape and urban ecology stakeholders in Ile-de France”	25
3.2.1 Opportunities for stakeholders	26
3.2.2 Enabling framework	27
3.2.3 Integration of NBS into urban planning	28
3.2.4 Results and learnings	28
3.2.4.1 Key takeaways	29
3.3 Velika Gorica accelerator event: “Inclusive finance of green projects and co-development of green infrastructure in cities “	29
3.3.1 Opportunities for stakeholders	30
3.3.2 Enabling framework	30
3.3.3 Integration of NBS into urban planning	30
3.3.4 Results and learnings	31
3.3.4.1 Key takeaways	31
4 REFLECTIONS	33
5 CONCLUSIONS	33

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Maps of the location, Graven, in Aarhus	10
Figure 2: Images from Graven during the urban ideation intervention	11
Figure 3: Final launch event in Aarhus	12
Figure 4: “Micro-forêt urbaines” online conference	13
Figure 5: Ideation climate events happening in Croatia	14
Figure 6: The event “Who plants and who sows?”	15
Figure 7: Impressions from the Aarhus Inspiration workshop..	20
Figure 8: Aarhus workshop participants exploring the Aarhus walkable floormap	24
Figure 9: Impressions from the training session.....	26
Figure 10: Pictures from the training day organized by MNHN, in partnership with IPR	27
Figure 11: Pictures from the event “Inclusive finance of green projects and co-development of green infrastructure in cities” in Velika Gorica	32

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of ideation events key takeaways	17
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

PROJECT TITLE

REGREEN - Fostering nature-based solutions for smart, green and healthy urban transitions in Europe and China

PROJECT PARTNERS

AU	Aarhus University
ICLEI	ICLEI European Secretariat
INTU	Intugreen
IPR	L'Institut Paris Region
JR	Joanneum Research
MNHN	Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle
ZEZ	Zelena Energetska Zadruga

COMMONLY USED TERMS

NBS	Nature Based Solutions
ULL	Urban Living Lab
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
WP	Work Package
DNNK	Danish Network for Climate Adaptation
NEB	New European Bauhaus
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
CSG	Corporate Social Governance

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the document

The purpose of this report is summarize the outcomes of the ideation events and the accelerator programme in task 8.1 Innovation and Business Incubation.

1.2 Scope of the document

In recent decades, there has been an increased awareness among urban developers and policymakers about the necessity of developing climate-resilient cities. The European Commission's commitment to sustainable urban development is substantial, given the costly damages to urban infrastructures and the broader impact of climate challenges on human well-being and healthy ecosystems (European Commission, 2016³).

The REGREEN project aims to generate evidence on how nature-based solutions (NBS) are supported by improved urban governance, public and private participation, and systematically integrated ecosystem services and biodiversity. The objective is to advocate for the benefits and values of NBS in urban planning to address societal challenges such as climate change resilience, public health, well-being and social inclusion. The approach involves co-creation with urban planners, citizens, and businesses in urban living labs to ensure long-term sustainability and accelerate the crucial transition toward equitable, green and healthy cities in Europe and China (REGREEN Project Proposal).

The market research presented in D8.2 explored the innovation environments in the REGREEN European Urban Living Labs (ULLs) to investigate business models and current practices. The study identified that the NBS-market is not clearly defined yet, and the term 'nature-based solutions' is relatively new to many stakeholders. Through a survey and interviews, two main business models could be delineated:

1. A hybrid business model, which is characterized by a combination of EU-funding, funding of regional governments, sponsoring of other companies, and actual revenues from clients, and
2. A private investment model, where private companies finance NBS projects through client revenue streams.

Challenges identified by the interviewees were a) external factors, e.g. public policies, building codes, official permissions, and public funding, and b) financial factors, e.g. implementation versus the running costs (see D8.2 Market Report). The Market Report also highlighted the evolving recognition of NBS benefits. Whereas some years ago, the focus was mainly on the costs, nowadays many arguments exist in favour of greening cities. Besides all the well-known environmental and social benefits of NBS, one of the reasons mentioned why several organizations started working with NBS is their motivation to make cities more beautiful and liveable. The data indicated needs of Nature-based Enterprises (NBEs), including learning from best practice cases, recognition by public authorities, and higher funding rates or incentives.

Based on this knowledge, a series of ideation events were initiated in the European ULLs. Due to the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic, the official public safety restrictions varied in the participating counties and municipalities. This resulted in the development and execution of different event frameworks that complied with the local public recommendations in each respective location.

³ European Commission. Urban agenda for the EU. 2016. Accessed 2021 Feb 23.
https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/urban-agenda-eu_en

The ideation events were designed to foster creative thinking, citizen engagement, and collaboration. These events aimed to gather different perspectives and innovative solutions and to provide a platform for stakeholders to envision and discuss the potential applications of NbS in their respective cities. The REGREEN start-up accelerator program focused on translating these ideas into tangible projects, empowering SMEs, facilitating knowledge exchange, and driving NBS implementation in urban contexts.

2 IDEATION EVENTS

REGREEN partners engaged innovation hubs and NBS-related stakeholders in events such as ideation events, climathons, and urban nature interventions. The ideation events aimed to generate innovative ideas and solutions for incorporating NbS into urban environments. Through interactive sessions, brainstorming activities, and discussions, participants explored the multifunctional benefits of NbS and contributed to the development of sustainable urban plans. The goal was to use participants' creativity to identify challenges and come up with practical strategies for implementing NbS in urban areas, making cities more sustainable and resilient.

In the following sections, the framework and results of the ideation events in the European ULL of Aarhus, Paris, and Velika Gorica are described.

2.1 Aarhus ULL

The ideation event was initially designed to engage students, SMEs, and other relevant participants interested in NBS and sustainable urban development. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the event's focus shifted to university students in collaboration with Aarhus University's business department. Unfortunately, the event could not proceed initially due to assembly restrictions at the university. When these restrictions were lifted, the business department was unable to continue the organization as the students' interest in such events had dropped. Aarhus University linked the lack of interest to what they called "post-corona stress", and students therefore focusing less on extra-curricular activities and more on the core tasks of their study.

In September 2021, the authors decided together with Aarhus ULL to focus on the transformation of industrial areas. On November 15, 2021, REGREEN hosted a REGREEN-cross seminar focusing on ideation in Aarhus ULL and started engaging participants and employees of the case company in presenting ideas for creating more biodiversity on the site. City architect of Aarhus Anne Mette Boye, who specialized in the transformation of industrial areas through PhD research, agreed to hold an inspirational presentation at the event. The furniture company Mogens Hansen Møbler, which converted a big part of its industrial area into a flower field rich in biodiversity, likewise agreed to send a representative to hold a presentation to inspire the participants.

