



Capitals of Biodiversity

European municipalities lead the way in local biodiversity protection



**CAPITALS OF BIODIVERSITY
EUROPEAN MUNICIPALITIES LEAD THE
WAY IN LOCAL BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION**

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Fundación Biodiversidad

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Convention on Biological Diversity Foreword



Dear friends,

The current rate of loss of our living treasure, the variety of living beings we call biodiversity, has reached such a level that the capacity of the planet to continue sustaining life on Earth is being seriously threatened. As demonstrated by the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, worldwide, human activities are causing extinction rates by a factor of 100 to 1000 times higher than the natural extinction rate. In Europe, between 30 and 50 percent of Europe's mammals, birds, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles and freshwater fish are threatened with extinction. As humankind becomes increasingly urban, we still – and completely – depend on the services that are provided by nature, ranging from food to medicines, and from building materials to clothes, fuel, air and water purification. As indicated by FAO, about 40% of the world economy is based on biological products or processes. For urban residents, declining biodiversity means increasing monotony and stress, and less quality of life. On the other hand, villages, towns and cities are important key players for biodiversity - through adequate action and communication about the significance of biodiversity, municipalities and their residents can be leaders in stopping the loss of biodiversity.

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the first truly global agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of Biodiversity, as well as on access to biological resources and the fair and equitable sharing of its benefits. Over 150 governments signed the document at the Rio conference in 1992, and 193 countries have now ratified the agreement.

The 193 Parties to the Convention have recognized, through successive decisions and by adopting a dedicated Plan of Action in 2010, the critical contribution of sub-national governments and local authorities to its implementation. Several Parties to the CBD have taken proactive measures on this issue. In particular, the European Union has financed the groundbreaking European Capitals of Biodiversity award, implemented by a coalition of NGOs, our partners ICLEI and IUCN, with France, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and Spain as the first European members to hold the competition. Due to the pioneering nature of this project, the Secretariat was pleased to be part of its Advisory Board, and collaborated with executing agencies to honour its 2010 winners by recognizing their achievements at the City Biodiversity Summit in Nagoya, Japan, which brought together more than 600 top executives of cities and States parallel to the 10th CBD Conference of the Parties.

I sincerely congratulate all winners and top-ranking municipalities, I thank all participating municipalities as well as the EU's LIFE programme and the national co-financers of the project, and I hope that this initiative will continue, that lessons learned by finalists and winners are shared within the EU and outside, and that similar competitions will recognize local biodiversity champions and show the way for local authorities to contribute further to the Convention's objectives and to its 2011-2020 Strategic Plan.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. Djoghla'.

Dr. Ahmed Djoghla, Assistant Secretary General
and Executive Secretary of the United Nations
Convention on Biological Diversity

The Project

Many European cities, towns and villages shelter an unexpectedly rich biodiversity. They host a high variety of ecosystems, which provide manifold habitats: gardens and parks, rivers and forests, old buildings and walls, fallow land, grassland, and many more. This diversity is not only important to protect threatened nature; for a large part of the population it is also the first or even the only contact to nature, as they live far away from natural habitats, which are more commonly found in rural areas.

Municipalities can do a lot to protect biodiversity and to provide healthy and liveable surroundings for their citizens and for future generations. Committed municipalities show responsibility and contribute directly to the sustainable development of their municipalities. The project “Capitals of Biodiversity” honours these municipalities, communicates their actions to other cities and highlights their performance on a national and European level.

The core of the project is national competitions which put local action for biodiversity at the centre of attention: Which municipalities act with most commitment for biodiversity? ...create and support natural green spaces? ...initiate river revitalization or recuperation of other important habitats? ...consider nature and biodiversity in their planning processes? The competitions were first implemented in France, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and Spain in 2010, during the UN Year of Biodiversity. In France, Hungary, Slovakia and Spain it was repeated in 2011. Altogether, 521 municipalities participated in the competitions, representing almost 40 million Europeans!

Municipalities of all sizes participated, from small villages such as Gyűrűfű (Hungary, 25 inhabitants) and Carrícola (Spain, 70 inhabitants) to large cities such as Barcelona, Bratislava, Budapest, Munich and Paris. Small and medium sized municipalities were particularly interested in the competitions: some 30 % of the participants were municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants, over 60 % had no more than 30,000 inhabitants. A fair competition was ensured by allocating all participating municipalities to different size classes.

The complex nature of the topic demanded a multilayered approach: Detailed questionnaires with sophisticated evaluation schemes determined the winners of the competitions.

Training workshops were organised for municipal staff members and political decision makers to demonstrate and promote what municipalities can do to protect biodiversity. Tried and tested best practice examples were collected and made available to municipalities and other interested parties in extensive training material and brochures. A biodiversity monitoring system was provided to municipalities as a tool to keep track of the state of their local biodiversity and to evaluate the effectiveness of their measures.

The top three municipalities in each size category were honoured each year in festive and well-attended national award ceremonies. The one overall winner of each competition was awarded the title of “National Capital of Biodiversity” of the respective year.

This prestigious award has already induced some very valuable exchanges across borders: the mayors of the French, Hungarian, and Spanish Capitals of Biodiversity 2010 contributed to the City Biodiversity Summit in Nagoya, Japan, event parallel to the 10th CBD Conference of the Parties in October 2010 and co-organized by ICLEI. One year later, in November 2011 all winners from the 2011 competition in each country were presented at an European award ceremony of the Capitals of Biodiversity held at the South Tyrol Liaison Office in Brussels.

Cross-border study tours between various Capitals have already initiated and will continue to strengthen liaisons in local biodiversity questions across European countries. This exchange and mutual support of European cities and towns can be considered as a considerable contribution to reach the European biodiversity goals.



© Federico Palmero Pavón

The Project Team

The project is a joint initiative of five national environmental NGOs, which implement the national competitions in the five countries and two global organisations.

The **German Environmental Aid** (Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V., DUH) is the coordinating organisation of the project. The department for Municipal Environmental Protection supports cities and towns in nature and biodiversity conservation as well as in climate protection on the local level. A major approach in the last 20 years has been implementing competitions for municipalities, which has eventually led to holding the “Capitals of Biodiversity” in partner countries as part of this project.

Natureparif is the regional agency for nature and biodiversity in Ile-de-France (Paris Region). Its members are: environmental associations, research bodies, chambers of commerce, companies, local authorities, the state of France and Ile-de-France. The main objectives of Natureparif are to network existing information and expertise, to establish a regional biodiversity observatory, to raise awareness on the state of biodiversity in Ile-de-France and to support institutions in order to promote conservation and a more rational use of natural resources.

The **Regional Environmental Center** (REC) Slovakia is one of the REC branch offices in 16 countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Established in 1992, REC Slovakia has successfully cooperated with all important Slovak environmental NGOs, governmental and academic institutions and Slovak municipalities. It is focused on sustainable development on national, regional and local level, on nature protection, landscape and urban biodiversity conservation, spatial and territorial planning, sustainable tourism and on environmental education.

The aim of the **Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency** (LBDCA) is to develop the Lake Balaton Resort Area to become a region that is most attractive for the local population, tourists and investors. Major tasks are environmental protection, traffic infrastructure and the development of human resources. The Regional Council and LBDCA coordinate activities to preserve the ecological conditions of the resort area, to improve water quality and to protect the environment.

The **Biodiversity Foundation** was established in 1998 by the Spanish Government. It works in the field of conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity, sustainable development and rural affairs, the fight against climate change, the conservation of marine sites and international cooperation. To contribute to these objectives it develops more than 500 projects per year and it collaborates with many institutions from public sector, civil society and business sector. The Foundation is presided over by the Spanish Minister of Environment, Rural and Marine affairs.

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to the most pressing environment and development challenges. It supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world and brings governments, NGOs, United Nations agencies, companies and local communities together to develop and implement policy, laws and best practice. Founded in 1948, IUCN is today a unique democratic membership union, with over 1,000 government and NGO member organisations, and 11,000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries.

ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability is an international association of over 1,200 local governments as well as national and regional local government organisations that have made a commitment to sustainable development. ICLEI provides technical consulting, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local governments in implementing sustainable development at the local level.



"Project team meeting in Madrid" © Fundación Biodiversidad

Training workshops

While local authorities are undoubtedly critical actors in conserving biodiversity, they often lack the capacity needed to effectively implement initiatives and access the information needed to manage their biodiversity. To support local governments in integrating biodiversity into their planning and decision-making, the project developed a number of biodiversity-related background papers for training modules, prepared by IUCN and ICLEI. These modules are designed to foster political commitment and the understanding of biodiversity conservation and enhancement, as well as to clarify the legal and policy framework for action.

The background papers have been developed based both on the perceived knowledge gap in the different countries and on current “burning” biodiversity issues. They are applicable in all European countries and draw on the experience of various cities across the continent.

These documents focus on:

Legal framework for biodiversity protection, providing the legal framework for biodiversity at international, regional and local levels

Biodiversity: introduction, trends and key issues, giving an overview of the main biodiversity issues and fostering an understanding of the social, economic and environmental benefits of biodiversity with a focus on urban biodiversity;

Biodiversity in municipality planning and services, supporting local officials in understanding the impact of municipal activities on biodiversity, the relevance and the opportunities

for integrating biodiversity management in local planning;

Communication and biodiversity, containing useful tips on how to effectively communicate biodiversity to different target audiences and stakeholders;

Climate change and biodiversity, offering an insight into how local biodiversity initiatives can reduce the impact of the consequences of climate change and how local climate change initiatives can be designed to reduce biodiversity loss and habitat degradation;

Fundraising for biodiversity, guiding local officials in understanding and identifying suitable funding sources for different components of local biodiversity projects.

The papers were presented at a series of national workshops, which also presented information sessions on the competition. International speakers and a range of best practices examples from all over Europe inspired participants, while local experts made sure that the workshops were adapted to meet their specific needs.

It was clear that this topic is of great interest to municipalities as the workshops were all well attended. Over the two years of the competition, throughout the five countries, 36 workshops were organized and attended by approximately 1,460 participants representing almost 700 municipalities.

All background papers are available for download on www.capital-biodiversity.eu



“Workshop in San Sebastian” © Fundación Biodiversidad

Monitoring Biodiversity in Municipalities: Potential and Advantages

It is often hard to tell whether local efforts to improve local biodiversity actually result in the intended enhancement of biodiversity. With an appropriate monitoring system it is possible to measure the impact of these efforts, the development of local biodiversity and the related ecosystem services. In order to equip municipalities with appropriate monitoring, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has developed a set of 23 indicators specifically for monitoring urban biodiversity. The result is the so-called “Singapore Index on Cities’ Biodiversity” – or CBI. After initial trials in large cities such as Brussels, Montreal and Singapore, a selection of CBI indicators was included in the “Capital of Biodiversity” questionnaires in all five countries. With over 330 local authorities of all sizes participating in 2010 alone, this was the first large-scale trial of the CBI.

