PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Urban Green Belts project
Issue 2 May 2017

Since kicking off in July 2016, the Urban Green Belts (UGB) project has moved into high gear with: the production of an in-depth baseline study; further development of the "smart models" concept; several stakeholder platform meetings; and a second Transnational Partners' Meeting, held in Maribor, Slovenia. Pilot actions, as vital components of the development of Smart Models, are ongoing in all the project partner cities and areas.

Know your greens!

Functional urban areas (FUAs)

Specifically, the main physical target of the UGB project is what is called a "functional urban area", or FUA. An FUA consists primarily of a densely inhabited urban core plus surrounding areas (called the "fringe" or "hinterlands") that are highly integrated with the core. Motives for people moving between FUAs are mostly (but not exclusively) connected to labour and education markets, while movement within FUAs is more connected to a wide-ranging variety of qualitative attributes.

One of the most significant qualities of FUAs, however, is their ability to exceed administrative boundaries, which poses unique difficulties when it comes to policy planning and decision making.

Related to urban green spaces (UGS), the UGB project promotes the establishment of sustainable UGS management systems by facilitating cooperation between public bodies at all levels, in addition to relevant non-governmental stakeholders and community groups.

Baseline survey

The first step towards reaching this ambitious objective was for the project partners to develop a thorough baseline survey, forming the basis for the development of "Smart Models" for integrated UGS management and roadmaps to be used later in the project. The result, a 67-page "Baseline study on the status quo of regional UGS governance and European good practices", presents a synthesis of the results of European-level analysis and seven local assessments undertaken by the local project partners.

The study identifies and briefly discusses a number of trends associated with urban green space governance, such as: application of complex approaches; use of green spaces as outdoor community centres; approaches aimed at participatory governance; development of green roofs and vertical gardens; and use of digital solutions to support UGS governance.

Survey conclusions

Although e-tools are already being widely used by the project partners' public authorities and relevant departments, it is clear that the majority of partners intend to upgrade their GIS databases in the near future, and plan to take into account a participatory approach in doing so. The local assessment analysis also revealed that good practices from throughout Europe can serve as a firm basis for better and more inclusive UGB governance and "smart model" development at later stages of the project.

Finally, the analysis confirms that the establishment of multi-stakeholder governance-related practices remains a daunting challenge in terms governance and management. Though plenty of promising practices are being taken on board, there is still lots of room for improvement.

➔ Baseline study

Local-language versions of pilot programme assessments from all the local partners are available below:

Budapest, Hegyvidék, Hungary: https://www.hegyvidek.hu/zold-iroda/eu-palyazatok

Zadar, Croatia: http://www.zadra.hr/projekti/projekti-u-provedbi/projekt-urban-green-belts/

Maribor, Slovenia: http://www.mra.si/urban-green-belts1.html

Krakow, Poland: http://zzm.krakow.pl/index.php/ugb.html

Upper Salzach Valley, Austria: https://ispace.researchstudio.at/urban-green-belts-erste-ergebnisse

Malopolska region, Poland: http://ue.krakow.pl/projekty/4597,1457,ue_projekt.html

Padova, Italy: http://www.padovanet.it/informazione/le-attivit%C3%A0-di-padova-nellambito-del-progetto-ugb

Praha, Czech Republic: http://www.praha6.cz/urban-greeen-belts?q=urban+green+belts

Make it right!

Smart models and new approaches to UGB management

There are many ways to manage urban green spaces (UGS)—and, arguably, just as many approaches. In order to promote an understanding of the complexities involved in this process, we highlight three different, though interrelated, approaches to urban green space management. First, the Geographical Information System-based (GIS-based) of spatial planning offers a technical approach that can also deal with several key aspects of UGS planning based on different data systems. Second, a "community involvement" approach in planning and maintaining green spaces can play a crucial role in green space management. Third, it is important to improve cooperation with different levels of government and administration to achieve effective UGS management.