The next step was to find a specific case for the students to work on. Contact was made with the museum of ARoS, who had been part of the official opening of the project of REGREEN in 2019. ARoS were very interested in participating in the event as partner and host for the participants, seeing the advantages in matters of promotion within the sustainability sector and obtaining specific recommendations for transformation of their bare areas around the museum. Unfortunately, Covid restrictions interfered again, and the museum had to close down for visitors and events.

By the end of 2021, REGREEN decided to create an urban ideation intervention. The Aarhus ULL provided five potential locations for greening and transformation. Due to the winter season and Covid restrictions, we chose a popular and lively location in the city centre of Aarhus. On January 15th, 2022, the first urban ideation intervention was held at Graven.



Figure 1: Maps of the location, Graven, in Aarhus

We engaged in conversations with individuals and small groups, comprising a total of 48 citizens. These discussions involved brief qualitative interviews guided by a structured interview guide. The answers from the participants indicate overall satisfaction among the citizens of Aarhus regarding the existing level of nature and city nature in and around Aarhus city. However, the feedback also revealed a common wish for increased NBS such as flowerbeds, street trees and pocket parks.

“Aarhus has a lot of city nature. I don’t think we need more, but definitely not less either.”

“Just a small patch of grass, surrounded by some trees. That can make a big difference.”

“Nature in the city is great. To sit on and look at.”

Quotes from the interviews, Aarhus, 2022

Social elements, such as benches and other places that invite people to “hang out” in nature, are elements that most participants defined as important elements to a good nature-spot, whereas urban nature as a means to climate adaptation and resilience was mentioned only by a few participants.

“It’s too bad with those big white walls. There is even more potential in the area if the vertical surfaces could also be used, for example with a green wall or balconies to sit on.”

“It would be great with more biodiversity and wild nature in some restricted areas. To get more life and more colours.”

Quotes from the interviews, Aarhus, 2022

Regarding the awareness of NBS, it is evident that the typical citizen of Aarhus is not familiar with the concept. However, upon explaining the NBS concept to them, there was unanimous agreement that it sounds like a good idea. Consequently, there is a positive outlook for the introduction of more NBS in the city.

A presentation of the results from the urban ideation intervention was shared in a webinar with Aarhus ULL.



Figure 2: Images from Graven during the urban ideation intervention

2.1.1 Follow-up event in Aarhus ULL

REGREEN engaged in a collaboration with the municipality of Copenhagen to use a Recycle Station as a project site, inviting SMEs to ideate, test, and develop their business models related to NBS. This initiative led to numerous network meetings, citizen engagement workshops, and a final launch event in August 2022 with over 1000 participants.

Over the past decade, Aarhus and Copenhagen have increasingly opened local recycle centres where local citizens can deposit various types of waste, such as cardboard, paper, glass, metal, wood, and textiles. Aarhus ULL hosts a relatively new recycle centre called REUSE, which serves as a platform for communication, events, and networking around the topic of circular economy. REUSE collaborates closely with the Municipality of Copenhagen to share experiences and learnings. Intugreen initiated a partnership with Copenhagen to optimize the Haraldsgade Nærgenbrugsstation (NGS) recycling station.

The transformation aims to enhance the visibility of NGS in the neighbourhood, integrate more nature on the site, and showcase the space's potential for events and network meetings. While NGS has already incorporated green roofs on waste sheds with solar panels, it seeks to explore additional NBS such as green walls, bio swales to prevent flooding, and small green oases (insect hotels, birdhouses, wildflowers meadows) to enhance urban biodiversity.

Throughout the program, we engaged both public and private organizations, conducting a series of citizen involvement activities. Key participants included Bo-Vita, Fritidsakademiet FRAK, Det Gode Selskab, Habitats, By-Biologen, Team 10K, Genlivet, Greencubator, Vildbørn, the ARC personnel and the network of volunteers on the NGS. These organizations contribute to urban sustainability through various means, including transforming urban spaces into green areas, contributing to urban transformations and sustainable building, serving as a hub for sustainable entrepreneurs, and focusing on co-creation, children, and workshops for entities like housing associations.

Stakeholders actively participated in various activities, including an ideation session to collect ideas for optimizing and regreening the site. Subsequently, we hosted four citizen engagement workshops with approximately 100 participants in total and a final launch event with over 1000 participants.



Figure 3: Final launch event in Aarhus

2.2 Paris Region ULL

The Paris Region ULL, led by the Institut Paris Region (IPR) and supported by Intugreen focused on renaturation efforts, particularly in the context of urban tiny forests, commonly known as “Miyawaki forests”, which have proliferated across Europe. This approach, founded by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, involves dense plantations of various tree species (3 to 7 per square meter) on an area typically less than 1 hectare, drawing inspiration from the spontaneous dynamics observed in forests. While several companies and associations have specialized in creating these tiny forests, claims of their rapid growth (e.g. “grow 10 times faster”, “host 20 times more biodiversity”, “are 30 times denser”), increased biodiversity, and higher density compared to natural forests have faced criticism from the scientific community.

Inspired by this, Paris Region ULL hosted an ideation program for a group of Master’s degree students from Paris Saclay Université, Sorbonne University, and the Museum of Natural History. This cross-disciplinary group, with diverse different academic backgrounds in ecology and social studies, focused on micro urban forestry. Through interviews with non-governmental organizations and experts, the students developed recommendations aimed at cities seeking ecological ways to implement urban forests while avoiding pitfalls of green marketing and greenwashing.

The ideation program, initiated in December 2021, concluded with an online conference organized by the REGREEN Paris Region ULL on January 10, 2022. The communication department of IPR (the partner leading the REGREEN Paris Region ULL), invited to the online conference, recognised the complexity of the subject and the scientific criticisms surrounding the “Miyawaki forests” method. In

response, the communications department aimed to develop communication tools to raise awareness among the general public and employees of IPR.

This type of ideation event proved to be a valuable tool for engaging new stakeholders, presenting fresh ideas and visions, and fostering transdisciplinary collaboration. Notably, the inclusion of the communication department, which typically does not work with NBS, demonstrated the effectiveness of such events in broadening perspectives and engaging diverse expertise.