Implementing the CBI posed certain challenges for many participants, particularly when little data was available or resources were limited. Moreover, the submitted values were often rather unrealistic, i.e. when the number of butterfly species claimed to occur in a given municipality greatly exceeded the total butterfly species richness of the respective country. Most accurate, i.e. most realistic, data was submitted, when the municipalities could select the taxonomic group of which they wanted to report species numbers. The most frequently selected taxonomic groups in all countries were amphibians, reptiles and mammals, followed by fish and dragonflies, in Germany also bats. Despite many challenges, biodiversity indicators as a whole proved to be an important tool to set baselines and benchmarks in the protection of local biodiversity.

An example for a European city already implementing a monitoring system – and successfully using the results in their urban

planning – is the German city of Neuss. Since 2006, Neuss has surveyed a number of native animal species such as farmland birds, owls, and birds of prey, as well as bats, amphibians and dragonflies. The knowledge gained from the monitoring has been incorporated into a Biotope Connectivity Plan recently agreed upon by the city council. The purpose of the Biotope Connectivity Plan and the species monitoring is to sustainably conserve native animal and plant species, including their habitats and ecosystems, on allocated priority sites in the administrative area of the city of Neuss.

As a result, aspects of nature conservation have been more effectively included in the development activities in Neuss. The environmental department has been able to contribute well informed and cost-effective expert opinions to various development plans in the city, initiating necessary alterations where protected species could be affected. In spring 2011, for example, the size of a business park was considerably reduced in a draft land use plan, leaving the remaining part untouched due to it being habitat to a Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*).

Owing to their monitoring activities and a generally good availability of biodiversity data in Neuss, the city was able to fill out all CBI indicators in the German competition and received full points in this section of the questionnaire.

The monitoring data collected in all competitions was forwarded to the CBD. Many suggestions and comments provided by the participants of the 2010 competitions helped the CBD to greatly improve the clarity, user-friendliness, and relevance of the indicators. The modified CBI was officially adopted, as part of a broader Plan of Action on Cities, Local Authorities and Biodiversity at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the CBD in Nagoya in October 2010.

List of winners 2010 competitions

FRANCE

2,001-10,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Jarrie
- 2nd Courdimanche
- 3rd Saint-Prix

30,001-100,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Pessac
- 2nd Alès
- 3rd Dunkerque

Special prizes:

- Prize Natureparif: Aulnay-Sous-Bois
- “Coup de coeur” prize: Pont-du-Château
- Special mention: Paris

10,001-30,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Grande-Synthe
- 2nd Pont-du-Château
- 3rd La Motte-Servolex

Over 100,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Besançon
- 2nd Lille
- 3rd Rennes

French Capital of Biodiversity 2010: Grande-Synthe

HUNGARY

Up to 2,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Kunsziget
- 2nd Gyűrűfű
- 3rd Alsómocsolád

10,001-30,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Tata
- 2nd Balatonfüred
- 3rd Siófok

Over 100,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Miskolc
- 2nd Kecskemét
- 3rd Debrecen

2,001-10,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Dévaványa
- 2nd Hévíz
- 3rd Csopak

30,001-100,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Hódmezővásárhely
- 2nd Veszprém
- 3rd Hajdúböszörmény

Special prize:

- Nature in the city: City of Dévaványa
(category 2,000 – 10,000 inhabitants)

Hungarian Capital of Biodiversity 2010: Tata

SLOVAKIA

Up to 10,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Želiezovce
- 2nd Kremnica
- 3rd Vysoké Tatry

Over 50,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Nitra
- 2nd Trnava
- 3rd Prievidza

10,001-50,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Michalovce
- 2nd Senec
- 3rd Dubnica nad Váhom

Special prizes:

- Best project award “Nature in the city”: Želiezovce
- Special prize for the best project: Želiezovce

Slovak Capital of Biodiversity 2010: Želiezovce

SPAIN

Up to 1,000 inhabitants:

1st Quer

2nd Alberuela de Tubo

3rd Sojuela

5,001-30,000 inhabitants:

1st Real Sitio de San Ildefonso

2nd Tineo

3rd Astillero

Special prizes:

Green areas: Gijón and Logroño

Environmental justice: Córdoba
and Santander

1,001-5,000 inhabitants:

1st Somiedo

2nd Puebla de Sanabria

3rd Valle de Mena

Over 30,000 inhabitants:

1st Vitoria

2nd Barcelona

3rd San Sebastián

Spanish Capital of Biodiversity 2010: Real Sitio de San Ildefonso



List of winners 2011 competitions

FRANCE

2,000 – 20,000 inhabitants:
Saint-Orens-de-Gameville

Over 100,000 inhabitants:
Toulouse

20,001 – 100,000 inhabitants:
Bayonne

Group of municipalities Dunkerque Grand Littoral
Special prizes:
Prize Natureparif: Maurecourt
“Coup de Coeur” Prize: Condette

French Capital of Biodiversity 2011: Montpellier

GERMANY

Up to 10,000 inhabitants:
1st Nettersheim
2nd Bad Grönenbach
3rd Schwebheim

30,001-100,000 inhabitants:
1st Ravensburg
2nd Wernigerode
3rd Landshut

10,001-30,000 inhabitants:
1st Ratekau
2nd Bad Saulgau
3rd Eckernförde

Over 100,000 inhabitants:
1st Hannover
2nd Münster
3rd Frankfurt am Main

Special prizes:
Nature in the City: Leipzig
Environmental Justice and
Environmental Education: Marburg

German Capital of Biodiversity 2011: Hannover

HUNGARY

Up to 2,000 inhabitants:
1st Kunsziget
2nd Bába
3rd Alsómocsolád

10,001-30,000 inhabitants:
1st Szentés
2nd Tata
3rd Balatonfüred

2,001-10,000 inhabitants:
1st Mórahalom
2nd Dévaványa
3rd Gyenesdiás

Over 30,000 inhabitants:
1st Kaposvár
2nd Veszprém
3rd Miskolc

Special prizes:
Best nature projects: Budaörs

Hungarian Capital of Biodiversity 2011: Szentés

SLOVAKIA

Up to 1,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Želiezovce
- 2nd Čierne Pole
- 3rd Hiadel'

10,001-50,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Michalovce
- 2nd Zvolen
- 3rd Lučenec

1,001-10,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Kremnica
- 2nd Vysoké Tatry
- 3rd Rybník

Over 50,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Nitra
- 2nd Trnava
- 3rd Banská Bystrica

Special prize for the best project: Zábiedovo / Slovak Capital of Biodiversity 2011: Kremnica

SPAIN

Up to 5,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Puebla de Sanabria
- 2nd El Oso
- 3rd Monleras

30,001-200,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Granollers
- 2nd Lleida
- 3rd Ourense

5,001-30,000 inhabitants:

- 1st Astillero
- 2nd Palau-solità i Plegamans
- 3rd Miajadas

Special prizes:

Restoration of demoted areas: Astillero
Communication: Lleida

Spanish Capital of Biodiversity 2011: Puebla de Sanabria



Description of Capitals of Biodiversity 2010

Grande-Synthe: French Capital of Biodiversity 2010

COUNTRY: FRANCE
MUNICIPALITY: GRANDE-SYNTHÉ
POPULATION: 21,815
SURFACE AREA: 2,111 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.VILLE-GRANDE-SYNTHÉ.FR

One can have a heavy industrial background and still be a pioneer regarding preservation of biodiversity. This is what achieved the city of Grande-Synthe which became in a few decades a perfect example of urban ecology. Its transformation was enabled through a constant political will which helped completely reshape this northern France town located on the Opale coast. The creation of an educational orchard in 1989 is a good example. This project evolved through time according to chosen themes. Originally the aim of creating this three hectares wide educational orchard was threefold:

- Encourage nature learning with the “Fruitier” building, which dominates the orchard and welcomes the public. This place is dedicated to explaining the different steps of plants’ growth and the specific upkeep for carpophores.
- Create a traditional orchard by planting local and regional fruit tree species long forgotten, such as: the « cabarette » apple or the « belle fleur double » apple. There are all sorts of other fruit trees such as cherry trees, pear trees, plum trees, as well as many kinds of berries, such as blackberries, strawberries, raspberries and redcurrant.
- Create an experimental orchard thanks to the help of regional natural spaces and several partners who supplied the ancient varieties. However some did not age well and turn out to be too damaged or unadapted for the local soil. In 2009 new grafts of old species were acquired, and then used as example in a planting operation to make them known to the public who could buy some.

In this orchard can be found collections of transborder fruits and a well chosen selection of local fruit as well as exotic fruit and many other wonders. Most trees already are staked and architected in different shapes (palmette, cordon). It also has the specificity of being upkeep in respect of the agrobiological concept. The garden also enables active learning during nature week ends.

A peripheral diversified hedge has been planted. Though its first purpose is one of wind break, the hedge nevertheless is an achievement in terms of blended biological protection since it is composed of about fifty species of trees, 72 different types of shrubs, 30 kinds of rosebushes and 12 species of vines. This complex mix offers numerous auxiliary tanks and creates a micro-ecosystem all year long, according to the different species. Offering both winter and spring food enhances the insects’ reproduction potential and therefore impacts the orchard’s protection.

The hedge therefore shelters useful insects but also insectivore mammals. The hedge trimmings are ground in shavings and returned to the soil (ramial chipped wood) by spreading at the base of the fruit trees, thus restoring a rich live soil, full of humus which can be assimilated by the trees. This very hedge now serves as a reference and is often reproduced in cities to reinforce biological corridors. Technical specialists suggested implanting endangered bees in the less visited areas of the orchard. The bees enhance the pollination of fruit trees and increase their production. With more than 160 different fruits, the orchard’s protective mission was greatly favoured by the European Council which rewarded Grande-Synthe city in 1995, year of the European Year of Nature Conservation.



© Grande-Synthe

Tata: Hungarian Capital of Biodiversity 2010

COUNTRY : HUNGARY
MUNICIPALITY : TATA
POPULATION : 24,906
SURFACE AREA: 7,812 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.TATA.HU

The city of Tata is located in Komárom-Esztergom County in Hungary, and is the centre of Tata micro-region. Tata can be found in the north part of Transdanubia, at the meeting point of Small Plain and Transdanubian Mountains, in the western gate of Tatai Trench, near the Által-ér water course.

The city of Tata has one of the richest collections of monuments and natural treasures in Hungary. There are 71 nationally protected monuments and buildings in Tata and further 277 buildings which form part of the city's regional heritage.

The highest point of the city is Kálváriadomb, which is 166 m high and the lowest point is Fényes-fürdő (bath), which is 120 m above the sea level.

Tata, called the City of Water, because for thousands of years the karst waters of this area were the most bountiful in the Transdanubian Mountains. Dozens of springs produced 250 million litres of crystal clear water every day. The majority of springheads may since be dry, but the first springs have already returned to Tata.

Tata's 220 hectare Old Lake is regarded as the oldest (almost 700 year old) artificial fishing lake in Hungary. The Old Lake is important on a European level thanks to its nature conservation, its economic and cultural history and its tourism.

