

**Urban Agenda for the EU**

# **Greening Cities Partnership**

**Draft  
Action Plan  
Consultation  
Report**



**November 2024**





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Authors: Greening Cities Partnership  
Prepared: November 2024

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**Contact:** [urbanagenda@urban-initiative.eu](mailto:urbanagenda@urban-initiative.eu)

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<sup>1</sup> Pact of Amsterdam, chapter 4, clause 19.

# Greening Cities Partnership



## Draft Action Plan Consultation Report

### A. Introduction

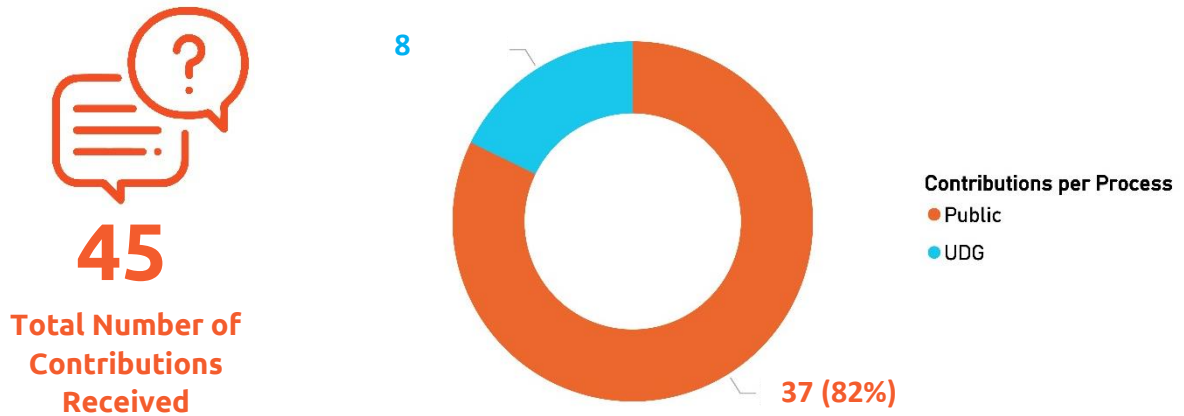
The public consultation process for the **Draft Action Plan of the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Greening Cities** was conducted in the summer of 2024 to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including EU institutions, Member States, urban authorities, EU networks, research institutions, private organisations, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders. The goal of the consultation was to ensure that the Action Plan reflects the needs and priorities of stakeholders at local, regional, and national levels, while supporting the broader objectives of urban sustainability and green infrastructure development in Europe.

The consultation, open from **June 06 to July 31, 2024**, collected responses through multiple channels, including the **UDG Member States consultation**, **the European Commission DGs interservice consultation**, and **an open public consultation** targeting a broad range of stakeholders. The feedback collected during this process has been analysed to provide actionable insights for refining the Greening Cities Partnership draft Action Plan and ensuring its successful implementation.

This report summarises the key themes addressed, stakeholder perspectives, and proposed revisions based on the feedback received and how those revisions have been integrated into the final Action Plan document, organised around the five main Actions of the Greening Cities Partnership draft Action Plan.

