



## Action Plan for the region of Castilla y León



### Part I – General information

**Project: Interreg Europe CityZen - Enhancing scalable innovations and new business models based on urban farming ecosystem values**

**Partner organisations concerned:**

- Fundación Patrimonio Natural de Castilla y León (Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y León)
- Universidad de Valladolid (University of Valladolid)

**Country: SPAIN**

NUTS2 region: ES41 CASTILLA Y LEON

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## Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation Programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

### ERDF Regional Operational Programme of Castilla y León 2014-2020

*Thematic Objective: 6: “Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency”, Investment Priority (IP) 6.d “Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure”*

Thematic Objective 6 aims to promote resource efficiency, restoring the environment and developing productive green infrastructures e.g. urban farming (UF) for integral maintenance and economic use of city resources and spaces.

Due to the prioritization of Natura 2000 areas and landfills restoration over the last years, insufficient investment attention has been paid to green infrastructures ecosystem services in urban areas (UF can be a driver for new sustainable projects and business-oriented activities to reduce pressure on resources).

Within IP 6d, six pilot projects were implemented to restore landfills and to showcase innovative models to upcycle degraded lands, including UF. However poor soil conditions made UF solutions difficult to implement in those restored areas, thus new schemes and OP investment priority called REACT-EU were launched.

The Action Plan (AP) envisages to monitor UF school projects carried out under the REACT-EU investment priority, where UF support measures were integrated as a result of CityZen.

### **ACTION: Monitoring UF in schools**

#### **1. Relevance to the project**

This Action was inspired by our regional stakeholders group (RSG), CityZen Good Practices (GPs) and Impact Workshops.

Our RSG meetings featured several school UF initiatives such as:

- Salamanca Urban Orchards co-financed by a multiregional OP under Urban Sustainable Development Plans.
- Madrid School Gardens, where the department of Environmental Education in Madrid City Council showed lessons learnt by the school gardens in Madrid.



- Experiences developed by the Natural Heritage Foundation within Interreg POCTEP “ENERUSER”.

- Orchard School Gardens at Cristobal Colón school in Valladolid as pilot action to re-naturalize the school site and launch educational program.

Inspirational elements taken from the CityZen GPs database are linked to:

- the Educational Farm RhineMain, founded at the tourist circular route in the Frankfurt Regional Park. The farm is used as active pedagogical tool, based on vision for practical learning, observation and discovery, that allows visitors and especially school children to learn about economic, technological, cultural and environmental aspects of agriculture. Teachers can use it as a resource for educating scholars on food production and links between agriculture and nutrition.

- the Svolou's Neighbourhood Pocket Park in Thessaloniki showing how a space that is no longer in use can be re-naturalized to carry out recreational and educational activities for local children and adults in a participatory way by using two main concepts: learning how to create and maintain an orchard and how to do it together with families from the neighbourhood. It provides an interesting view point on school gardens since its scope goes beyond the curriculum and fosters active involvement of families with the rest of the school community.

From the showcases explained at the Impact Workshops, we can highlight collaboration of Bulgarian Central Cooperative Union with schools to launch herb gardens.

The implementation of the AP will be also fostered by the staff exchanges held by the end of Phase 1 in the partner regions.

## **2. Nature of the action**

Promoting UF in schools aims to develop eco-innovation and environmental performance management skills at neighbourhoods' level by involving the entire educational community in the process - children, teachers and parents.

Taking into account the CityZen experiences and the integration of UF as an amendment to the Regional ERDF OP by the help of the REACT-EU funds, a new Investment Priority 13I and Specific Objective OE 20.1.4.- OE REACT-UE 4. “Support to investments contributing to the transition to a green economy” were adopted. Within the new objective reported already as a policy change, 65 projects for school urban gardens were approved.

The Action aims to monitor the implementation of these 65 school gardens, where UF becomes part of the nature-based solutions to educate scholars, increase resilience to climate change and reduce inputs of energy and water resources.

A set of indicators will be designed in CityZen Phase 2 to measure the diverse impacts of UF school projects, their overall integration and acceptance in the educational process and potential follow-up activities to enhance local knowledge and skills.

Indicators may include the following:





- Surface of school orchards implemented, sq meters
- Number of edible trees planted, units
- Number of edible bushes (berries) planted, units
- Amount of budget allocated to UF, EUR
- Amount of UF budget / total budget of the programme, %
- Kg of vegetables produced
- Kg of fruit and berries produced
- Number of teachers participating
- Number of children participating
- Number of UF capacity building activities developed
- Number of training activities developed and opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship (orchard planting and management works, food processing, bioeconomy as composting food waste, orchards biodiversity, water efficiency)
- Impact on educational competences. Number of educational activities by competence.
- Number of local/community-based markets created

As part of the monitoring process a questionnaire for teachers will be developed to identify opportunities that promote educational competences and entrepreneurship skills to transform harvested vegetables and berries into homemade products.

Educational activities will be designed by teachers and students at the participating schools to integrate UF within their own educational programs. Trainings of the teaching teams that participate in each project and feedback on the educational process will be collected by each school as well.

The results of the monitoring will allow to make a better assessment of the ERDF OP – achieved impact, practical results by the action, perception among stakeholders, etc. This impact assessment analysis will allow a consideration of the Program's scope, activities, budget, transferability and upscaling.

### **3. Stakeholders involved:**

Castilla y León Cityzen's project partners (Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y León and University of Valladolid) will coordinate the monitoring of the AP, validating questionnaires and indicators, drafting the AP results report and involving the rest of stakeholder who will be:

- Regional Ministry of Education, that is in charge of developing an educational program to highlight adaptation to climate change and the contribution to nature-based solutions (and UF as part of it) to resource efficiency, environmental performance and Eco innovation.
- Schools with approved UF projects that are final users of the nature based solutions implemented. They will be involved in the maintenance of the school gardens, educational activities and monitoring of their impacts in Phase 2.
- Regional Ministry of Environment, through the Cityzen project partner "Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y León" will be involved in the construction works of the school green infrastructures, coordinating all the pilot action (works/climate resilience/educational activities)



**4. Timeframe:**

1 year (1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023)

**5. Costs:**

10.000 € staff costs for monitoring of school projects results

**6. Funding sources:**

The monitoring of UF impacts at the 65 school projects will be financed as part of the operations included at the Castilla y León ERDF OP 2014/2020. These are additional funds provided by REACT-EU.

The monitoring of educational impact including design of questionnaire, validation and analysis of data, will be financed by the internal staff budget of the Natural Heritage Foundation and by each school

**Date:** 22 April 2022

**Name of the organisation:** Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y León

**Signature of the relevant organisation:**

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Programmes Director