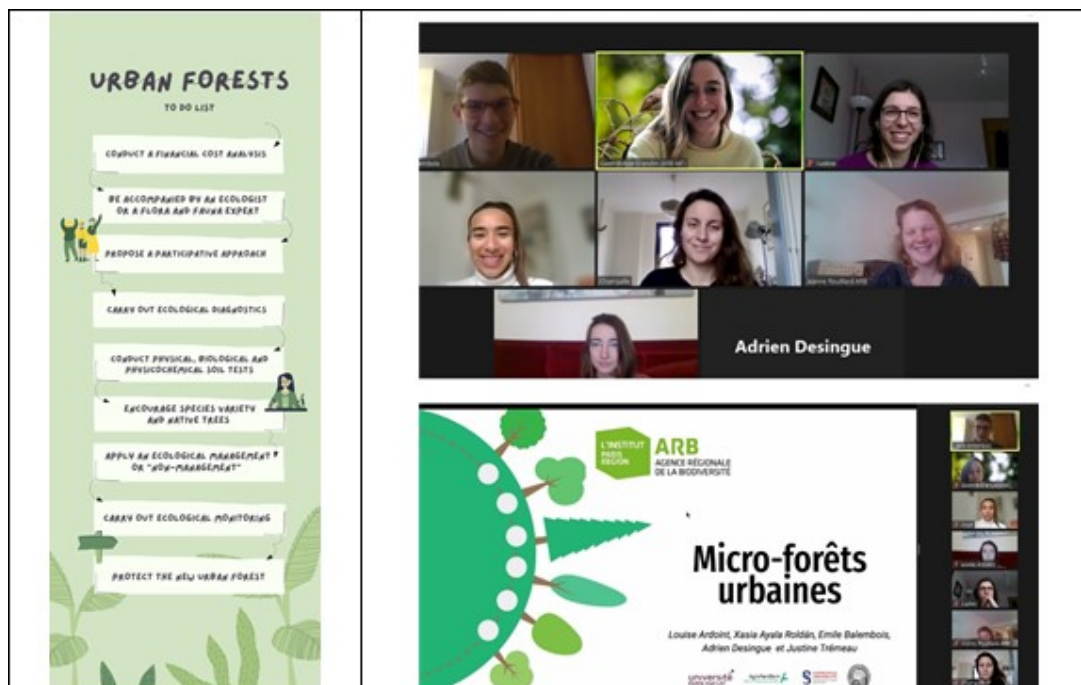


Figure 4: “Micro-forêt urbaines” online conference. Left: Communication material showing the nine main recommendations for a successful urban forest project produced by the communication department of IPR, based on the recommendations developed by the students. Right: screen capture of online meetings between students and IPR.

2.3 Velika Gorica

The EIT Climate-KIC RIS Hub Croatia, in active collaboration with REGREEN partner ZEZ, organized the annual event “Who sows and who plants?” on December 13, 2021. This gathering brought together around fifty representatives from start-ups, companies, organizations, and projects operating within the ecosystem of green, sustainable and digitally-assisted NBS. The primary objective was to foster connections among stakeholders, recognize and encourage cooperation in developing solutions, services, or products good for people, society, nature, and climate.

During the event, the NBS community showcased their initiatives to a diverse audience, including representatives from the ministry, cities, NBEs, start-ups, and other engaged stakeholders. The Green Energy Cooperative presented RREGREEN’s Nature Solutions platform, and the Velika Gorica ULL participated in the audience.

The event kicked off with three presentations introducing programs that offer strategic, conceptual, implementation, or financial structures for advancing urban green infrastructure. The Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction, and State Property outlined a program aimed at stimulating funding

for pilot projects and significant green infrastructure initiatives, with an expected financial contribution exceeding 600 million euros.

The City of Zagreb presented its implementation program for NBS showcasing practical examples of implementation. These initiatives not only redefine spatial planning but also involve citizens in planning dialogues and the execution of solutions through city district councils.



Figure 5: Ideation climate events happening in Croatia

The EU's New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative was also highlighted with its objective to horizontally integrate technical and technological solutions with cultural, aesthetic, and social values. In other words, it seeks to involve citizens in the process of designing a climate-neutral Europe, aligned with the EU Green Deal. This initiative is a call for citizens to actively contribute to the transformative design of Europe toward a climate-neutral society. Having garnered financial support of over 85 million euros from various EU funds in just two years, the NEB is rapidly evolving into a hub for fostering connection and creativity.



Figure 6: The event “Who plants and who sows?”

As formal presentations transitioned into informal conversations within the collaborative space of co-working WESPA in Zagreb's Zavrtnica, the seeds of new collaborations and synergies were planted. These interactions are poised to develop into a series of partnerships among all participants, actively shaping a better, biodiverse and climate-neutral future.

The connections established during this event played a crucial role throughout the Regreen project, underscoring that relationships formed in collaborative environments are not only meaningful but also essential throughout the entire initiative.

2.4 Learnings from the ideation events

2.4.1 Learnings from Aarhus

Through the ideation event in Aarhus, the living lab gained insights into various event formats. They learned that the average citizen appreciates city nature, with social aspects being an important part of it. Interestingly, most people do not think of urban nature as a tool for climate resilience, and the term “nature-based solutions” is unfamiliar to them.

Despite the challenges posed by the Covid emergency, involving stakeholders early in the event organization process was crucial. The organization of such events entails lengthy procedures, including obtaining permissions and displaying promotional materials.

Another key takeaway is to be mindful of the beneficiaries of the gathered data and involve them in the process of defining questions and methods.

Key Takeaways

- **Citizen Appreciation for City Nature:** The living lab discovered that the average citizen in Aarhus appreciates city nature, and social aspects play a significant role in this appreciation. Understanding the value citizens place on urban nature is crucial for tailoring nature-based solutions that resonate with community preferences.

- **Limited Awareness of Urban Nature’s Role in Climate Resilience:** Interestingly, it was observed that most people do not perceive urban nature as a tool for climate resilience. This insight highlights a potential gap in public awareness regarding the multifunctional benefits of urban nature. There may be opportunities for education and communication to bridge this knowledge gap.
- **Unfamiliarity with “Nature-Based Solutions” Terminology:** The term “nature-based solutions” is unfamiliar to most citizens. This finding suggests that there may be a need for more accessible and widely understood language when communicating about nature-based solutions. Clear and relatable terminology can enhance public understanding and engagement.
- **Crucial Role of Stakeholder Involvement:** Despite challenges posed by the Covid emergency, involving stakeholders early in the event organization process was identified as crucial. This highlights the importance of collaboration with local entities, businesses, and organisations in facilitating the successful planning and execution of such events.
- **Acknowledgment of Lengthy Organisational Procedures:** The realisation that organising events involves lengthy procedures, including obtaining permissions and displaying promotional materials, underscores the need for careful planning and adherence to administrative requirements. Efficient event organisation contributes to the overall success of engagement initiatives.
- **Mindfulness of Data Beneficiaries:** Being mindful of the beneficiaries of the gathered data emerged as another key takeaway. Involving these stakeholders in the process of defining research questions and methods ensures that the data collected is relevant, valuable, and aligns with the needs and interests of those who will use it.