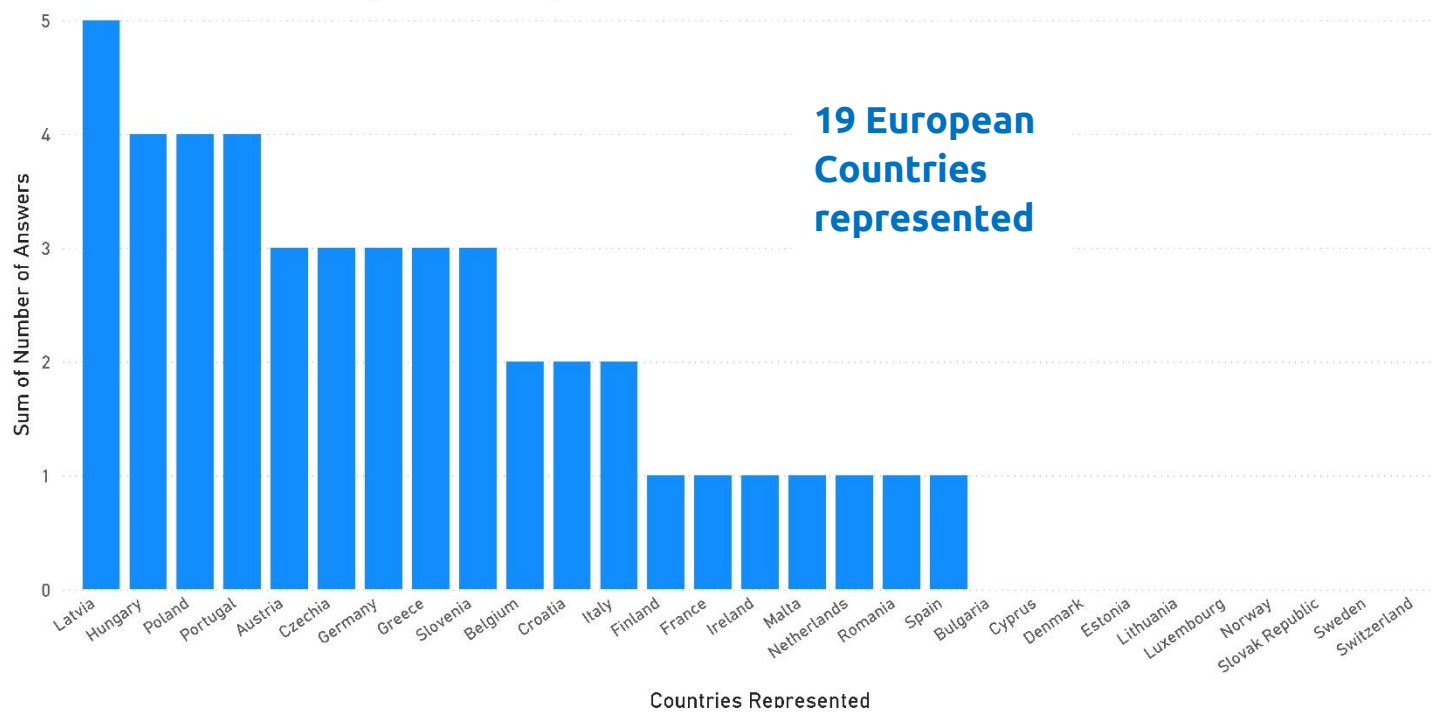
# A.1 Overview of the Consultation Process Results

The public consultation collected insights from a diverse range of stakeholders across multiple member states. The following diagrams illustrate the number and type of stakeholder groups who participated.



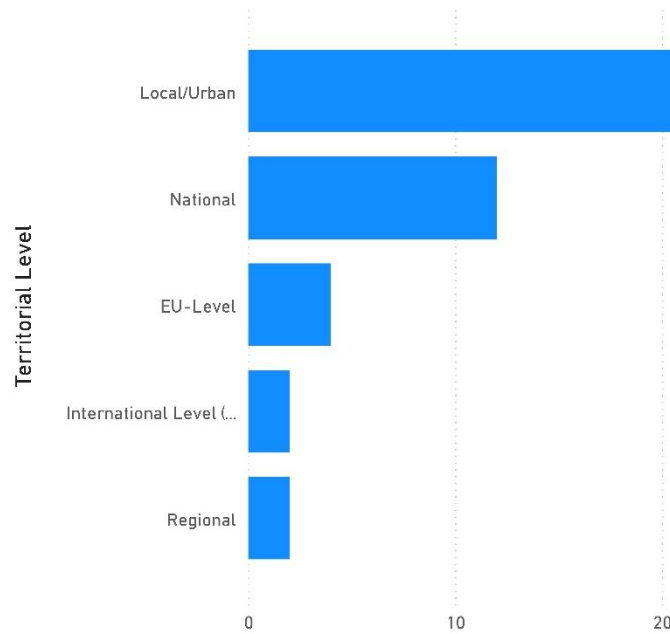
The following diagram displays the distribution of responses received from each country, highlighting the level of engagement across represented member states.