As one of Central Europe's most important wintering areas for water birds, the area came under the protection of Ramsar Convention in 1989. Up to 25-30,000 wild geese can spend the night around the lake during the autumn migration period. 12% of European population of the bean goose (*Anser fabalis*) stay here. Significant population of the White fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*) spends the winter on the lake. Besides the Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), the Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) and the Brent goose (*Branta bernicla*) can also be found here. The 11m high lookout tower built in 1999 on the lake side also helps the observation of migrating birds. The town has organized a special event since 2001, which is called "Tatai Vadlúd Sokadalom" (Wild Geese Festival). The main goal of this event is

to make the Old Lake and wild geese popular. This event is the most visited green festival of the country.

The Eszterházy Castle and its park belong to the tourist attractions of the town. Situated in the Tóváros district of Tata, the English garden was established in 1783 by the Eszterházy family, and is one of the most remarkable historic gardens of the country. The English garden has enjoyed official protection since 1955, and its collection includes some rather fine trees. Enormous plane trees, horse chestnuts, large-leaved lime, black poplars and grey poplars all serve to remind us of the time when this great park was created. Some of the true rarities of the English garden are the Caucasian wingnut tree groups, which have spread to form mini forest themselves.

The local government of Tata and Corvinus University's Faculty of Horticultural Science have renovated the eastern (forest) area of the park and nowadays it is possible to admire the indigenous species of a historical garden.



"Wild geese and the Castle of Tata" © Local Government of Tata

Želiezovce: Slovak Capital of Biodiversity 2010

COUNTRY : SLOVAKIA
MUNICIPALITY: ŽELIEZOVCE
POPULATION : 7,289
SURFACE AREA: 5,652.28 HECTARES
WEB SITE : WWW.ZELIEZOVCE.SK

The Slovak Capital of Biodiversity – Želiezovce – is located in the south-western part of the Slovak Republic, administratively in the Nitra Region and in the Levice District. The town is situated in the eastern part of the Danube Lowland on the river Hron alluvium. With 7,289 inhabitants it belongs to the smaller towns with ethnically mixed population. The town of Želiezovce has gained a “Capital of Biodiversity” prize thanks to its effort to conserve natural components and the biodiversity which is applied in management of green spaces in the framework of regulation tools, in the spatial planning process or within other planning tools and documents, in awareness raising and implementation of projects.

As an example it is possible to mention that the town, within the spatial plan and in the Local Territorial System of Ecological Stability (which is a part of the spatial plan), has defined parts of the territory where the nesting of birds is supported through placing nest boxes and remaining dry wood for the bird species nesting in tree hollows. 13 pieces of nest boxes with specific parameters for the most permanently appearing local song-birds and predators have been placed. Due to worsened opportunities and overall adverse situation of bats caused by insulation of high buildings and repairs of roofs of local churches the town is planning to place special boxes for bats.

Within the activities focused on the support of the spatial protection the town of Želiezovce tried to ensure the territorial protection of the protected site Želiezovce Park with the third level of protection. The town negotiates with the Western Slovak Water Company on purchase or rental of the territory of protected zones of water sources, preservation of water sources and on the use of surrounding territory to create a natural forest community in accordance with building the components of the Local territorial system of ecological stability. The area of the location in question is 140,000 m².

The town systematically deals with the issue of invasive species, e.g. in the so called Mikulsky parcik (park) which is not owned by the town. The town removes self-seedings and sprouts of invasive species (tree of heaven, box elder)

to reduce their adverse impact on the original vegetation. In the framework of biodiversity protection the town signed a rental contract on a land owned by the Slovak Railway Company (area of 1,600 m²) in order to reduce impacts of invasive species of the tree of heaven on the original vegetation. This species causes damages especially in the forest lands.

The town in cooperation with other organisations pays a great attention to awareness raising concerning the nature and biodiversity protection through a broad spectrum of activities for inhabitants and schools, e.g. Earth Day, Environment Day, Water Day, Biodiversity Day, Month of Forests, Hour of Garden Birds, Butterflies Day, Bats Day, etc.



© Alexander Tóth

The Royal Site of San Ildefonso: Spanish Capital of Biodiversity 2010

COUNTRY : SPAIN
MUNICIPALITY : THE ROYAL SITE OF SAN ILDEFONSO
POPULATION : 5,725
SURFACE AREA: 16,000 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.LAGRANJA-VALSAIN.COM

The territory of the Royal Site of San Ildefonso is found in the Province of Segovia, Autonomic Community of Castilla y León (80 Km north from Madrid). The territory includes the towns of La Granja, Valsaín, Pradera de Navahorno and the exterior enclave of Riofrío.

The mountainous prominence that corresponds to the territory, with altitudes, passing from 2,400 meters to 1,100 meters and a variable orientation, product of the mountainous alignment array that crisscross and merge at the Navacerrada mountain pass, this endows the territory with variable environmental conditions and therefore a great variety of habitats with rich and singular flora and fauna.

This township is representative of the demographic distribution in Spain, since it forms part of the 90 per cent of townships with less than 10,000 inhabitants in this country.

The borough council of the Royal Site of San Ildefonso obtained the maximum distinction of Capital of Biodiversity for its history, initiatives and projects regarding nature conservation.

For the past 20 years, the township has defended a development model based on the historic, environmental and cultural identities of the region, promoting harmony between respect for nature,

the generation of wealth and the quality of life of its inhabitants.

Of special importance are the activities carried out to protect wild species, through the project for recovering and improving the state of the amphibian population in the Mountains of Valsaín and the river habitats of the otter and Pyrenean desman. Similarly, many important actions have been taken regarding productive species, such as the programme for the environmental protection of the traditional orchards of the white bean of La Granja during the period 2008-2012 and the recovery of the fish farm in the Royal Palace Gardens for producing local common trout. Also strategic plans have been implemented for three emblematic and threatened species: the Imperial Eagle, the Black Stork and the Black Vulture.

On the other hand, the Mountains of Valsaín have a sustainable forest system and hold the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) certificates.

Since 1987 the Spanish National Environmental Education Centre (CENEAM), of the Regional National Parks Organisation, which forms part of the Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, has been implementing many activities related to the protection of biodiversity.



"Gardens of the Royal Site of San Ildefonso" © Real Sitio de San Ildefonso Town Hall

Description of Capitals of Biodiversity 2011

Montpellier: French Capital of Biodiversity 2011

COUNTRY: FRANCE
MUNICIPALITY: MONTPELLIER
POPULATION: 257,092
SURFACE AREA: 5,708 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.MONTPELLIER.FR

Montpellier is the 8th French city, and has the most dynamic demography of the country, with no less than 4000 new inhabitants each year. It's a green city which counts 954ha of green spaces opened to the public, among which 412 municipal, and 395ha wood spaces, classified in the Local Urban Plan. Fully aware of the richness of its fauna and flora, and willing to preserve biodiversity, the city made several commitments. On international level the city joined the network "Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity" of the CBD and is a member of the Advisory Committee on Cities and Biodiversity to the CBD in order to share its progress in terms of urban development adapted to preserving biodiversity. Then at a regional level, the city recently subscribed to the national strategy for biodiversity. Finally on a local level, it organized a long-term action plan in favor of biodiversity (2010-2014).

A guide to Improve urbanism through a development referential

Since 2008, the city has been working on the creation of a guide meant to improve urbanism through a development referential. It is a shared referential designed to take into account and continuously develop the environmental and social aspects of urban actions. Its aim is to evaluate the durability of any urban project in order for the city to try and choose the less impacting option, as far as environment is concerned. This initiative results from the regulatory impact surveys which take into account the global environmental context of the project. This referential tool has several purposes: programming, help in the decision making and also evaluation throughout the different steps of any urban project in order to limit its ecological impact.

A brochure was created to sensitize and inform the public on the environmental impact of urban developments. This document will be added to the next Local Urban Plan so as to increase its impact.

The guide is composed of three chapters, corresponding to the three steps of any urban action (programming, developing and building),

and defines 9 priority actions and 30 indicators. It focuses especially on the green and blue infrastructures, as well as on preservation of biodiversity in projects. The chosen criteria are based upon more virtuous development concepts, and help to improve builders and developers' practices. Among the criteria chosen to evaluate the urban actions are: soil sealing ratio, infrastructures' layout, urban areas dedicated to natural spaces, surface of preserved canopy, water consumption and preservation ratios.

Thus by evaluating projects' impacts before their realization, the guide helps appraising and respecting natural spaces and biodiversity inside the city. It will also enable architects and builders to take biodiversity into account, and will improve the master plan for green network which started in 2007. The green network aims at linking the city's natural spaces. It is composed of 42km long peripheral ring, called the Marathonienne, and of radial courses sometimes going as far as the city centre.

The main goal of Montpellier is also to preserve and improve the rich natural heritage through the promotion of wastelands as biodiversity reserves and useful tools for connecting natural spaces. The city is currently working on the development of a smooth travel network throughout the whole city, based upon the green infrastructure (riverbanks, parks, natural and agricultural spaces).



"The Garrigues lake and its surroundings, a Mediterranean natural space in the very heart of the city © Natureparif"

Hannover: German Capital of Biodiversity 2011

COUNTRY: GERMANY
MUNICIPALITY: HANNOVER
POPULATION: 519,212
SURFACE AREA: 20,414 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.HANNOVER.DE

In the city of Hannover, a “green” and diverse living and working environment is considered a vital requirement for a lastingly high quality of life. The authorities have taken the necessary steps and made biodiversity a basic goal in the current urban development process. The result is an extraordinary number of action plans: rivers are reconstructed and maintained in a natural way and the natural momentum is consistently integrated into the river management. The municipal forest is FSC certified and an additional programme successfully enhances and supports the amount of dead wood in the forest. Natural “wild” areas appear in the parks where they increasingly replace intensively managed lawns. A “courtyard and residential environment programme” supports and encourages citizens to make their communities greener. Several action plans deal specifically with biodiversity in the open landscape around the city aiming at creating ponds, planting trees and small woods, protecting wild farmland herbs, extensifying grassland management and increasing organic farming.

The municipal tree nursery cultivates local varieties of native plants to contribute to the protection of the diversity of plants. The “Plant Species Aid Programme” goes one step further: former habitats of rare plant species are successfully reactivated on 118 specifically chosen sites. Regular monitoring impressively demonstrates the successful dispersion of rare vascular plants.

In addition to all these measures directly aiming at improving biodiversity, the biodiversity strategy of Hannover declares another specific goal: the people are to be made more enthusiastic about nature. A remarkable number of high-quality institutions and activities have been set up to achieve this goal. In the “Forest Experience Tower” or “Forest-Skyscraper”, for example, the well-established concept of a nature trail has gone vertical: a wooden tower of 32 m, raising above the top of the surrounding trees, allows experiencing a tree as a habitat for numerous species. Fascinating and interactive displays on several levels of the tower – much like a multistorey building in a city – explain

the morphology of trees and the diversity of life between roots and canopy. Since the Forest Experience Tower first opened in 2009, it has become a magnet for adults and children alike.