2.4.2 Learnings from Paris

According to IPR, the learnings from the ideation program in Paris Region ULL underscore the importance of allocating dedicated time to formulate the case and involve stakeholders from various departments. Collaboration with diverse perspectives not only enriches the ideation process but also promotes a holistic approach to problem-solving. Additionally, IPR emphasized the value of participatory approaches, such as conducting interviews. Involving direct input from people, whether experts or participants, contributes to a more thorough understanding of the subject matter and enhances the effectiveness of communication strategies. Lastly, the importance of providing support to participants throughout the ideation process, particularly in this case, the students involved. Ensuring that participants feel guided and empowered encourages a space for creative ideas and solutions.

Key takeaways

- **Dedicated Time Allocation:** Allocating sufficient time for formulating the case is crucial. This ensures that the objectives, goals, and expectations of the ideation program are well-defined. It allows for thorough planning, which is essential for the success of the subsequent stages.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** Involving stakeholders from various departments is emphasized. This not only broadens the range of perspectives but also ensures that the ideation process is inclusive and representative of diverse interests. Collaboration with stakeholders from different backgrounds enriches the overall brainstorming and problem-solving processes.

- **Holistic Problem-Solving:** The importance of adopting a holistic approach to problem-solving is highlighted. Considering diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary collaboration contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges at hand. It promotes well-rounded solutions that address multiple facets of the identified issues.
- **Participatory Approaches:** The value of participatory approaches, such as conducting interviews, is underscored. Direct input from people, whether they are experts or participants, adds a human dimension to the ideation process. It ensures that the solutions generated are grounded in the lived experiences and insights of those directly involved or affected.
- **Enhanced Communication Strategies:** The inclusion of participatory approaches enhances the effectiveness of communication strategies. By directly involving individuals in the process, the communication of ideas and solutions becomes more relatable and resonant. This approach can contribute to better engagement with stakeholders and the broader community.
- **Support for Participants:** Providing support to participants throughout the ideation process is deemed crucial, particularly for students involved in the program. Guidance and empowerment of participants create an environment conducive to creativity and idea generation. It fosters a sense of confidence and ownership, leading to more meaningful contributions.

2.4.3 Learnings from Velika Gorica

The Croatian ideation event on Nature-Based Solutions served as a critical gathering point for stakeholders to engage in networking, share experiences, and gain a comprehensive understanding of the NBS market. The event highlighted a significant interest in NBS, underscoring the importance of such meetings to ensure market penetration and reach end-users effectively. The key outcomes included:

- Networking as a central benefit of the event, providing a vital opportunity for stakeholders to form strategic alliances that are essential for advancing the NBS agenda. The exchange of experiences allowed participants to share valuable insights, addressing common challenges and exploring innovative applications of NBS. The event also acted as a marketplace of ideas, introducing key NBS players and providing a snapshot of the current market, which is crucial for spotting opportunities and fostering future collaborations.
- The discussions at the event emphasized the necessity for systematic support for the integration of NBS into the mainstream and to enhance its visibility among end-users. The event concluded with participants identifying practical strategies for promoting NBS, engaging with policymakers, and developing sustainable business models.

Main takeaways

- **Networking as a Central Benefit:** The event served as a critical platform for stakeholders to engage in networking, fostering strategic alliances crucial for advancing the NBS agenda. The exchange of experiences among participants facilitated the formation of valuable connections, allowing them to share insights, address common challenges, and explore innovative applications of NBS.
- **Marketplace of Ideas:** The event acted as a marketplace of ideas, bringing together key players in the NBS field. This facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the current

market, enabling participants to identify opportunities and potential collaborators. The event's role in showcasing the diversity of NBS applications is vital for encouraging innovation and collaboration in the field.

- **Systematic Support for NBS Integration:** Discussions highlighted the necessity for systematic support to integrate NBS into the mainstream and enhance its visibility among end-users. Participants recognized the importance of strategic initiatives to promote NBS, engage with policymakers, and develop sustainable business models. This emphasis on systematic support underscores the need for coordinated efforts to mainstream NBS in various sectors.
- **Identification of Practical Strategies:** The event concluded with participants identifying practical strategies for promoting NBS adoption. These strategies encompassed engagement with policymakers, raising awareness among the public, and developing business models that align with sustainability goals. The focus on practical and actionable approaches reflects a commitment to translating discussions into tangible outcomes.

Table 1: Summary of ideation events key takeaways

Key Takeaways	Aarhus	Paris	Velika Gorica
Public perception and awareness	Limited Awareness of Urban Nature's Role: There should be opportunities for education and communication to bridge the gap in public awareness regarding the multifunctional benefits of urban nature.	N/A	Event as a facilitator for understanding NBS: The event acted as a marketplace of ideas, bringing together key players in the NBS field. This facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the current market, enabling participants to identify opportunities and potential collaborators.
Communication Strategies	Unfamiliarity with "Nature-Based Solutions" Terminology: Clear and relatable terminology can enhance public understanding and engagement.	Participatory Approaches: Direct input from people, such as conducting interviews, adds a human dimension to the ideation process. Inclusion of participatory approaches enhances communication effectiveness.	Systematic Support for NBS Integration: Discussions highlighted The necessity for Systematic Support to integrate NBS into The mainstream and enhance its visibility among end-users in various sectors.
Stakeholder Engagement	Crucial Role of Stakeholder Involvement: Collaboration with local entities, businesses, and organizations is crucial for successful event planning and execution.	Stakeholder Involvement: Involving stakeholders from various departments ensures inclusivity and diverse perspectives in the ideation process.	Networking as a Central Benefit: The event served as a critical platform for stakeholders to engage in networking, fostering strategic alliances crucial for advancing the NBS agenda.
	Mindfulness of Data Beneficiaries: Involving beneficiaries in defining research questions and methods ensures relevant and valuable data.	Holistic Problem-Solving: Considering diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary collaboration contributes to comprehensive problem-solving.	The exchange of experiences among participants facilitated the formation of valuable connections, allowing them to share insights, address common challenges, and explore innovative applications of NBS.

Key Takeaways	Aarhus	Paris	Velika Gorica
Event Planning	Acknowledgment of Lengthy Organizational Procedures: Careful planning and adherence to administrative requirements are essential for event success.	Dedicated Time Allocation: Allocating sufficient time for formulating the case is crucial for well-defined objectives and thorough planning.	Marketplace of Ideas: The event's role in showcasing the diversity of NBS applications is vital for encouraging innovation and collaboration in the field.
	Crucial Role of Stakeholder Involvement: Collaboration with local entities, businesses, and organizations is crucial for successful event planning and execution.	Support for Participants: Providing guidance and empowerment to participants creates an environment conducive to creativity and idea generation.	N/A

3 START-UP ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

The REGREEN start-up accelerator program focused on assisting SMEs and companies through mentorship, educational courses, and business training, emphasising the business potential of NBS. The program within the ULLs sought to empower companies in the private sector, practitioners and municipalities, and to foster knowledge exchange and network integration. The goal was to enhance their innovation capacity and propel the implementation of NBS in urban contexts. The acceleration programmes across the REGREEN ULLs had slightly different focuses. While concrete opportunities for companies were discussed in Velika Gorica, the emphasis was on exploring drivers and frameworks for NBS in Aarhus and Paris, triggering companies to investigate business opportunities.