Sum of Number of Answers by Countries Represented

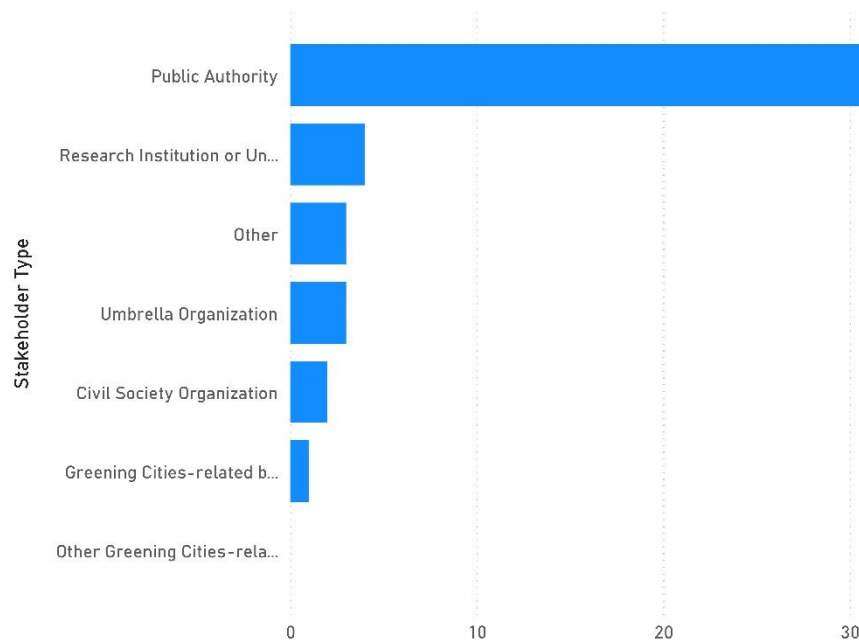


The diagrams below illustrate the distribution of contributions by territorial level and by stakeholder type providing insight into the diversity of perspectives gathered during the consultation.

### Number of Contributions by Territorial Level



### Number of Contributions by Stakeholder Type



# B. Addressing the Feedback of the Consultation Process

## B.1 Overall Feedback on the Action Plan

The **Greening Cities Partnership Action Plan** received a range of insightful comments, with stakeholders emphasising the importance of collaboration across spatial levels, improving know-how, public participation, and actionable support for municipalities. While the overall feedback expressed support for the proposed Actions, several key areas for improvement were highlighted, leading to important revisions.

### Key Topics Raised and Revisions

#### 1. Collaboration Across Spatial Levels

One of the overarching recommendations was the need for improved collaboration between rural, urban, and regional levels when planning and implementing green infrastructure. This was particularly noted for connected nature corridors, where integrated planning is essential.

- ⇒ **Revision:** A significant update to the draft Action Plan is the clarification of the **Urban Ecosystem Restoration Manual (UERM)** as an overarching output of the Greening Cities Partnership Action Plan (new Action 6). This manual will bring together findings from the different Actions and support cities in their greening efforts. The UERM will address cross-level collaboration within its chapters, though resource limitations mean it will provide a high-level overview rather than in-depth guidance. Additional work is required to support the implementation of the **Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR)** and boost restoration measures at various spatial levels.

#### 2. Improving Knowledge and Know-How

Feedback suggested that the Action Plan should focus not only on data collection but also on improving know-how, particularly by exploring new concepts and approaches for nature-based solutions and greening cities.

- ⇒ **Revision:** The **UERM** will provide cities with guidance on implementing the **NRR** targets and include case studies showcasing innovative approaches already being used. Additionally, **Action 1** will include a targeted analysis that covers new concepts and methodologies, equipping cities with tools to address their unique greening challenges.

### 3. Public Participation and Raising Awareness

Several comments emphasised the importance of public participation in urban space planning, particularly for green infrastructure projects, and called for efforts to raise awareness among residents and professionals about the benefits of GI.

- ⇒ **Revision:** The **UERM** will incorporate a section on municipal governance that highlights the need for citizen participation in the planning process. This section will promote integrating public feedback into greening projects and focus on educating both the general public and professionals about the long-term benefits of green infrastructure for quality of life.

