

Tackling the barriers that keep nature off the cities

The URBAN GreenUP analysis on obstacles hampering the implementation of Nature-Based Solutions and the related countermeasures is now available

Making our cities more sustainable and less harmful for the environment is one of humanity's top priorities. Different approaches in this direction can be adopted. So far, renaturing urban plans by making use of Nature-Based solutions (NBS) are among the most effective ones. However, different kinds of barriers may stand in their way or slow them down. To top it all off, these hindrances are often times interlinked to one another which therefore makes it impossible for radical changes such as NBS to take place. To address this issue, the EU-funded URBAN GreenUP project has prepared a document identifying the main classes of barriers faced by its fellow cities. It also provides indicators on how to overcome such barriers, along with a collection of success and failure stories.

The document outlines different kinds of barriers. Some of these obstacles are purely technical and related to the NBS design and installation while others are of political, legislative, financial and social concerns, which may jeopardize altogether the implementation of these NBS.

In the realm of politics, one of the toughest barriers is the conflict and mismatch of priorities between local and the national governments. These include budget restrictions and cuts, as well as bureaucratic red tapes like land ownership.

Further complications arise by adding legislation into the picture. For one, legislative approval is required every time important changes such as NBS implementation is to take place in a city. This will become more troublesome if we also account for NBS's unconventional designs that may violate the local legislative measures or protocols, and if these interventions should be implemented on private property.

Looking at it from a financial perspective, the biggest concern that the population may have is where the funding needed to implement NBS should come from. As a matter of fact, NBS most often fail to offer tangible cash return in the short term. This makes it less attractive for future investors.

Last but not the least, social barriers may arise as NBS impose a change of scenery and habits for the locals. For one, people have low public awareness as to how environmental protection can be beneficial to them. As a consequence, nature based interventions are considered among the citizens' lowest priorities thus giving them a weak stance as to whether they should be supported.

With the Urban GreenUP's catalogue, anyone can jumpstart and go over through the list of NBS as it also covers the wide spectrum of solutions that come along with them. These may range from crowdfunding and tax reduction to effective communication strategies

The document is publicly available on the URBAN GreenUP website and is meant to provide guidelines and recommendations to cities and organisations implementing NBS.

EDITOR'S NOTE

URBAN GreenUP is an Horizon2020 project started in June 2017 and running until May 2022. Its goal is to design and implement a number of NBS in the three Front-Runner cities of Valladolid (Spain), Liverpool (United Kingdom) and Izmir (Turkey). Five Follower cities (Chengdu in China, Ludwigsburg in Germany, Mantua in Italy, Medellin in Colombia, Quy Nhon in Vietnam) will help develop a sound NBS replication strategy.