3.1 Aarhus Accelerator event: “Knowledge sharing for high quality urban NBS – an inspirational workshop in Aarhus”

On October 26, 2023, Aarhus municipality, in collaboration with REGREEN and Invest4Nature projects’ partners, organized a workshop tailored for local Nature-Based Enterprises⁴, municipalities, landscape architects, and urban planners engaged in sustainable urban development. The workshop, co-organized with the Danish Network for Climate Adaptation (DNNK), aimed to explore the business potential of NbS. Showcasing how NbS can drive ecological benefits, enhance environmental management, and facilitate climate adaptation in urban areas, the event equipped participants with knowledge, tools, and inspiration derived from REGREEN and Invest4Nature. 24 stakeholders participated in the workshop.



Figure 7: Impressions from the Aarhus Inspiration workshop. On the left, the flyer of the event. On the right, pictures from the sessions of the workshop.

⁴ “Enterprises which contribute to the development and delivery of NBS and for whom nature is at the core of their business were termed nature-based enterprises (NBE)”. Kooijman, E.D.; McQuaid, S.; Rhodes, M.-L.; Collier, M.J.; Pilla, F. Innovating with Nature: From Nature-Based Solutions to Nature-Based Enterprises. *Sustainability* 2021, 13, 1263. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13031263>

3.1.1 Opportunities for stakeholders

Stakeholders in Nature-Based Solutions projects have plenty of opportunities to explore and capitalize on.

Public funding

Aarhus Municipality has established a land acquisition fund that the municipal departments can apply for, focusing on extracting added value from climate adaptation projects, led by the Aarhus Water Utility company.

Cost-effective solutions through multifunctionality of NBS

Stakeholders can recognise the cost-effectiveness of incorporating NBS in climate adaptation projects. Aarhus Municipality provides good examples like Klokkeparken, where NBS demonstrates efficacy in retaining water during extreme rain events, preventing damage, and contributing to sustainable urban development.

The link between access to green spaces and reducing stress for businesses

Collaboration on outdoor areas among companies has significant potential for promoting employee well-being, reducing stress, and improving mental and physical health. Many companies focus on integrating climate adaptation with initiatives promoting employee well-being, recognizing the potential for enhanced recruitment and retention.

Valuing the added value of NBS can push development

Quantifying the added value of NBS to a city can significantly push its development. Economic valuation of green spaces in relation to health, biodiversity, and other factors aligns with the rising focus on the triple bottom line for companies and the increasing demand for synergies in public projects.

Megatrends

As cities embrace megatrends centred around integrating nature into urban spaces and promoting health and livability, the demand for NBS is on the rise. Stakeholders can leverage this trend to further support the adoption of NBS. The increasing adoption of NBS may also create a need for monitoring, providing an opportunity for nature-based enterprises to offer new products related to monitoring of NBS and ensuring the delivery of the promised benefits.

3.1.2 Enabling framework

While the potential for NBS is substantial, several barriers hinder their effective implementation.

Regulation and legislation

One prominent challenge is rooted in existing regulations and legislation, limiting the scope of utility companies to focus solely on wastewater plans and water supply. The water utility company in Aarhus faces financial constraints as its resources are primarily allocated to water management activities, excluding expenditures on initiatives that could enhance community well-being, such as biodiversity enhancement, the introduction of green spaces, or initiatives to benefit the mental and physical health of local residents. To overcome this, collaborative efforts with external parties are required, with municipalities setting green goals in wastewater plans to unlock funds for NBS in water utility companies.

Inertia in the system & lack of courage, inspiration and innovation

The legislative landscape poses a barrier, as it struggles to keep pace with evolving challenges and demands, hindering the exploration of innovative approaches. There is a reluctance to deviate from established norms, denoted by a lack of courage, inspiration, and innovation. Thinking new and different, as it is to use NBS instead of the traditional concrete pipes, is often more difficult for the executive board, while there are a lot of employees who are passionate about making all this exciting. Furthermore, the financing of the construction of NBS and financing the management and operation of NBS lies in different departments and sometimes in different public institutions (e.g. water supply – municipality). This complicates the cooperation between the NBS company and the owners of the NBS, often lacking operating funds in the financing structure. Finally, it is difficult to maintain the “green” intentions defined in municipality district plan, when the private constructors take over.

Access to land

Access to land emerges as a significant obstacle, with difficulties in obtaining necessary land for NBS projects. Municipalities are very reluctant to use expropriation and there is uncertainty surrounding its application, adding layers of complexity to this challenge.

Lack of facilitation of collaboration across actors

Facilitating collaboration across various stakeholders – companies, municipalities, and utilities – is crucial for NBS development. However, the absence of a supportive framework makes it burdensome for companies to actively engage in collaborative efforts. There is a need to create a synergy so that it is easier to collaborate and create connections and corridors in the landscape.

Observations in relation to the abovementioned barriers reveal difficulties in translating overall goals into concrete implementation, highlighting the need for clear objectives and action plans. On the one hand, it is beneficial to gain greater understanding through, for example, the City Explorer Tool or standing on a floor map, but how do we translate it into action? What should be the goal and where should it be carried out? How does that translate into actual value creation? There may also be different views on what is the best value creation.

A lack of awareness regarding NBS adds to the challenge, with a limited understanding of its scope beyond trees. Economic benefits associated with NBS, such as its long-term contributions and nature’s intrinsic value, often go unrecognized in decision-making processes, thereby leaving out the economic benefits of NBS from the equation.

Needs

Building knowledge and understanding about biodiversity

To address the abovementioned barriers and enhance the enabling framework for NBS in Aarhus, there is a pressing need to build knowledge and common understanding about biodiversity that must be considered from the project’s inception and not as an embellishment at the end of the project.

There are many dispersed protected nature-areas of which many are of a poor nature quality. It is necessary to establish a common language and ensuring continuity in how we manage land use is critical for successful integration of biodiversity. Biodiversity is a complex and interconnected web of ecosystems, and the loss of specific elements within it can have cascading and sometimes irreversible effects. Therefore, simply transplanting or compensating for the loss of specific species or habitats elsewhere may not fully replicate the intricate interactions and functions of the original ecosystem.

Biodiversity is not only about the variety of individual species but also about their relationships, dependencies, and roles within a given environment.