### 4. Training and Capacity Building

Stakeholders highlighted the need for the inclusion of training activities in the Action Plan, stressing that without training and capacity building, it will be difficult for municipalities to progress in terms of green infrastructure development.

- ⇒ **Revision:** The Partnership acknowledges this gap, and **training opportunities** will be provided through workshops and webinars during the dissemination process for the **UERM**. Further dissemination workshops will be organised once the manual is complete, ensuring that municipalities are supported on building the necessary skills and knowledge to implement green infrastructure projects effectively.

### 5. From Documentation to Action

There was concern that the Action Plan focuses too heavily on producing written documents and lacks concrete support measures for urban authorities, particularly in **Actions 1, 2, 3, and 5**. Stakeholders stressed that dissemination alone is not sufficient; practical advisory and support measures are essential.

- ⇒ **Revision:** While documentation is an important step, the **Action Plan** will integrate targeted **support measures** on an individual Action basis. Advisory services and external expertise will be provided, ensuring that methodologies and guidelines are actionable and can lead to tangible outcomes for cities.

## B.2 Action-Specific Feedback

### Action 1:

#### Need for Green: Methodology for Quantifying the Demand for Green Infrastructure at the Local Level

Action 1 received valuable feedback from the European Commission, UDG members, and the general public. The main points raised during the consultation process included suggestions to differentiate between large and small cities in terms of **land use pressure**, emphasise the co-benefits of green infrastructure to gain **political support**, and ensure that the methodology encompasses both blue and green infrastructure. Stakeholders also stressed the importance of **knowledge-sharing, GI monitoring** via Copernicus, and integrating the **social, economic, and environmental dimensions** of GI benefits. Additionally, recommendations were made to link GI to **climate adaptation** and biodiversity, ensure context-sensitive solutions, and improve the clarity of wording in some sections. The roles of key partners like ESPON and JRC were also highlighted as needing better clarification.

#### Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Corrections:** Factual errors were corrected, and text was revised where necessary.
- ⇒ **References:** Relevant references to existing literature were added, with a request to review thematic literature to be addressed in the implementation phase.
- ⇒ **ESPON and JRC roles:** Clarifications were made to better define the roles of ESPON and JRC in supporting Action 1.



## Action 2:

### Indicator System for Evaluating Urban Nature Plans

Action 2 received constructive feedback during the public consultation process, particularly on the need to align the proposed indicator system with the framework for **Urban Nature Plans (UNPs)**. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of harmonising the indicators with existing international and Member State-level assessment frameworks, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the IUCN's Urban Nature Indexes (UNI). Additionally, it was suggested that the Action should establish comparable baselines for urban ecosystem restoration efforts and include both quantitative and qualitative indicators to capture various categories and conditions of urban green spaces.

Further feedback focused on the **dissemination of outputs** and the organisation of capacity-building activities to support local authorities in using the indicator system effectively. Comments from the EC Interservice Consultation process also emphasised the need to clarify the **scale of indicator implementation** and differentiate between core and supplementary indicators. The importance of technical experts, such as GIS analysts, in conducting spatial analyses was also noted.

#### **Incorporation into the Action Plan:**

- ⇒ **Alignment with existing frameworks:** The final Action Plan now aligns the indicator system with frameworks like the SDGs and UNI, while ensuring flexibility for local contexts.
- ⇒ **Clarification of indicator levels:** The roles of core ("mandatory") and supplementary ("voluntary") indicators have been clarified, emphasising local authorities' flexibility in tailoring the indicators.
- ⇒ **Implementation scale:** The Action now specifies that the primary scale of indicator implementation is local, with national-level reporting facilitated.
- ⇒ **Capacity-building activities:** The Action Plan includes the organisation of capacity-building events through EU-wide platforms, such as the EWRC and Cities Forum, and networks like EUKN, ICLEI, Eurocities, and JPI Urban Europe.
- ⇒ **Survey use explanation:** The role of the Partnership survey in developing the indicator system is now better explained.
- ⇒ **Clarification on Eurostat portal:** The revised plan clarifies that the indicator system will not be integrated into Eurostat's portal but will be recommended for inclusion in the UNP Guidance and Toolkit.