Other extraordinary educational institutions with well thought out educational concepts are scattered across the city, such as a children’s forest, an urban farm and the school biology centre. Together they make sure that the meaning of biodiversity and the necessity to protect it are conveyed to people of all ages.



“The City Hall of Hannover is surrounded by diverse nature” © City of Hannover

Szentes: Hungarian Capital of Biodiversity 2011

COUNTRY: HUNGARY
SETTLEMENT: SZENTES
POPULATION: 29,375
SURFACE AREA: 35325 HA
WEB SITE: WWW.SZENTES.HU

Szentes is located in the southern part of the Hungarian Great Plain, in Csongrád county. The Tisza and Hármas-Körös rivers surround, the Kurca streamlet runs across the third most populous town of the county. (29375 residents).

Szentes and its area are accessible on public road: on the M5 motorway from Budapest, on the E5 main road, then from the exit road of the motorway at Kiskunfélegyháza, on 451 road (Budapest-Szentes 137 km, M5 motorway-Szentes 35 km, Hungarian-Romanian border – Szentes 49 km).

Szentes railway station is accessible from various directions (Budapest, Szeged, Orosháza) and people could continue their travel by train to other smaller towns of the micro-region.

The area is particularly rich in various bird species. The Kurca river which divides the town into two parts provides ideal dwelling place for water and reed birds along the bank. Due to the rich vegetation of the riverbanks species like *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Rallus aquaticus*, *Porzana porzana*, *Acrocephalus palustris* present in the area. In addition, the Kurca river doesn't freeze over winter due to thermal water effluents and it makes the area excellent resting place for rare domestic and migrating bird species, such as *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, *Bucephala clangula*, *Tringa ochropus* and *Alcedo atthis* in winter season. At the 122 hectare Thermal Lake which is 5 kilometres from the town, since 1983 ornithologists observed 172 bird species of which 60 species are resident birds. The following species should be noted, as examples: *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, *Tadorna tadorna*, *Aythya marila*, *Clangula hyemalis*, *Haliaeetus albicilla*. The lake can be accessed from the town on a scenic bicycle-path, as well.

Scattered mosaic areas of sodic and grass lawn cover large extent north-east to, south-east of the town. Some well-connected part, called the Cserebökény Pustas become protected area and belongs to the Körös-Maros National Park since 1997. Almost 200 bird species have been identified in the area of which 15 are highly protected. Significant migrating birds are: *Buteo rufinus*, *Buteo lagopus*, *Falco peregrinus*, *Pluvialis*

apricaria, *Carduelis flavirostris* and *Plectrophenax nivalis*. Noticeably, the groves and parks – Széchenyi Grove, Heroes' Wood, Hospital Park – inside the town provide nesting places for several bird species, too.

The Széchenyi Grove, surrounded by the Kurca river, is the widest park of Szentes and became a botanical and cultural –historical monument. It is a nature reserve since 1953. Plane trees, conker-, ash-, lime-, maple trees, marsh cypress, black pines, pedunculate oak trees can be found in its precious botanical garden. The natural beauty of the Tisza and Körös rivers, rich vegetation and fauna greatly contributes to the unique natural endowment of Szentes.

The 16 hectare park of the regional hospital is protected by local regulation from the 1930's. The Kurca river flows among pine trees, marsh cypress and maidenhair trees in the park. The first thermal well of the town can be found here, too.

The horticulture of the area is based on the utilisation of thermal water for heating. It is recognised as the biggest greenhouse and walk-in plastic tunnel horticulture of the country. Greenhouses occupies 23 hectare and heated by 14 thermal wells. In 40 hectare non-heated walk-in plastic tunnels are used. Another 50 hectare of agricultural land local species of pepper, tomato, cucumber are produced.

The flavour of the vegetable produced in Szentes is unique. The outstanding vitamin content of the vegetables grown here is contributed by the special climate of the Southern Great Plain, the great number of sunny days, and the high content of mineral substance of the waters.



"Kurca river of Szentes" © Local Government of Szentes

Kremnica: Slovak Capital of Biodiversity 2011

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA
MUNICIPALITY: KREMNICA
POPULATION: 5,337
SURFACE AREA: 4,313,52 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.KREMNICA.SK

The Capital of Biodiversity in Slovakia, in the year 2011 became city of Kremnica. It is a small town in a central part of Slovakia. Even it is a small town, it can be named as the crossroad of natural wonders, history, culture and also the city with a modern vision. The town is surrounded by mountains – Kremnické vrchy and it is just over the ridge to the west of Banská Bystrica, regional important city.

Kremnica held an important role among the major European mining towns in the Middle Ages. It was mainly due to the abundant gold and silver ore deposits in the Kremnica Mountains (Kremnické vrchy). Kremnica itself is one of the older Slovak towns, receiving its royal charter in 1328, along with mining and minting privileges. For centuries, the gold and silver were converted into silver groschen and gold ducats in Kremnica Mint, which was established together with the town and still works. Since 24th February 2011 Kremnická Mint is part of the European cultural heritage.

Main square (marketplace) situated in the centre emerged under the town castle during the 14th century. Even though many of the houses were torn down after the World War II, most of the sumptuous, originally gothic buildings were preserved until the present time. Monumental trinity column built in 1765-72, large Franciscan monastery from the mid 17th century and the mint belong among the dominant sights on the square. Since 1425, when Kremnica was awarded the right to organize markets, the square became not only trade, but also cultural and social center of the town.

The charming town of Kremnica is recently focusing on the tourism and the region is famous for leisure activities, ranging from cultural to sport activities. From the sport activities should be mentioned Skalka ski resort at the ridge of hills west of Kremnica, at 1232 metres. Transformation from mining to tourism has requested a lot of energy and also a modern vision. The Kremnica town and its City Council through their activities aim to improve natural protection and sustainable development of the town.

Town solves some interesting projects on nature conservation and biodiversity in town. For instance,

project of the Zechenterova Garden which is including a larger area of greenery in the town and since 1958 it is treated as the national monument. Very interesting activity was mowing the Bujačia meadow to maintain the site with the occurrence of protected and endangered species Carpathian saffron (*Crocus heuffelianus*). And even though meadow is not the property of the town, the town sought the means to prevent deterioration of this site. Besides the projects which are dealing directly with biodiversity protection, Kremnica is very active in campaigns focusing on rise awareness about biodiversity. They are also hosting one of the largest film festivals in Central Europe focusing on environmental protection – ENVIROFILM. Moreover, they are implementing several projects focusing on diverse environmental issues. These activities as well as overall proactive approach of the town should be the inspiration for the larger cities.



"View of the town Kremnica" © Ivan Čiliak

Puebla de Sanabria: Spanish Capital of Biodiversity 2011

COUNTRY: SPAIN
MUNICIPALITY: PUEBLA DE SANABRIA
POPULATION: 1,586
SURFACE AREA: 8,151 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.PUEBLASANABRIA.ORG/PUEBLA.HTM

Puebla de Sanabria is a town located in the far northwest of Zamora province, in the Autonomous Community of Castilla y León. In fact, it is set in the Sanabria region bordering on Portugal, Galicia and Leon. It is a mountainous enclave among the ranges of Culebra, Segundera and Cabrera Baja, with a rich variety of natural and agricultural landscapes, not to mention environmental values of high interest and diversity at geological, geographical and hydrological levels as well as its abundant flora and fauna.

This town declared a National Artistic-Historical Heritage has a vast monumental heritage and deep-rooted popular culture. Its location coincides with a strategic point over the jetty dominating the interfluvium between the Tera and Castro rivers surrounding the city. A superb elegant castle rises up on the highest point below which pop up the slate-roofed houses comprising the urban landscape.

This town stands out as the centre of the main commercial services of the region, although in the socio-economic aspect Puebla de Sanabria has undergone an important transformation over the last 25 years. Since the pronounced abandon of rural and cattle farming activity in the area, has largely been replaced with the development of tourism as the key development factor.

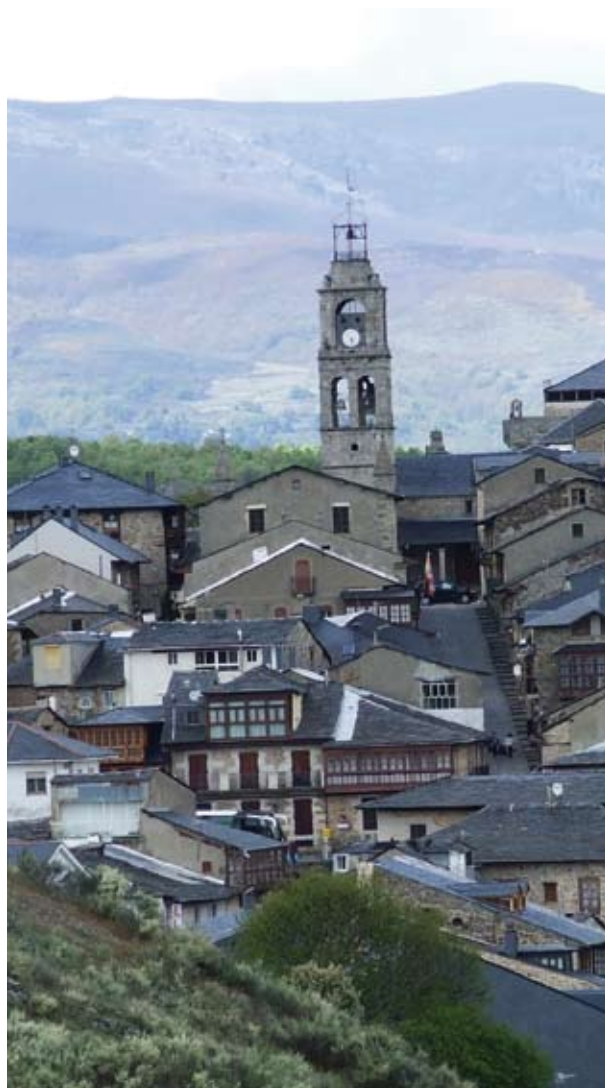
From a demographic viewpoint, Puebla de Sanabria is a representative Spanish municipality since it is part of the 90.76% of Spanish towns with under 10,000 inhabitants.

Puebla de Sanabria Town Hall obtained the top Spanish Biodiversity Capital award 2011, because they know how to appreciate and protect their vast biological variety and traditional culture, clearly different and alive to develop a tourist sector based on environment preservation and promotion.

Furthermore, its methods of town planning are centred on uniform sustainable growth, where landscape preservation and integration criteria greatly stand out in the territorial development aspect.

Also worthy of mention are different projects, including recovery of the urban section of River

Tera, creation of the Iberian wolf thematic centre as a world reference, the mycology school in Ungilde or the integral classroom of rivers, glaciers and fluvial mountain ecosystems.