Nature depends on species being transported from one area to another. Ensuring this continuity within a specific location is vital, rather than heedlessly altering an area without consideration for potential losses. Recreating an ecosystem that has existed for several decades is often impossible. While discussions around substituting nature occur, from a biodiversity perspective, it is often unfeasible. Therefore, there is a need to be able to monitor whether the NBS delivers the promised improvement in biodiversity – and that requires knowledge both when planning the NBS, and in the monitoring of the NBS.

Building interdisciplinary knowledge across disciplines

Interdisciplinary collaboration between biologists, engineers, and hydrologists is essential to understand each other's perspective. Without it, it is difficult to get in depth and really integrate the disciplines necessary to make sustainable and successful NBS projects.

Simple tools and support

Simplifying tools for planning and monitoring NBS is imperative given the complexities of the challenges at hand. Additionally, support mechanisms, such as funding pools and subsidy schemes (similar to the successful subsidy scheme created in Denmark during the 1970s and 1980s in the wind industry), are vital to encourage small businesses and startups to get cooperation started to create greater natural connections in the landscape for the benefit of climate adaptation, stress levels among employees, retention and recruitment. A comprehensive ecosystem at both local and European levels can facilitate collaboration, specialization, and the growth of a robust NBS value chain.



Figure 8: Aarhus workshop participants exploring the Aarhus walkable floormap

3.1.3 Integration of NBS into urban planning

There are various opportunities within the municipality planning process to advocate for the use of NBS. One of them involves imposing “green” requirements on developers (within legal boundaries) and setting standards for municipalities when strategizing urban development. Additionally, there is a potential to leverage the Planning Act to incorporate more environmentally friendly requisites into local plans.

However, current legislation prevents the widespread adoption of NBS and the exploration of innovative collaborative solutions between companies and municipalities. An experiment within a municipality, as in the free municipality scheme with test laboratories, could be a significant opportunity. Here, both the municipality and utility companies, for instance, would have the freedom to create efficient, multifunctional solutions that add value. This setup would also allow companies to test new approaches, fostering an environment of nature-based entrepreneurship.

3.1.4 Results and learnings

The workshop discussions mainly revolved around the barriers due to regulatory limitations, financial constraints, and the need for increased awareness, and knowledge-building for effective NBS implementation. The opportunities lie in integrating NBS into ongoing urban projects and promoting multiple bottom lines beyond mere financial considerations. The learnings emphasized the necessity of further research, collaboration, and innovative financial incentives.

3.1.4.1 Key takeaways

- **Value of NBS in city development:** Municipalities and utility companies recognize the economic and functional advantages of integrating NBS in climate adaptation projects, but utility companies are restricted by current regulations to account for the value added of NBS.
- **Connection between green spaces and well-being:** A strong link exists between access to green spaces and reducing stress for businesses and employees. Collaborations between companies and municipalities on outdoor areas can significantly enhance employee well-being and aid in recruitment and retention.
- **Urban space management:** Balancing the use of urban space for nature, recreation, and biodiversity while accommodating human needs is complex and involves compromises.
- **Inertia and access to land:** Reluctance to adopt innovative approaches, access to land, and legal restrictions contribute to the slow progress.
- **Financial support and ecosystem awareness:** A need for financial aid, support for small businesses, and value-based approaches for quantifying the benefits of green solutions were identified.

3.2 Paris Region Accelerator Event: “Ecology and landscape: a meeting of landscape and urban ecology stakeholders in Ile-de France”

For the Paris Region ULL, the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle (MNHN), in partnership with L’Institut Paris Region (IPR), organized a one-day training course for landscape and ecological engineering professionals entitled “Ecology and urban landscapes: preserving and promoting biodiversity in landscaping practices”. Landscape architects, gardeners, planners, and ecologists came together on October 9, 2023, to discuss the methods and benefits of promoting biodiversity in urban green spaces, through presentations, workshops, and a field visit. The training course took place at the Museum’s historic premises, and was attended by 30 participants.





09_OCT_2023
TRAINING DAY
 NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
 NATURAL HISTORY

ECOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE: A
 MEETING OF LANDSCAPE
 AND URBAN ECOLOGY
 STAKEHOLDERS IN ILE-DE-
 FRANCE

AGENDA

9:30 - 10:30 Biodiversity in the City, Landscape, and Citizen Science
 Aurélien Judic & Martin Jeanmougin

- What are the benefits of integrating biodiversity into urban landscaping practices?
- Can participatory science be a lever for better integration of biodiversity into landscaping practices?

10:45 - 11:30 Origin and Traceability of Urban Vegetation
 Élodie Seguin

- Encouraging local and wild vegetation? Why and how?

11:45 - 12:30 Visit to the ecological garden of the Jardin des Plantes

12:30 - 14 Lunch break

14 - 15 An Innovative and Subversive Approach to Urban Gardens: The Example of the Punk Garden
 Eric Lenoir

- Toward New Urban Gardens? Implications for Landscape Practices

15 - 16:30 Workshops for Reflection on Operational Levers
 Aurélien Judic et Marie Spanier

- What Biodiversity?
- What Landscape Design?
- What Ecosystem Services? What Management?
- What Connectivity?

LOCATION

Meeting at 9 AM in front of the Gallery of Paleontology (Jardin des Plantes, 75005)

REGISTRATION

Online Registration Form : <https://forms.office.com/e/mTkqR21KSn>

Max participants : 30 people

Informations : marie.spanier@edu.mnhn.fr

Deadline for Registration : 28_sept_2023 included



Figure 9: Impressions from the training session. Left, agenda of the training session. Right, field visit to the ecological garden.

3.2.1 Opportunities for stakeholders

The purpose was to provide new approaches to urban green spaces to raise awareness of their potential to host biodiversity and the benefits this could bring, along with the levers for action to encourage it. The day provided an opportunity to bring together researchers and professionals to discuss the subject of urban biodiversity, a time when these two worlds often struggle to find common channels of communication. Moreover, it was designed to enable participants to exchange ideas and create a network of players committed to these issues.



Figure 10: Pictures from the training day organized by MNHN, in partnership with IPR.

As we observe a growing demand for nature from urban residents and communities, coupled with an increasing emphasis on regulations in this regard, this training provided participants with an opportunity to align themselves with this momentum. It allowed them to offer a professional service that caters to this emerging demand, all within the context of global changes and promotion of nature-based solutions.

3.2.2 Enabling framework

The integration of biodiversity into territorial planning and the development of urban green spaces is a critical aspect of building sustainable and resilient cities. This integration not only enhances the natural beauty of urban environments but also contributes to improved quality of life and ecological balance. Several key factors drive and shape the opportunities for better biodiversity integration in these urban spaces:

- **Knowledge transfer and teaching:** educating stakeholders about biodiversity's importance and coexistence with urban development fosters a culture of sustainability. Furthermore, collaborative knowledge exchange identifies conservation priorities and innovative solutions to meet diverse urban needs.
- **Knowledge of levers and resource players:** recognizing policy levers and key stakeholders is vital for effective biodiversity integration. The provision of robust and accessible databases is also a key factor.
- **Thinking about urban spaces in a multiscale manner:** connectivity of urban green spaces must be carefully considered to ensure the continuity of biodiversity and the provision of its ecosystem services. However, actors in landscape planning often operate on different scales. Addressing this connectivity challenge requires the development of tools for assessing

connectivity issues and the establishment of a governance structure that advocates for the planning of these biodiversity spaces.