## Action 3: Reaching Meaningful Urban Targets

Feedback from respondents to the survey focused on four key areas. Firstly, stakeholders requested **further clarification** on what Action 3 would achieve, noting that the original title "Reaching Meaningful Urban Targets" was vague and lacked detail about the guidance to be provided. The second area of feedback concerned the proposal for an EU framework to restore nature, which was deemed unnecessary given **the adoption of the NRR**. Third, several comments stressed the importance of **behavior change and citizen engagement** in urban greening policies, highlighting the need for education and awareness-raising around new land management approaches, such as rewilding. Finally, respondents emphasised the importance of **collaboration between local and regional levels**, especially in establishing connected nature corridors, a point raised in both the general feedback and feedback specific to Action 3.

### Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Title Update:** The Action Plan has been revised, with the title of Action 3 updated to "Policies for Achieving Urban Restoration Targets / Urban Nature Plans." The revised Action includes further clarification on how to support cities in achieving urban nature restoration targets.
- ⇒ **Creation of Action 6 (UERM):** A new Action (Action 6) has been created, dedicated to the development of the UERM. This manual consolidates the findings and guidance from all Actions in the partnership, offering comprehensive guidance on policies for municipal and privately-owned land, monitoring through indicators, funding strategies, and assessing how much green space a city needs. The UERM serves as a cohesive tool for building the capacity of cities on urban greening.
- ⇒ **NRR Alignment:** Action 3 has been updated to reflect the adoption of the NRR, removing the proposal for a new EU framework as it is no longer necessary.
- ⇒ **Citizen Engagement:** The Action Plan now addresses the importance of citizen engagement and awareness-raising in urban greening policies. This is included in Action 6 through a UERM chapter on collaboration with citizens for protecting and restoring nature on privately-owned land. The UERM also outlines the need for co-creating urban spatial plans with citizens.
- ⇒ **Local-Regional Collaboration:** The updated Action Plan acknowledges the need for collaboration between local and regional levels to establish connected nature corridors, a vital element for the successful restoration of nature under the NRR. However, it also recognizes that the Partnership's limited resources prevent further in-depth exploration of this topic.

## Action 4:

### Strengthening Structural Funding for Urban Green Infrastructure

Feedback from the public consultation process on Action 4 highlighted several critical areas necessary for improving the financing of green infrastructure (GI) in cities. Stakeholders emphasised the need for **dedicated funds for urban GI**, with many stressing the importance of addressing both the initial costs and the ongoing maintenance of green spaces. The eligibility of induced investments, such as costs associated with **waterproofing** adjacent buildings when trees are planted in streets, was raised as an area for consideration. Incentive mechanisms were also mentioned as crucial for encouraging broader participation in GI projects. Additionally, respondents called for **simplifying structural funding rules** and expanding their focus to account not only for biodiversity benefits but also for the social and psychological benefits GI provides to urban residents.

#### Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Dedicated GI Funds:** The importance of dedicated urban GI funds has been acknowledged in the Action Plan to ensure that financial resources are available for cities to support GI projects.
- ⇒ **Eligibility of Induced Investments:** The Action Plan reflects the consideration of induced investments as eligible expenses in GI projects, such as costs related to building waterproofing during tree planting initiatives.
- ⇒ **Funding for Maintenance Costs:** Funding for the maintenance of urban green areas is already included in Action 4, as it is recognised as key to the long-term success of GI projects.
- ⇒ **Incentive Mechanisms:** The Action Plan emphasises the importance of incentive mechanisms, which are crucial for transferring the benefits of GI to landowners and encouraging broader participation.
- ⇒ **Urban vs. Suburban GI:** Action 4 incorporates the distinction between GI in cities and suburban areas, with an emphasis on the role of urban GI in benefiting both biodiversity and citizens' wellbeing.
- ⇒ **Structural Funding Guidance:** The need for a guidance document to expand the possibilities of structural funding for urban GI projects has been incorporated into the Action Plan, focusing on both biodiversity and the benefits to city residents.