© Puebla de Sanabria Town Hall

Nature in the city best projects

Ecological management of the Parc de la Citadelle in Lille

COUNTRY: FRANCE
MUNICIPALITY: LILLE
POPULATION: 180,000
SURFACE AREA: 2,218 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.MAIRIE-LILLE.FR

Lille City owns with the “Parc de la Citadelle” a 110 ha wide land which attracts both public and biodiversity. The park management incorporated the ecological engineering techniques on a threefold basis: restoration of the natural environment, promotion of the military and historical inheritance, and welcoming of outdoor practices.

The environment diagnosis as well as the species inventory (belonging to specific groups determined by Lille center for biodiversity) are carried out by the city ecological specialist, the Center’s partners and research departments. These observations are then translated into action programs and recommendations. Upkeep methods are adapted to these new objectives: setting intervals between grass-cutting, raising the cutting height by 8 cm, establishing exportation for grass, planting of herbaceous plants, shrubs and regional trees, fighting against invasive species (Japanese knotweed, muskrat), exporting of duckweed, and preserving dead wood in many forms: dead trunks maintained upwards or replanted, and installation of logs in the ground or ditches.

All these actions only make sense if they are lead simultaneously (synergy and interaction); each action is undertaken according to the needs of target species. Example: dead wood for saproxylic insects, cut grass for compressed rush, extensive pasture for the grey flycatcher, and cavity trees for stock doves and Daubenton’s bats.

Measures were also taken to change the public lighting in the park alleys through the replacing of candelabras and consoles with adapted equipment so as to reduce pollution for night fauna (bats and butterflies).

Nature preservation is consistently incorporated in all projects such as ramparts’ restoration. However, these actions can only succeed if ecological connexions are established with other natural sites of Lille City, through the green, blue and black infrastructure.

- All actions are undertaken by the four agents composing the team in charge of upkeep, under the lead of both an engineer and the management’s ecological technician. The action cost is included in the global management cost.
- The estimated time dedicated to ecological engineering is approximately 40%.
- Fauna and flora 2009 inventory (all taxes included): 17,000 €; 2010: 30,000 €.
- A partnership is established with the “Blongios” association for the realization of ecological workings, on a voluntary basis. Grant: 1,500 €/year.
- A partnership was established with several organizations which are part of Lille center for biodiversity: universities, botanic conservatory and naturalist associations.



“Parc de la Citadelle” © Natureparif

Organization of specific management for gardens and parcs in Paris

COUNTRY: FRANCE
MUNICIPALITY: PARIS
POPULATION: 2,201,578
SURFACE AREA: 10,539 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.PARIS.FR

Settled where the Seine valley and its tributaries meet, Paris happens to be quite a rich bio geographic mix, since it gathers more than 2,000 species of wild plants and mushrooms, and around as many species of animals, more than 1,000 different insects, 10 kinds of amphibians, 174 bird species, 3 sorts of reptiles, 33 different mammals species and 36 different kind of fish. In order to preserve and enhance further its biodiversity, the City of Paris developed a specific policy to preserve and increase biodiversity. This policy was conceived with the help of the inhabitants through an innovative and participative approach, starting the possibility to join a scientific program aiming at making a country wide inventory of biodiversity. Paris started carrying out a specific management policy in 2007 through different departments of the Green spaces General Management (such as services in charge of the gardens, of wood and trees, and of cemeteries), under the technical lead of the department dedicated in garden management. The General Management' scientific and technical department leads the process of certification of green spaces depending of their environmental management. An independent organization will eventually audit greens spaces applying the specific management policy for means of certification.

Specific management implies principles such as:

- Generalizing best practices aiming at a respectful care of both environment and man
- Adapting management to gardens' specificities and use
- Encouraging landscape, vegetation and animal diversity
- Emphasizing the historical and cultural identity of each garden.

The gardens in Paris are scattered in a compact urban context. This kind of nature parceling is a characteristic which inspired the specific management concept. Specific upkeep methods were categorized according to each element composing the green space (trees, shrubs, lawn, flowers, minerals and water). Each category is defined by management goal, aesthetic aspect,

use and biodiversity. The gardener's constant aim is to enhance the garden's inheritance and use while working towards the limitation of pollution and the development of biodiversity. Therefore both facets of the garden - contemplation through its architectural inheritance and living through its use – enable biodiversity observation (ecological pond, protected area...). A detailed technical folder helps spreading the necessary practices and knowledge. A specific folder for each garden enables a consistent follow up of the upkeep. Specific management and particular subjects such as composting, chemicals' alternatives or else water control are taught through specific trainings.

Dedicated signs enable users to link the landscape changes with environmental achievements. The certification of specific management applied to green spaces validates the specific management and the related environmental practices. The visible results come through an increase in biodiversity, together with a decrease of environment degradation. Landscapes multiply to serve as example for public communication.



© C. Dagneau

The Green Arc of Paunsdorf

COUNTRY: GERMANY
MUNICIPALITY: LEIPZIG
POPULATION: 518,862
SURFACE AREA: 29,736 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.LEIPZIG.DE

The “Green Arc” is a chain of green spaces surrounding a large high density housing area in the north-east of the city of Leipzig. Step-by-step, 120 hectares of former military training grounds and adjacent fallow land are turned into a modern recreation area. The core of the Green Arc has been a unique grazing project, where currently 13 water buffalo and nine przewalski’s horses conserve 35 hectares of open landscape and contribute to the recreational value of the area. The water buffalo and wild horses, which once belonged to the great native mammals in central Europe, stay outside all year round and also breed on site. Since 2004, the grazing area has developed impressively: the regrowth of trees has largely been stopped by the constant grazing; invasive plants such as the Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) and dominating patches of Wood Small-reed grasses (*Calamagrostis epigejos*) have been displaced. Grassland has successfully spread. Thanks to

the water buffalo, ponds and swamp areas have developed very well. Rare animal species have found and repopulated suitable habitats in the area. Visitors can access and enjoy the model combination of nature conservation, recreation and farming on a walking trail encircling the grazing area.

For the inhabitants of the adjacent housing area, the wild animals have already become treasured components of their community. The grazing area is complemented by further park areas with opportunities for sports and recreation, private gardening plots, small woods, sheep grazing land and meadows with fruit trees. A promenade connects the different recreational areas and five distinctive viewing platforms. Altogether, the housing area has greatly benefited from the varied recreational offerings of the Green Arc. In the Green Arc wilderness meets the city.



"Landscape management with przewalski's horses on the former military training grounds
© Günther Von Szombathely

Development of Fundoklia educational trail, measures of local government on conservation areas

COUNTRY: HUNGARY
SETTLEMENT: ÉRD
POPULATION: 64,308
SURFACE AREA: 60,54 HA
WEB SITE: WWW.ERD.HU

The Fundoklia Valley can be found at the western part of the Érd-Tétényi Upland. It is approximately 3 kilometres long, 10-30 meters deep, dry karst valley formed by Sarmata limestone. The M7 motorway divides it.

The whole valley is nature conservation area, protected by the local government; the northern part is also under archaeological protection; the southern part is enlisted as a NATURA 2000 site.

The valley has a unique landscape value, and it is rich in archaeological, botanical and zoological values. The area is rich in natural resources: 316 vascular plants were described here. It has two highly protected species: the *Seseli leucospermum*, and the *Dianthus serotinus* subsp. *Regis-stephani*, and another 33 protected species; the *Stipa pulcherrima* and the *Stipa eriocaulis* has a huge stock here, the *Adonis vernalis* (pheasant's eye), is also frequent, while the *Lilium martagon* (Martagon or Turk's cap lily) is a valuable rarity.

The Fundoklia educational trail

The trail leads the visitors along the eastern part of the valley, on previously spontaneously evolved paths; on the edges and at the bottom of the valley. The visitors can enter by foot or by car from the neighbouring streets, without damaging the natural values. Vehicles can park around the protected area without disturbing the traffic.

The trail consists of two parts: the first is around 1060 metres long and presents the flora and fauna of the dry meadows of the plateau and the edge of the hill, while the second one is around 600 metres long and presents the forest wildlife of the bottom of the valley. Important elements of the trail are the information boards (2 pieces), wood-panel stations (12 pc) and where the steep, slippery trail, covered with friable Sarmata limestone is too dangerous, there are wooden stairs with railings.

The location of the 12 station is defined by the geological, geo-morphological, archaeological, zoological and botanic values, and by the location of the former mines. The topics of the 12 stations are the following:

- 1 Mining, the areas of artificial basement systems, the Sarmata limestone as building material;
- 2 The presentation of the world-famous prehistoric sites of Érd;
- 3 The wooded steppe meadow with *Brachypodium sylvaticum*;
- 4 The Stipa rocky meadow (*Stipa eriocaulis* – *Festucetum pallentis*);
- 5 The Sarmata limestone steppe meadows;
- 6 The presentation of the geological characteristics of the valley at the mining area;
- 7 The wildlife of the forest of the valley and the dry bushes;
- 8 The grassy cliff hilly steppe meadow;
- 9 The open rock grasslands (*Bromo* – *Festucion pallentis*; with *Fumana procumbens*);
- 10 The presentation of the diverse geomorphology of the valley;
- 11 At the end of the valley loess grasslands and the loess bush of *Amygdalus nana* L.;
- 12 At the end of the valley the colonies of the European Bee-eater, *Merops apiaster*, and the wildlife of the surrounding shrubs, hedges, and abandoned orchards can be seen.

Thanks to the protection of the stone row the area can be visited only by foot, thus the disturbance was reduced and the protection became more effective. After the installation of the information boards, trail-station tables the visits to the area increased.



Fundoklia educational trail in Érd © Local Government of Érd

Prievidza - cherry's orchard

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA
MUNICIPALITY: PRIEVIDZA
POPULATION: 50,085
SURFACE AREA: 4,306 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.PRIEVIDZA.SK

The main objective of the project was to prevent from individual residential construction in the selected territory "Cherry's orchard" and to create green areas for the city inhabitants.

According to the Prievidza spatial plan the site concerned was determined for further individual residential construction. The Prievidza citizens remembered the site as a productive cherry orchard which used to be a favored location for recreation and relax in the past. Unfortunately, this area was abandoned for long 20 years and the lands in the Cherry's orchard were not owned by the city of Prievidza. According to the new spatial plan of the city of Prievidza this site was re-categorised as a territory specified for green areas and simultaneously the city managed to buy 9,000 m² of the area. So the city saved more than 25,000 m² of green spaces.

This is an example involving several important factors leading to the protection of green spaces in the city – clever city council, cooperation of the city with civil associations and willingness of the city to invest in buying the lands. This formal part of the project, was running from January 2007 to December 2009, bringing a tangible result – a modification of the spatial plan, purchase of some lands by the city and preparation of project works. At present, the second phase of the project (implementation) is being carried out – modification of the previous orchard to a green area – running from June 2010 with estimated investment costs of approximately 500,000 €. The project should be completed and open for future users, the city inhabitants, in 2013.