The UGB project builds on all three of these approaches through the development of "smart models"— sets of methods, tools and solutions for successful UGS management. Now that the framework concepts of these smart models have been completed, we are now working on elaborating the models themselves and developing different methods that the project partners can put to the test during pilot activities.

➔ Smart UGS assessment and green infrastructure planning

➔ Community involvement

➔ Multi-level governance

www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/UGB.html


Witkowice Green Living Lab in Krakow

UGB pilot concepts of the partners: Current state of play

The main pilot activity of the **Zadar County Development Agency ZADRA NOVA** (Croatia), is to make an interactive map using a GIS programme and "smart methods". The specific objective is to build a database of trees, flowers, bushes and hedges in selected urban green belts in the city and to use the database to help manage these areas.

Project partner **Prague 6's** (Czech Republic), primary goal is to evaluate alternative organisational, financial and technical governance models for UGS. This includes developing a subsidy scheme for securing management of selected locations in the pilot area. Another goal is to propose a possible social programme that utilises the district's agricultural capacity.

The **Maribor Development Agency** (Slovenia), plans to revitalise a pilot area around a former prison complex in the centre of Maribor. The plan is to use participatory methods to involve stakeholders in designing and carrying out the concept—an approach that will allow the team to test methods while simultaneously achieving visible results.

The lead partner of the UGB project, **Budapest District XII (Hegyvidek)** (Hungary), is implementing a community involvement pilot action to promote the voluntary maintenance of green areas in public spaces. The approach involves contacting community residents, raising their awareness of the importance of green areas, and motivating them to adopt and care for these areas in the future.

The objective of this pilot action is to apply a multi-level governance approach in renewing and developing rows and groups of trees in **District XII** public spaces. After examining and determining the condition of the trees, it will be decided together with stakeholders if some species need replacing or require different treatment methods.

The aim of the pilot project, the "Witkowice Green Living Lab" in **Krakow** (Poland) is to revitalise tourism and recreation infrastructure by promoting nature education through information boards, constructing a footbridge over the river, and providing parking spaces for cars and bicycles. All activities (consultations, picnics and other activities) will have an impact on community involvement throughout the process. Krakow will also test a mobile application for activating citizens in UGS management and nature protection.

The goal of the pilot activities in the **Upper Salzach Valley** (Austria) is to evaluate green spaces with a focus on their recreational value. This assessment will be performed with the help of specified indicators (e.g. accessibility by foot and by public transport, attractiveness, recreational utilities) and GIS-based methods (e.g. network analysis, weighted overlay techniques).

The **Municipality of Padua** (Italy), will implement a pilot action on smart methods and tools for UGS management in the south-west end of the city. The pilot area includes a green triangle connecting the urbanised centre with rural peri-urban areas. A stakeholder platform of roughly 40 entities is already involved and has recently set up a thematically linked group of associations and business located in the area. Although public green spaces and trees have already been mapped via GIS, it will still be crucial to map the large share of private green spaces as well.

Get involved: About Stakeholder Platform Meetings

The 2nd Stakeholder Platform Meetings of the project were dedicated to the presentation of local assessments, examples of good practices, and the project's "Baseline study on the status quo of regional UGS governance and European good practices".

The meeting's successful implementation of the "Quadruple Helix Approach" — which involves experts, decision makers, local societies and business — brought together different stakeholders from the project partner areas, and the participants used the opportunity to voice their ideas and visions regarding urban green spaces.

Stay organised!

Very often, the best way to get things moving is to talk in person.

The UGB project's second international partner meeting, which took place on April 19-21, 2017, in Maribor, Slovenia, was hosted by the Maribor Development Agency. The meeting focused on evolving smart models that can provide an integrated tool system for local authorities in managing urban green spaces. Model concepts and structures were formulated during the meeting, and the partners presented their pilot activities that will test the models at a later stage of the project.

➔ Maribor meeting press release

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