## Action 5:

### Enhancing the Use of Innovative Funding by Urban Authorities to Green Cities

Stakeholders raised several issues regarding Action 5. The most prominent concerns were related to the barriers that cities face in using **innovative funding instruments**. These barriers ranged from a lack of human resources, skills, and knowledge about financial tools to language barriers. Another major theme was the lack of funds for the **long-term maintenance** of green infrastructure (GI), which is often seen as more challenging than securing initial funding. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of simplifying legal and practical requirements to facilitate the use of innovative financial tools. Other points raised included the need to **monetise existing GI** to generate revenue for further investment, and the importance of showcasing good and bad practices in public-private partnerships (PPPs) to help local authorities adopt innovative funding solutions. There was also a strong emphasis on the need for tailored support for smaller cities with fewer resources, as well as on disseminating good practices through conferences and seminars to create communication opportunities between municipalities and funding institutions.

#### Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Template for Good Practices:** Build a template for collecting and showcasing good practices in GI financing, with the first set of cities identified for online meetings.
- ⇒ **Round Table Discussions:** Organise a roundtable between selected cities/regions and representatives of the financial sector to explore solutions to financing barriers.
- ⇒ **Inspirational Booklet:** Develop an inspiration booklet on "Innovative Funding" to help municipalities understand and adopt new funding mechanisms.
- ⇒ **Identifying Barriers:** Include a thorough assessment of gaps, bottlenecks, and barriers that hinder cities from adopting innovative financial instruments. Summarise findings to inform workshops.
- ⇒ **Practical Recommendations:** Develop practical recommendations based on identified barriers, such as reframing legislative frameworks or unifying legislative processes across the EU and member states.
- ⇒ **Risk Management for GI Financing:** Collect recommendations for risk management in public-private financing for GI, particularly from a municipal perspective.
- ⇒ **Innovative Solutions:** Rethink and develop new, innovative financing solutions while simplifying current mechanisms.
- ⇒ **Promotion of Individual Approaches:** Advocate for individual, localised approaches to GI financing, recognising that customised solutions can maximise the success of green projects and sub-projects.

## B.3 Synergies and alignment with other initiatives

The Greening Cities Partnership received numerous **synergy proposals** from a wide range of stakeholders, including UDG Member States, national governments, urban authorities, EU programmes and initiatives, research institutions, civil society groups, the private sector, and SMEs. Many stakeholders offered direct contact points and suggested opportunities to support the implementation and dissemination of both the Action Plan and its individual Actions. Key suggestions included experience exchanges, result dissemination, survey participation, and targeted support for specific Actions. Stakeholders also proposed collaborating on awareness-raising activities, providing expertise for implementation phases, organising joint workshops, participating in surveys and case studies, and maintaining updated information on survey outcomes.

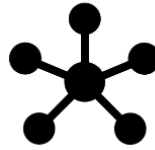
In response, the Partnership will consider each request and will establish **specific lines of communication** for each Action as well as for the Action Plan as a whole. This approach includes identifying potential collaborators to support targeted actions and creating a dynamic stakeholder list to help map and manage all communications. These synergies will enhance the Action Plan's reach and impact, reinforce its political messages, and bring valuable knowledge into the various dimensions of urban greening it addresses.

## C. Conclusion

The public consultation process for the draft Action Plan of the Greening Cities Partnership has provided valuable insights, strengthening the proposed Actions and identifying key areas for alignment, collaboration, and enhancement. Stakeholder feedback emphasised the need for practical tools, targeted funding, and increased citizen engagement, all of which have informed revisions to the Action Plan and the addition of supportive resources such as the Urban Ecosystem Restoration Manual. Moving forward, the Partnership will focus on fostering synergies, building communication frameworks with potential collaborators, and implementing targeted actions to ensure that urban greening efforts are sustainable, inclusive, and impactful. With a roadmap shaped by multi-level stakeholder engagement, the Partnership is well-positioned to support urban authorities across Europe in achieving ambitious green infrastructure goals.

# ANNEX

## Urban Agenda for the EU Greening Cities Partnership Constellation of Actions



Have a look at the dynamic Miro Board Infographic here:  
[https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVKCSLjX0=/?share\\_link\\_id=489551391524](https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVKCSLjX0=/?share_link_id=489551391524)