© Lukáš Grešner

Zvolen – Treatment of green area around the new church on the site Hôrka

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA
MUNICIPALITY: ZVOLEN
POPULATION: 42,286
SURFACE AREA: 9,869 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.ZVOLEN.SK

In the town Zvolen it is an extra space - a cone-shaped hill with the newly built church (in 1994) at the top. The church and adjacent rectory building is surrounded by three quarters majority of spontaneously evolving green (the semi-abandoned meadows) and at the last side there is dominating the church at the new created Square of the Cyril and Methodius. This creates a new center of town district, made up mostly prefabricated housing estate and dense housing houses.

At the same time it is one of the few areas inside the city with a well-preserved nature - with remnants of species-rich semi-natural grasslands. Therefore, this location is classified as an "urban bio-center" in the Landscape ecological plan of the town Zvolen and therefore the area should retain its natural character.

Within the project this measures has been made at the area:

1. The minor adjustments of the terrain and planting ornamental trees in the immediate surroundings of the church, on the basis of a detailed project of the garden architect.

2. Selection of naturally growing (and earlier planted) shrubs and trees that were left on the locality and selective felling abundant shrubs, cutting of weeds and longer non cutting local areas and the minor adjustments of the terrain and restoration of grasslands (preparation of surfaces for cutting in later years).

3. Planting the trees on the whole locality based on the existing project:

- avenue of lime trees planted along the three existing sidewalks
- planting of small groups of trees in open areas with respecting of the proposed routes of calvary

4. Removal of soil dumps and establishment of lawn on their places

5. Two mowing grass in the carefully chosen terms (to maintain the diversity of the species) – that will preserve the natural character of the meadows with three flowering periods (in spring before the first mowing, after the first mowing in the summer, after the second summer and early autumn).



"The minor adjustments of the terrain and planting ornamental trees"
© Ing. Libuše Murinová

Santander: Network of biodiversity gardens

COUNTRY: SPAIN
MUNICIPALITY: SANTANDER
POPULATION: 181,589
SURFACE AREA: 3,600 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.AYTO-SANTANDER.ES

With a view to increasing the diversity and abundance of non-conflictive wild species in an urban environment, Santander Town Hall setup a garden network creation project in favour of biodiversity preservation. Said initiative started in June 2010 and finished one year later, and was carried out within a collaboration framework with the NGO Seo/Birdlife. This project was financed by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces via the Network of Local Governments for Biodiversity.

The project consists of implementing preservation actions and increasing biodiversity in the Santander urban park network via four different action types:

a) Preservation actions, ecological improvement and surface increase of vegetable formations included in Annex I of the Habitat Directive.

b) Conditioning dead wood accumulation points and installation of nesting boxes favouring the presence

of invertebrates and saproxylophage insects, especially stag beetles.

c) Creation of an artificial puddle network to favour increase in the amphibious populations (salamander, toad and frog) in parks, thereby favouring breeding points for these vulnerable species.

d) Study and preservation of the Scops owl (*Otus scops*) in Santander gardens and parks.

Among the main results of this project elimination of exotic flora stands out likewise the creation of Holm oak copses, restoration and increase of cliff areas, restoration and consolidation of dune vegetation, restoration and increase in dry atlantic heathland, signs in garden areas, installation of interpretative panels or installation dead wood structures (pyramids).



© Santander Town Hall

Species and biotope protection best projects

Maurecourt: Redevelopment of the Oise banks

COUNTRY: FRANCE
MUNICIPALITY: MAURECOURT
POPULATION: 4,101
SURFACE AREA: 365 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.VILLE-MAURECOURT.FR

Maurecourt is a 365ha city in the Yvelines, located at the confluence of the Oise River and the Seine. It developed harmoniously: it managed to preserve its natural and agricultural spaces (2/3 of the territory) while allowing the increase of population (from 3493 inhabitants in 1999 to 4101 in 2009). This population growth, together with the evolution of leisure, demanded the construction of many cultural and leisure buildings, such as an art house and a gymnasium, and also undertook the renovation and reestablishment of the infrastructures dedicated to football, so that those are not liable to flooding anymore. In order to replace these old infrastructures, the city undertook a program of redevelopment of the Oise riverbanks. The first part of this project (4,5 ha), which comes to an end, aims at reconstituting a wetland and protecting the resources through a collecting field, and allow the river to run freely in case of flooding. The project will also fulfill the requirements of the French Water Resource Development and Management Outlines, dynamize biodiversity and contribute to the reconquest of water's right biological quality.

Several steps were necessary to complete the project. First, the city had to demolish old buildings, then to get rid of pollution, and then to reimplant nature in the former industrial area (shipyard) on the Oise banks. The first part also helped to sensitize the inhabitants through educational projects about environment. The city then created two spawning grounds planted with local plant species, as well as bank protection zones (red beds and branches). A former craneway was turned into an observation footbridge, above the lower banks.

After the reopening and the tree shaping in "totems", several new things were created: a pond, a composting platform for the care of the site, a meadow filled with honey plants and two orchards. Beech trees and elm trees were planted on the embankment. The boat-lodgings were relocated inside the urban area, savage huts were destroyed and car wrecks removed. A request for a declaration of public utility has been issued in order to render public the private areas.

The most important works were made early 2011. Since the reopening, ducks were spotted on the pond, young fishes were seen inside the spawning ground, and a roe deer apparently came to visit.



Frayeres et passerelle d'observation © Natureparif

Ratekau – Bat-friendly township

COUNTRY: GERMANY
MUNICIPALITY: RATEKAU
POPULATION: 15,524
SURFACE AREA: 5,960 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.RATEKAU.DE

When house-owners in the northernmost German state of Schleswig Holstein attach bat-houses or renovate their houses in a bat-friendly way, then they can apply for a title “Bat-friendly house” at the regional section of Birdlife International and the regional Nature Conservation Foundation. In Ratekau, this project has fallen on fertile soil and the town has turned into an official “bat-friendly township”: both private house owners and the local authority have embraced bat conservation.

Bat boxes have been installed on all public buildings to give bats resting places during the day and to raise their offspring. When new buildings for the local school and the fire brigade were constructed, they were planned and built bat-friendly from the beginning. Today, over 60 bat boxes are available for the nocturnal animals on public buildings alone. The authorities advise and support house owners

who want to renovate their houses or who discover nursery roosts in their attics. Furthermore, the town has bought five old bunkers in the nearby forest, which were no longer used by the German armed forces, and together with young people turned them into wintering grounds for bats. An old pump station was also refurbished as a bat home in winter.

The measures have been successful: regular monitoring shows that all bunkers and the pump station have been populated by Natterer's Bats (*Myotis nattereri*) and Brown Long-eared Bats (*Plecotus auritus*). Pond Bats (*Myotis dasycneme*), a regionally endangered species, have also been discovered. In a private home, a nursery roost of no less than 150 individuals was once found. More projects are being developed to ensure that Ratekau remains a bat-friendly township in the future.



© Environmental Department of Ratekau

Increasing and preserving of the Great Bustard population in Dévaványa and protecting their habitat

COUNTRY: HUNGARY
MUNICIPALITY: DÉVAVÁNYA
POPULATION: 8,273
SURFACE AREA: 21,673 HECTARES
WEBSITE: WWW.DEVAVANYAVAROS.MCONET.BIZ

The protection of the great bustard has been an important task in the surroundings of Dévaványa since 1976. The Dévaványa Landscape Protection Area on 3,600 ha was established at that time. When forming the landscape protection area the primary aim was the preservation of the great bustard population in the area.

The declared habitat protection program of 2004 was aimed at this ambition. The European Union Funds allowed to make the landowners and farmers interested financially in joining the protection of the great bustard. In this way profit can be generated from the protection activity besides moral recognition.

The farmers had to the nests discovered in their land but they had to make a commitment to pay more attention to creating a better habitat for the great bustard by:

- Establishing appropriate vegetable culture for the great bustard: growing corn on 20% of the territory, growing pulses on 20% of the territory, planting rape (*Brassica oleifera*) on 10 % of the territory, leaving green fallow-floras on 20% of the territory. The remaining 30% land can be planted freely.
- Decreasing the use of fertilizers and chemicals significantly.
- Not using pesticides.

- The prolongation of the harvest of pulses and lawn after the nesting time. Using bird friendly reaping techniques.

After legal compliance the farmers receive significant subsidies by the hectare. The income from the program for the great bustard protection can be planned every year, which means guaranteed income. The success of the program can be demonstrated by the number of the farmers involved; at the beginning a few people joined this program, while nowadays almost all the farmers are partners.

The habitat protection of the great bustard harmonizes with the activities of the Körös-Maros National Park Directorate. The farming on the Great bustard Pilot area established by the National Park, sets a good example for the farmers. As a result of this cooperation, the great bustard population has increased 20% and the number of animals reaches 500 around Dévaványa.

The most important achievement of this program is the changing attitude; because the farmers pay more attention to their natural surroundings. They can realize that the protection of nature and the preservation of biodiversity safeguard the future in the long term. The project is running at least until 2014.



Great bustard © Gábor Czifrák

Conservation of Euro-siberian steppic woods and Pannonic sand steppes at the pSCI area of „Nagykőrösi Pusztai Tölgyesek”, 2006-2011

COUNTRY: HUNGARY
SETTLEMENT: NAGYKÖRÖS
POPULATION: 24,625
SURFACE AREA: 22,796 HA
WEBSITE: WWW.NAGYKOROS.HU

The cooperation of the Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate, the Local Government of Nagykovács and the WWF Hungary could ensure the long term protection of the pSCI area of “Nagykovács pusztai tölgyesek”, and to improve the nature conservation situation of the Euro-Siberian steppic woods (with *Quercus* sp.) and the pannonic sand steppes. The oak-forests are the last, more or less intact stock of the Euro-Siberian steppic woods in the Carpathian basin. These habitats are endangered by invasive species, the difficulties of natural renewal, the improper forest management, fragmentation of the habitat, the disinterestedness of the society and the lack of information.

The results of the project:

- 99% of an area of 405 hectares is freed from invasive species.
- The experiment on the exclusion of wild animals answers the question, whether the lower groundwater level or the over-sized wild animal population is responsible for the decay of the natural renewing capacity of the forests.
- On 175 hectares the forest management is profoundly changed, as the management of these areas was taken from the original owners.
- Forest was planted on 65 hectares, where previously invasive species were growing.
- The lack of information and disinterestedness of local society was diminished. The professional knowledge on the steppe oak-forests was used through the involvement of professionals and the society.
- Nature conservation management plan was developed for the Natura 2000 site “Nagykovács pusztai tölgyesek”.

Activities and measures:

- Weed control by mechanical and chemical methods to rollback invasive species.
- Monitoring and fencing.
- Changing forest management methods

which harm valuable habitats for the next 90 years, and introducing nature conservation management methods.