Achieving effective integration of biodiversity in territorial planning and urban green space development is a complex task, hindered by several key barriers:

- **Language differences and diverging approaches of the urban green space:** Diverse stakeholders in urban planning use varying terminology and concepts, leading to misunderstandings and misalignment of goals. Bridging this language gap is essential for collaborative biodiversity objectives. Furthermore, the stakeholders in urban space planning sometimes have very diverse goals and methods. For instance, public and private green spaces have different objectives, with public areas focusing on recreation and aesthetics and private spaces on economic interests. Balancing these distinct needs while promoting biodiversity is challenging.
- **Temporality:** Short-term project timelines often conflict with the longer-term benefits of biodiversity conservation. Encouraging a long-term perspective and demonstrating the lasting advantages of biodiversity integration is essential.

3.2.3 Integration of NBS into urban planning

Incorporating Nature-Based Solutions into urban planning is essential for creating more sustainable and resilient cities. To achieve this integration, a two-fold approach is necessary:

1. Firstly, a deeper understanding of the intricate linkages between urban green spaces and urban ecosystem services is crucial. To maximize the benefits of NBS, urban planners must possess a comprehensive knowledge of these linkages. This understanding can guide the strategic placement and design of green spaces, ensuring they are optimally positioned to deliver essential services to urban populations.
2. Secondly, creating decision-making tools that consolidate and popularize this knowledge into relevant indicators is equally vital. Urban planning involves complex, multifaceted decisions, and policymakers need user-friendly tools that streamline the integration of NBS into their strategies. These tools should encapsulate the relationships between green spaces and ecosystem services, translating them into actionable insights and indicators that can guide decision-making. By making this information accessible and easy to use, cities can foster a culture of sustainability and ensure that NBS is consistently and effectively integrated into urban development plans.

3.2.4 Results and learnings

Researchers and landscape professionals spoke at the event on the themes of participatory science, plant origins and traceability, landscape management and associated ecosystem services. Participants gained new perspectives on urban green space planning, through new concepts such as the Punk Garden, which questions our relationship with the landscape, aesthetics, and maintenance of green spaces. Discussions in workshops allowed for the exploration of potential levers based on concrete case studies.

The event attracted a diverse array of participants, including landscape architects, ecologists, development project managers, gardeners, etc., with varying levels of knowledge of biodiversity conservation and approaches to green spaces. This diversity led to engaging exchanges between participants and speakers, addressing different aims such as learning more about urban biodiversity, connecting with other stakeholders, and discussing practical cases of landscaping.

3.2.4.1 Key takeaways

The high demand for this training day and the feedback from participants indicate that landscape professionals see the preservation of biodiversity as an urgent issue that needs integration into their practices. Today, there exists a compelling need to support these professionals through knowledge transfer during training courses (initial or ongoing) and the creation of tools and resources to assist them in daily decisions regarding plant palettes, management methods, or understanding the context of their development projects.

The high expectations of the participants indicate the necessity of establishing a consistent training cycle, enabling participants to collaboratively shape their future professional practices while respecting biodiversity and understanding associated NBS. A week-long training, including dedicated workshop time, should not be underestimated. It provides participants with the opportunity to put the acquired knowledge into practice and, more importantly, engage in discussions about their often-differing perspectives on spaces, which is a valuable asset for learning.

3.3 Velika Gorica accelerator event: “Inclusive finance of green projects and co-development of green infrastructure in cities “

Organized by ZEZ, the Croatian start-up accelerator program was set as a pivotal gathering of stakeholders aimed at fostering the growth of NBS in the urban living lab of Velika Gorica. The event provided an opportunity for the exchange of practical knowledge and experience, showcasing the city as an emerging platform at the national level for NBS topics. The event featured several slots:

- In the first slot, the context of NBS was presented, along with disseminated Regreen project results and city-relevant outcomes.
- The next slot focused on the NBS start-up “Green Fusion”, connecting funders and potential projects. NBS projects presented were from Velika Gorica, including an example in the administrative area of Mraclin, planned for implementation by the 2023 year’s end.
- Emerging young NBS organisations, recently in the start-up phase, were invited to share their stories, challenges, and successes with younger generations of students in the field of NBS.

Within the latter slot in the agenda, participants also addressed the ministry and the city departments responsible for NBS market development, sharing their needs and perspectives on the rollout of the NBS market. Other large research NBS projects were presented later in the event, followed by presentations on nature and socially responsible best practices. A networking lunch after the official part of the event allowed for additional ideas to surface in a less formal setting.

Speakers from NBS organizations and their short descriptions:

- Gruntek (Croatian platform that offers freshly grown seasonal food via online platform and delivery to the address)
- Arboring (company specialized in planting of big trees in urban setting and moving the trees)
- Vesela Motika (company that is invested in providing urban food solutions from vertical gardens to dehydrated foods reduced to a pill size containing all needed nutrients)
- IDOP (consulting company offering socially and nature workshops to the companies in form of team building)
- REGEA (climate agency developing NBS pilot in Zagreb and explores NBS funding)

- Green fusion (green start-up that acts as a stock market for NBS projects and connects them to potential funders from Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals and Corporate Social Governance (CSG) funds)
- Urbani šumari (specialized in tree maintenance and preserving old trees)

3.3.1 Opportunities for stakeholders

The event opened discussions and presented myriad of opportunities available to stakeholders including municipalities, businesses, and urban planners. It highlighted the successful collaboration between the city and ZEZ while demonstrating the potential for using blended funding on municipal level and how to attract additional talents and ideas. Students gained direct inspiration from formal start-ups and young organisations, propelling them to think about their future business ideas and gaining first-hand experience by engaging with existing NBS organizations, thereby sharing real-life insights.

NBS organisations presented their work to future workforce, which brought fresh ideas to the NBS arena. They now have the opportunity to communicate their needs to the policy makers (ministry) and their costumers (city departments).

The city of Velika Gorica has positioned itself as connector and platform for idea exchange, networking, and relevant pilots on the Croatian level, creating a significant connection to the supervising body of the ministry. The city also had the opportunity to hear first-hand what NBS companies can offer to them.

