

**URBAN  
AGENDA**  
FOR THE EU

WORKING TOGETHER  
FOR BETTER CITIES

SUSTAINABLE USE OF  
LAND & NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS



Sustainable use of land  
and nature-based solutions  
partnership

## **What is the Urban Agenda?** ---

Urban Agenda for the European Union is an inter-governmental cooperation initiative, agreed by the EU Ministers responsible for urban matters in May 2016 in the Pact of Amsterdam. Based on the Pact, thematic partnerships have formed that cover the most pertinent urban challenges in Europe. Each partnership consists of representatives of European cities, national governments, EU institutions and other partners who work together on solutions and recommendations for improving regulations, financing and knowledge in the given thematic area.

## **Why sustainable land use and nature-based solutions?** ---

One of 14 thematic areas identified for the Urban Agenda is the sustainable land use and nature-based solutions. Rapid and uncontrolled growth of the cities, urban sprawl, pollution, pressure on the natural ecosystems – all those challenges call for better management of natural resources, including land, and better integration of urban growth with the surrounding environment. Through sustainable land use practices and implementation of nature-based solutions, we can build more compact and livable urban spaces – cities that are more effi-

cient, accessible, healthy and attractive.

Sustainable land use and nature-based solutions are about using the potentials of the surrounding environment. Land, clean air and water, green areas – are all valuable resources and they are not infinite. We need to learn how to use those resources in a smart, sustainable way to ensure that cities develop as the integral part of the wider environment, not in isolation from it.

## **The aim of the partnership** ---

The partnership aims at promoting and strengthening sustainable use of natural resources, including land, in the urban setting. The partners intend to propose legislative changes, useful methodologies and recommendations in areas such as land take, unused land and brownfields development, functional urban areas and nature-based solutions. Through research, discussions and various events, facilitating dialog and exchange with multiple stakeholders, the partners hope to add to the existing knowledge, financing schemes and regulations. The designed actions aim at influencing not only European level, but should also help countries and cities to better recognize and use the need for and opportunities of sustainable land use and nature-based solutions.

## Challenges to European urban space

---

- Unsustainable consumption and production patterns
- Increased developed land area outside urban cores (urban sprawl)
- Loss of biodiversity & pressure on ecosystems
- Pollution and traffic congestion
- Over-crowding
- Physical decline of building and neighborhoods

- Shorter commutes and less congestion
- More green and healthy urban environment
- Walkable cities with friendly, high-quality public spaces
- Monetary savings for municipalities and inhabitants
- Less new land taken for new infrastructure

## Building compact and livable cities

---

## Urban Agenda Action Plan – 9 targeted actions

---

- Managing land take
- Brownfields development
- Management of under-used land
- Functional Urban Areas cooperation
- Nature-based solutions

# Actions' overview

---

## ACTION N° 1

INCLUDING LAND TAKE AND SOIL PROPERTIES IN IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

**Joint meeting with DG Environment, guidelines and recommendations** – to recognize land take as an important element of environmental impact assessment procedures and work with DG Environment on how to include land take in the existing directives; to strengthen and harmonize existing impact assessment procedures on the EU, national, local levels in order to make them effective in reducing land-take.

Action leader: **Bologna**

## ACTION N° 2

FUNDING AND FINANCING GUIDE FOR BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

**Financing guidebook** – to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information for cities on how to receive EU-level funding and financing, and to leverage private investment for brownfield redevelopment; to encourage cities to use brownfields instead of taking new land.

Action leader: **Luxembourg**

## ACTION N° 3

IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING UNDER-USED LAND

**Joint workshops, discussions and guideline document** – to give cities practical tools on how to use opportunities of unused or under-used spaces (e.g. vacant land, empty, abandoned buildings,

brownfields); to build knowledge and awareness about opportunities of utilizing under-used spaces; to mobilize urban authorities, NGO's and private sector in searching for opportunities of under-used land.

Action leader: **INCASÒL Government of Catalonia**

## ACTION N° 4

INDICATORS OF LAND TAKE

**Workshops and discussions, proposing methodology and final report** – to propose a set of common indicators / a composite index of net land take that takes into account urban greening, re-naturalisation processes and soil sealing / desealing; to provide a common reference indicator for countries and EU institutions in assessing the environmental impact of spatial plans and decisions, and for setting reasonable targets for net land take.

Action leader: **Bologna**



## ACTION N° 5

PROMOTING FUA COOPERATION AS A TOOL TO MITIGATE URBAN SPRAWL

**Discussions, policy lab, research and final guidebook** – to showcase benefits of functional urban areas / metropolitan cooperation in the context of sustainable land use practices, joint spatial planning and mitigating the effects of sprawl; to stimulate on-going discussions on how to mainstream functional approach more effectively and how to establish successful FUA collaborations.

Action leader: **Poland**

## ACTION N° 6

BETTER REGULATION TO BOOST NBS AT EUROPEAN, NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

**Survey, workshops, policy lab and final guidelines** – to better integrate nature-based solutions within existing directives, such as Flood Directive, and other existing EU-level legislation and documents; to help cities and states to better address nature-based solutions in their strategies and policies, and to set minimum legal requirements for NBS.

Action leader: **Bologna**

## ACTION N° 7

BETTER FINANCING ON NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

**Workshops, discussions and final guidebook document(s)** – to provide cities with a comprehensi-

ve guide on how to search for funding for nature-based solutions; to mainstream available funding sources; to overcome existing bias regarding the perceived obstacles for NBS and demonstrate that nature-based solutions are an attractive and desirable alternative to “business as usual” approaches.

Action leader: **Zagreb**

## ACTION N° 8

AWARENESS RAISING IN THE AREAS OF NBS AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF LAND (URBAN SPRAWL)

**NBS glossary, communication campaigns** – to ease the nature-based solutions concept and raise awareness on the topic; to unify a related vocabulary and co-create a joint glossary on NBS; to provide methodology on how to work between various urban stakeholders and achieve a common vision on implementing NBS in the cities.

Action leader: **Bologna**

# ACTION N° 9

AGREEING ON COMMON TARGETS AND INDICATORS FOR NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS, URBAN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN CITIES

## Collaboration with European stakeholders and proposing a methodology

– to establish a relevant, easily adaptable and easy-to-implement set of targets and indicators for cities in cooperation with European institutions and projects; to agree on indicators and targets that the citizens, the politicians and the administrations jointly recognise and find meaningful; to provide cities with an easy tool for successfully implementing nature-based solutions.

Action leader: **Stavanger**



# Coordinators

## BOLOGNA (IT)

Department of Urban Planning,  
Housing and Environment,  
City of Bologna  
giovanni.fini@comune.bologna.it

## POLAND

Department for Development  
Strategy, Ministry of Investment  
and Economic Development  
daniel.balinski@miir.gov.pl

### Partners representing cities:

Antwerp (BE)  
Cork (IR)  
Métropole Européenne de Lille (FR)  
Stavanger (NO)  
Verband Region Stuttgart (DE)  
City of Zagreb (HR)

### Partners representing Member States:

Cyprus  
Lithuania  
Luxembourg  
Portugal  
Slovenia

### Partners representing the European Commission:

Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)  
Directorate-General for the Environment (DG ENV)  
Directorate-General for Research & Innovation (DG RTD)  
Joint Research Centre (JRC)

### Partners representing other stakeholders:

European Investment Bank (EIB)  
Catalan Land Institute (INCASÒL)  
EUROCITIES  
Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)  
European Environment Agency (EEA)  
International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP)

### Observers:

URBACT

### Support:

Ecorys  
European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN)

For more information, please visit:

<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/sustainable-land-use>