- To restore the inner and external unity of the oak forests of the puszta through artificial restoration with traditional species.
- Media work, webpage, events organized for the professionals and the public; the renovation of the „forest school”, its buildings, renovation of a camp, minimum 3 complex environmental education program for the area of pSCI according to the local and regional demands.
- The utilisation of all available data in the management plan (archive, presently country relevant, results of international, and local researches on biological status and track of the effects).



© István Péter Kleczli

Oaks – Remembrance of the Family of Esterhazy

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA
MUNICIPALITY: ŽELIEZOVCE
POPULATION: 7,289
SURFACE AREA: 5,652.28 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.ZELIEZOVCE.SK

The main objective of the project was to treat the oldest trees in the protected site of the Želiezovce Park and to map historically and botanically important trees, involving local historians and nature scientists. The historic park represents a protected site of the third protection level. There are several old trees which have been mapped in the framework of the project and the oldest ones have been treated. These trees include three English oaks, one London plane, and one protected tree of bald cypress.

The oldest oaks represent majestic woody plants with trunk girth reaching 570 cm, height of 20 metres and age of 300 – 350 years and are remainders of the original forest community in which the Family of Esterhazy founded an English park in 1875. The oaks became a part of the whole era of the ruling of the Esterhazy Family and their descendants in Želiezovce. Since 1960s they have suffered from a semiparasite mistletoe. The protected tree of bald

cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) reaches the height of 24 metres, the treetop diameter is 12 metres and is 200 years old. Cypress is not original tree for Slovakia and it was transported to Slovakia probably due to the passion of travellers and collectors of the Esterhazy Family. The town park also includes more than 30 pieces of London planes (*Platanus x acerifolia*). Their age is estimated at 200 to 250 years. Within the framework of the project one tree individual broken by windstorm was treated.

At the occasion of Tree Day on 20 October a publication “The Historically and Botanically Important Trees in the Town of Želiezovce” was published as a result of research and cooperation with the local historians and experts. A number of mass media were interested in the idea to take care of historically and botanically important and old trees, contributing so to the promotion of the town and support of environmental awareness.



© Alexander Tóth

Quer: Construction of a lesser kestrel breeding ground to recover the lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*)

COUNTRY: SPAIN
MUNICIPALITY: QUER
POPULATION: 674
SURFACE AREA: 1,462,5 HECTARES
SITIO WEB: WWW.AYUNTAMIENTODEQUER.ES

Construction and startup of the lesser kestrel breeding ground is the Quer municipality biodiversity aim. Their collaborating members include: NGO Group for Recovering the Autochthonous Fauna and their Habitat (GREFA), Castilla La Mancha Community Assembly and Provincial Council of Guadalajara. This initiative shows the determination of this town to recover the lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*), a specie of priority interest included in Annex IV of Directive 92/43/EEC, which had disappeared from the cerealist steppe over 50 years ago, after abusive use of insecticides like DDT in the Spanish countryside, and today banned, almost made the species extinct.

The lesser kestrel is a migratory bird of prey, which lives in colonies. It returns to the territories in the Iberian Peninsula where the pair had their previous colony or the youngest were born, in February and March after wintering in Africa. This is why a return point for the colony and their young

could belong to was fixed with the construction of a lesser kestrel breeding ground.

The Quer lesser kestrel breeding ground has a central building and a perimeter wall leaving an inner yard where nests were designed and built with ideal conditions to enable reproduction and survival of the bird. From here you have an unbeatable panoramic view of the cerealist extension. This building can house 50 nests all in all, a number coinciding with the capacity of the countryside around to nourish the kestrels.

Project success was proven in 2010 when the first chicks bred in captivity on the installation in previous years (2008-2009), returned to Quer after fulfilling their first vital stage of African emigration. The breeding success of the colony means it was unnecessary to bring more chicks born in captivity. According to estimated calculations by 2012 there will be around 20 to 22 pairs should the same progression continue.



© Quer Town Hall

Forests, water and agriculture best projects

“Source d’Arcier” Watershed: Reduction of pesticide use and development of biological agriculture around Besançon

COUNTRY: FRANCE
MUNICIPALITY: BESANÇON
POPULATION: 121,857
SURFACE AREA: 6,505 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.BESANCON.FR

This project aims at increasing the number of organic farms, and consequently the number of biological products in Besançon’s collective catering. Therefore the objective is to reduce polluting substance at the source, thus improving all the watershed rivers. As part of the regulatory protection of its main drinking water channeling (approximately 45% of Besançon supply comes from the Arcier source), the city chose to go further than regulatory protection of the resource. Together with the State services (such as the Department of Health and Human Services), the Doubs’ Chamber of Agriculture, the regional federation for pest control (FREDON) and the Marais de Saône joint commission achieved a major awareness campaign meant for two different kinds of public: professionals (such as SNCF, the French railroad company, the Equipment Department Management, the eastern regional highway division and the General Council, communes, airfields, hydrocarbon storage) and farmers.

In order to go even further, the idea in 2009 was to establish biological agricultural/short cycles on these protection perimeters to take yet another step towards the improvement of the environment and of the water quality. The objective is to encourage farms to convert to biological agriculture and to propose outlets for some of their products in Besançon’s collective catering (5000 meals a day in school cafeterias). This implies several actions:

- Follow up of the water quality analysis;
- Individual survey for farmers and cooperatives of the watershed;
- Conversion diagnosis for farms and cooperatives;
- Animation of the related fields;
- Creation of specific areas dedicated to biological agriculture, with the help of the rural

development agency (SAFER), for famers who wish to settle in the watershed.

Thanks to the actions undertaken (such as the organization of weeding in villages), the quantity of phytosanitary products used by professionals was divided by 5 (from 225kg of active matter in 2004 to 50 kg in 2008), and therefore greatly diminished in the source.



© Natureparif

Partridges in the Upper Palatinate Forest

COUNTRY: GERMANY
MUNICIPALITY: TÄNNESBERG
POPULATION: 1,507
SURFACE AREA: 4,655 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.TAENNESBERG.DE

The partridge-project of Tännenberg was launched in 1999 by the Wildland Foundation and the Nature Reserve "Nördlicher Oberpfälzer Wald" (Northern Upper Palatinate Forest) in response to seriously declining numbers of partridges around the Upper Palatine village of Tännenberg. Following an initial survey, the local farmers started to implement a suit of measures: hedges were planted and maintained, nutrient-poor field margins were developed, dry and warm sandy spots were created. Stubble and crop leftovers were more and more left in the fields over winter, and wildflower areas were created. Old potato and cereal varieties such as emmer, einkorn wheat or spelt were cultivated on suitable fields. A wide row spacing without the use of plant protection products ensured partridge-friendly conditions. Thus the habitat of partridges was gradually restored, providing the animals with enough food in the fields and cover, which is of particular importance during the breeding season and for chick rearing.

Incidentally these measures also created habitats for other species of the open areas, such as butterflies, grasshoppers, skylarks and red-backed shrike. In the first eight years of the project about 108 hectares of agricultural land were extensified for the protection of the partridges.

The products of the "Partridge fields" are now among the specialties of the region: old potato varieties in all colors enrich the meals, and the bakery has "partridge breads" and spelt rolls on offer. The local brewery even produces a partridge beer.

The cooperation of all stakeholders from conservation agencies and hunters, municipalities and nature parks as well as farmers has been successful: partridges have increased significantly in Tännenberg and the surrounding communities and the typical partridge coveys can once more be observed in the fields and meadows.



"A partridge family in Tännenberg" © Rolf Bräsecker

The Old Lake rehabilitation in Tata

COUNTRY: HUNGARY
MUNICIPALITY: TATA
POPULATION: 24,906
SURFACE AREA: 7,812 HECTARES
WEBSITE: WWW.TATA.HU

The Old Lake of Tata can be regarded as one of the most significant lakes of Central Transdanubian Region with its 220 ha water surface, as plays a central role in water sports and tourism, international environmental protection and architectural heritage.

The urbanization, industrialization and agricultural development of the catchment area have generated several environmental problems in the last decades (drying karst-wells, air, soil and water pollution..), as a result of which Tata and the Old Lake lost their national resort status. The water quality of the Old Lake and Által-ér (water course) deteriorated and the water became inappropriate for bathing. Sedimentation, eutrophication and basin degeneration on water courses led to the reduced water conveyer ability (it decreased to a fraction of the original) and the condition of the structures in the water declined. The reservoir of the lake during flood decreased too.

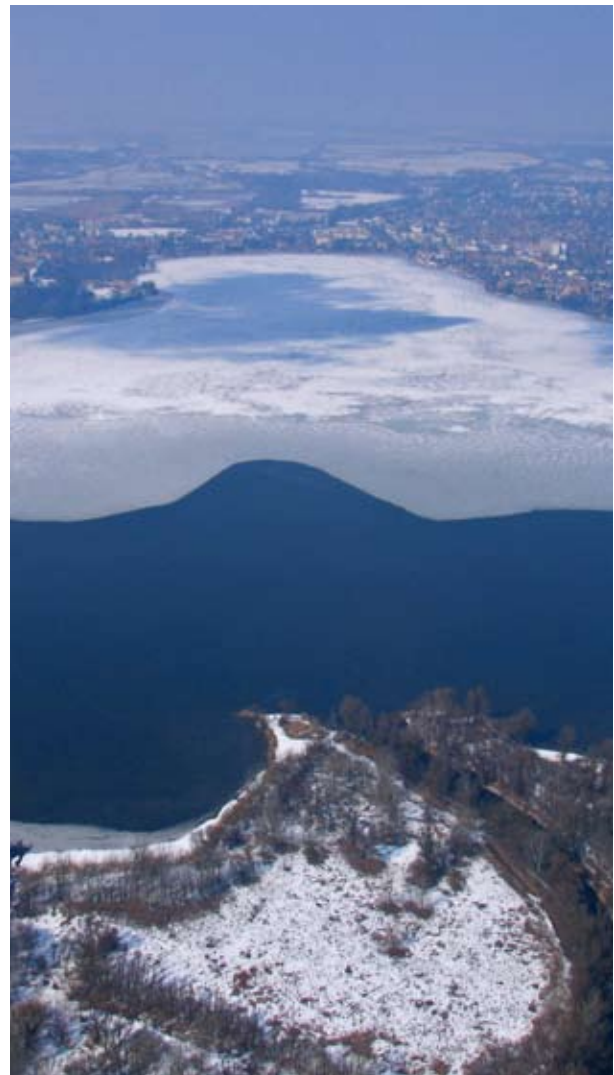
Recognizing the unfavourable processes, a wide-range social cooperation started in the 1980s to save the lake. One of the national civil associations in the whole catchment area was established in 1994. As a result of social and professional cooperation the rehabilitation plan of the Old Lake was elaborated, which contain the following tasks:

- the reconstruction of the out-flow system of Által-ér
- the renovation of the Old Lake locks
- clearing of the inland water pipeline (sediment removal, bush-cutting)
- the improvement of the upper line of Által-ér
- the preparation of a filtration system in Tata in 20 ha
- the preparation of a filtration system in Bánhida in 11 ha
- the reconstruction of the Old Lake on 15 ha (habitat reconstruction, the establishment of nature trails and islands)
- the building up a water quality control system
- the restoration of the shore line of the Old Lake (forming a green path along 900 m)

The implementation of this project contributes both environmental and nature protection and social and water management aspects.