Velika Gorica presented projects that might be funded in the next 1-2 years, intending to present them to the corporations, mid-sized to large companies, and corporations with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds available. Other stakeholders presented their work, obtained additional capacity based on REGREEN projects results, and sought feedback and networking opportunities. Participants had the chance to network with stakeholders they typically do not meet at other conferences or thematic and focused events like this one.

3.3.2 Enabling framework

Participants delved into the factors driving and shaping NBS projects examining key drivers, barriers, limitations, and risks. The event addressed challenges at the national level in the development of the NBS market while acknowledging the positive shift in perspective from public bodies.

By bringing almost all significant NBS stakeholders in Croatia into one room, limited to 40 people, we aim to create connections that will positively influence the framework for the NBS in Croatia.

3.3.3 Integration of NBS into urban planning

The integration of NBS into urban planning will be a key focus, emphasising the effective synergy of these events with larger construction projects. This dual approach has established a unique position for these initiatives within the broader ecosystem. In the last session, Velika Gorica explained how NBS projects are integrated at the city level for all stakeholders, presenting the good, bad and the ugly behind the process. The ULL also detailed the journey within the REGREEN project, transitioning from isolated NBS initiatives to a systematic approach. They have followed ministry programs and worked closely with the city of Velika Gorica, a frontrunner in Croatia. With its optimal size for pioneering NBS projects — not too large like capitals stuck in bureaucracy, yet with enough internal capacity to engage effectively in research initiatives — the strategic way of thinking and doing has changed considerably in Croatia over the last four years, becoming part of national policy.

3.3.4 Results and learnings

The event is anticipated to have a transformative impact on the NBS market in Croatia, with Velika Gorica rising as a pioneering hub in the country. Proactive support from the ministry and collaboration with ZEJ are expected to yield positive outcomes in city policies. The middle of the event featured presentations from established NBS organisations, providing insights and connecting students and professors with industry leaders. REGREEN partners aim to motivate local companies and stakeholders to invest in NBS projects. The involvement of the green start-up “Green Stock Market” is highlighted for its role in connecting NBS projects with CSR funds and ESG goals.

3.3.4.1 Key takeaways

The key messages and discussions have revolved around the advancement of the NBS market, the role of public funding, and the significance of city collaboration in fostering innovation. This involved connecting stakeholders, providing information, offering externally funded projects, and co-developing NBS initiatives. The strategy for showcasing NBS projects within the context of the Velika Gorica Green Infrastructure strategy was outlined, with a focus on inspiring students to explore the business potential of NBS projects. Participants shared key points of starting new NBS businesses:

- Caution about expanding the business too rapidly, recognising opportune moments to accept or decline job opportunities.
- Recognition of the exponential growth in the NBS market in the coming years.
- Emphasis on NBS as a local resource, prioritising sustainability for providing local food and climate mitigation and adaptation measures.
- Acknowledgment of the need for extensive awareness campaigns among all stakeholders, given the widespread misunderstanding of NBS.
- Differentiation between greenwashing and genuine green policies through education and workshops about nature implementation.
- Newly founded start-ups should prioritise building knowledge and technology, focusing on product relevance rather than seeking investors immediately. Investors are responsible for identifying the best opportunities.
- Encouragement of the initiation of NBS start-ups during college years or as early as possible to determine personal suitability for this path.
- Acknowledgment that failure is a key component of success, and the more you fail, the more you will learn.

Moreover, stakeholders indicated that there are not many events and spaces to discuss topics for developing NBS in Croatia and related topics for enabling the NBS market. The city outlined the process of developing and implementing NBS projects, detailing the steps and timelines involved. During discussions with stakeholders, a consensus emerged that the current timeline for rolling out NBS projects, especially at the municipal level, is excessively lengthy for effective local climate change mitigation and biodiversity enhancement. It was recognized that cities need additional funding and staff capacity to successfully implement climate adaptation and mitigation measures through NBS solutions whilst also enhancing biodiversity.



Figure 11: Pictures from the event “Inclusive finance of green projects and co-development of green infrastructure in cities” in Velika Gorica

4 REFLECTIONS

The events were designed in cooperation with the three REGREEN ULLs in Denmark, France and Croatia to support SMEs and start-up companies recognizing their potential for innovative ideas, facilitating knowledge exchange, and driving the implementation of NBS in urban contexts.

The event in Velika Gorica “Inclusive finance of green projects and co-development of green infrastructure in cities” stood out as a pivotal gathering. It showcased the city as a hub for NBS and facilitated discussions among stakeholders, including start-ups, organizations, and city departments. The event in Aarhus “Knowledge sharing for high quality urban NBS – an inspirational workshop in Aarhus” provided a valuable opportunity for knowledge exchange among various stakeholders, but had a limited emphasis on start-ups and SMEs. It still served as a valuable platform of exchange between different types of stakeholders, like landscape architects, urban planners, and municipalities, who came together and discussed some of the pressing challenges in integrating nature into urban planning and displayed the business potential of NBS. The training day in Paris “Ecology and landscape: a meeting of landscape and urban ecology stakeholders in Ile-de France” primarily engaged public stakeholders, but still succeeded in organizing a valuable event for industry experts to discuss the methods and benefits of promoting biodiversity.

The boundaries between different types of events can be fluid, and the effectiveness of a program depends on different factors, including the needs of the participants. All three events contributed to market creation, facilitating vital connections and networking opportunities. The outputs, including stakeholder workshop, training and engagement sessions represent tangible progress. The experiences gained from these events provide valuable lessons for refining and shaping future accelerator programs.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This deliverable provides a comprehensive overview of the outcomes derived from the ideation events and the accelerator program of the REGREEN project.

The ideation events across REGREEN ULLs, Aarhus, Paris Region, and Velika Gorica – despite facing adjustments due to COVID-19 restrictions – showcased the pivotal role of citizen engagement, networking, and collaboration in advancing the NBS agenda. These events provided valuable insights into the complexity of urban space management, the need for ecosystem awareness and recognition of NBS benefits, and for a stronger financial support. Recommendations highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge, stakeholder collaboration, and ongoing training cycles.

In a later stage of the program, the accelerator events aimed at showcasing the business potential of NBS to the private sector, focusing on empowering SMEs, facilitating knowledge exchange, and driving the implementation of NBS in urban contexts. Also the new EU framework on biodiversity and opportunities for companies were discussed. The inspirational workshop in Aarhus, the training day in Paris, and the accelerator event in Velika Gorica each contributed unique perspectives and addressed specific challenges in integrating NBS into urban planning supporting the creation of supply chains for NBS related companies.

Addressing challenges such as policy constraints and financial barriers requires increased funding rates and learning from best practices. Key elements for overcoming challenges include interdisciplinary collaboration, user-friendly planning tools, and supportive financing mechanisms. Despite the

obstacles, REGREEN emphasis on knowledge-building, collaboration, and creating enabling frameworks sets the stage for significant NBS growth in urban areas.