Considering the fact that a significant part of the area is vulnerable Natural Land, includes Natura 2000 sites and belongs to the protection of Ramsar, the planned habitat reconstruction serves national and international interests alike.

The project is still in progress (1997-2002/2010-2011).



© Local Government of Tata

Trnava – Insulation green belt for housing estate Družba

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA
MUNICIPALITY: TRNAVA
POPULATION: 66,399
SURFACE AREA: 7,153 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.TRNAVA.SK

The aim of the project was the enlarging of public greenery as a natural forestpark at the interface of residential houses and agricultural land under cultivation, which would be the basis for the protection of greenery and future internal continuous green ring in the system of urban greenery.

The main task of the green ring was proposed::

- The improvement of living conditions of the housing estate in the contact with the production agricultural land at the eastern suburb of the city by eliminating the negative impacts of agricultural crop production.
- Reducing the impact of the wind and the soil erosion on the residential area and agricultural land.
- Reduction of the deficit of the park and the urban greenery in the city on a newly built green area of about 8 ha
- Enlarging of public natural formations for short rest and recreational activities on the east side of town, which are missing at the present.

Within the project the lands were replaced and repurchased from private owners and the vegetation formations according to the principles of the establishment of forest with the aim to shape this forest as the educational park or the suburban Forest Park with the special designation in the future was planted. The area of this green belt was equipped by the furniture and within this green belt some areas for free-range dogs were defined.

The results achieved after the project:

1. Increasing of the soil protection, hygiene, relaxation and aesthetic values of the territory.
2. Increasing of the amount of greenery in the city of 8 ha.
3. Creating a new field of bio-corridor in the city.
4. Increasing of the overall comfort of housing in the affected area.
5. Ensuring the protection and filtering function of the air quality in the area.



"The green belt" © Ing. Jarmila Garaiová

Two local species to be conserved in Allariz: Corn and the Limia cow

COUNTRY: SPAIN

MUNICIPALITY: ALLARIZ

POPULATION: 5,920

SURFACE AREA: 8,600 HECTARES

WEB SITE: WWW.ALLARIZ.COM; WWW.AREADEALLARIZ.COM

Since 2007, the local council has set up a host of actions aimed at recovering local varieties of corn and crop-growing areas. Through a business initiative, the young people of this township have been able to learn about traditional uses and innovate with respect to products originating from corn. In addition, every year the Festa do Millo (Corn Festival) is held to pay homage to traditional uses of corn and other new uses.

In 2000 a herd of Limia cows was introduced on common land in Penamá to recover this local breed which is in danger of extinction. A traditional ecological system has been set up to allow for the recovery of pasturelands and the cleaning of former

crop-growing areas. Experiments are under way on new ways of developing pasturelands and ecological fertilisers.

These activities have made it possible to obtain a large herd of Limia cattle for producing ecological meat, thereby preventing forest fires and obtaining economic benefits for the more than 300 families who jointly own the land.



© Allariz Town Hall

Coca, a township committed to its forest resources

COUNTRY: SPAIN
MUNICIPALITY: COCA
POPULATION: 2,131
SURFACE AREA: 9,810 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.COCA-CIUDADDECAUCA.ORG

Since 1996 the local council has based its main forestry policies on bringing added value to forests by extracting natural resin, promoting the use of splintered wood throughout the Iberian peninsula as biomass for use as energy for heating and stressing that forest owners should receive compensation for the externalities of their forests, particularly due to the excess fixation of carbon in the atmosphere emitted by those who must pay for their emissions today.

Coca is currently the European town with the largest number of natural resin-producing pines. Its forests provide 95% of all resin produced in Spain, with annual earnings of 120,000 € for public ownership, and jobs for 70 people in its forests. According to various scientific articles, the quality of Spanish resin is one of the best in the world.

Almost 85% of the municipal boundary is formed by mountains, of which 70% belong to the local authorities. They hold the sustainable forest certificate. Furthermore, efforts to consolidate the forestry sector involve selling municipal urban heritage, and the funds obtained are used to buy

abandoned rural forest land for transformation into mountains for public use which will be used for extracting resin, wood, biomass and other raw materials obtained from forests.

At present, work is in progress on building the European Reference Centre for Natural Resins, Forests and Raw Materials obtained from Forests (CEREBOSMA) in this township.

The exemplary management of the mountains of Coca has allowed it to win many national and regional prizes: Prize of the Government of Castilla-León for the best population-establishment policies associated with forestry resources; two National Green Flag prizes in 2008 and 2010; 1st National Prize for Sustainable Rural Development; Mention of Honour in 2010 for the best-maintained forest in Spain, etc.

Coca is an example of a township that is committed to renewable natural resources, opening up a path in international terms, succeeding in establishing populations in rural areas, and consolidating the awakening of a basic sector of the Spanish economy such as forestry.



© Coca Town Hall

Communication and raise awareness best projects

Chenôve: House for sustainable development including a school farm and an educational garden

COUNTRY: FRANCE
MUNICIPALITY: CHENÔVE
POPULATION: 15,500
SURFACE AREA: 747 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.VILLE-CHENOVE.FR

Situated south of Dijon, Chenôve has become, with its 15500 inhabitants, the second metropolitan area as well as the second economical pole of Great Dijon. Though Chenôve started as a small winemakers' village, gathering no more than 800 inhabitants in 1850, the city experienced a great urban development throughout the 20th century. It was organized in unifunctional zones (natural spaces, habitat, industry and commerce) and divided by main highways going from south to north. Its 747ha are divided between the plateau, considered as Dijon's « green lung » and classified « Natura 2000 » since 2003 (240 ha), the Mail neighbourhood (136 ha and more than 60 % of the population), the other neighbourhoods (230 hectares) and the industrial and commercial zone (177 hectares).

The house for sustainable development opened in october 2009, and is well situated in the heart of Chenôve's old town, inside a former winemaker's house, entirely renovated (BBC quality label). Behind it, the beautiful landscapes of the Clos du Roy Park, with the school farm, the educational garden and the pond. The park is connected to the Chenôve plateau (Natural 2000). The house employs 1 contractual and 7 permanent staff members, and is dedicated to any issue related to: water, trash, energy, natural spaces, climate change and of course anything aiming at developing eco-citizen behaviour. Lessons take place in the educational garden as well as public expositions, conferences, and regular thematic days are organized.



"The Pond in Clos du Roy Park" © Natureparif

Berlin – Pilot project Panke 2015

COUNTRY: GERMANY
MUNICIPALITY: PANKOW, DISTRICT OF BERLIN
POPULATION: 364,917
SURFACE AREA: 10,300 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.BERLIN.DE/BA-PANKOW/

The EU Water Framework Directive requires informing and involving citizens even before the beginning of any construction work aiming at improving the ecological quality of a European waterway. In a pilot project for the exemplary implementation of the directive specifically in a highly urban area, the small river Panke, which runs across the Berlin district of Pankow, is currently being renaturated along its entire length of 27 kilometers.

Coordinated by the Senate Department for Health, Environment and Consumer Protection of the state of Berlin, the whole planning and development process has been accompanied by a diverse public relations campaign. Lecture series, information days called “Day of the Panke”, a website, and a computer game for children (“Straight was Yesterday: A river becomes natural”) give a glimpse of the spectrum of activities. A network of involved institutions and initiatives has emerged around the Panke renaturation: the state authority of Berlin, the district authorities of Pankow and Mitte, the Local

Agenda 21 of Pankow, neighbourhood management bureaux and cultural institutions are among the relevant stakeholders.

In order to directly involve the local citizens, two participation workshops were held in 2008, where the planners presented their ideas for each section of the river. This forum allowed citizens to actively get involved in the planning process, and the planners profited immensely from the population's knowledge of the local area. The people of Pankow remain involved in the development of the Panke by adopting and looking after small sections of the river.

After over 150 years of intense river regulation, the revitalization of the Panke river in the middle of Berlin is a mammoth task. But considering the backing of the local population, which certainly has been boosted by their early involvement, the prospects are good for turning the Panke into a healthy urban river in the coming years, providing biodiversity with a new habitat and the people of Berlin with another high-quality recreational area.



"One the working groups during a participation workshop in November 2008" © Andrea Wolter

International Nature Film Festival Green Screen®

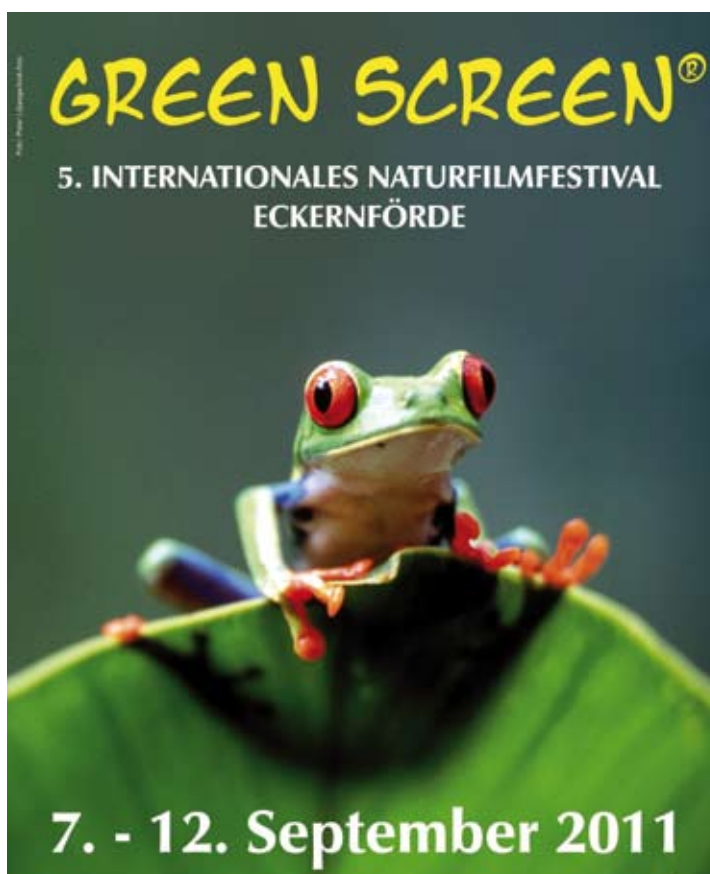
COUNTRY: GERMANY
MUNICIPALITY: ECKERNFÖRDE
POPULATION: 22,720
SURFACE AREA: 1,839 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.ECKERNFOERDE.DE; WWW.GREENSCREEN-FESTIVAL.DE

Every year for six days in September, the idyllic township of Eckernförde on the coast of the Baltic Sea turns into a metropolis for nature filmmaking, when the Green Screen© festival is on. Well supported by the local authorities, local cinemas and event centres present international nature films. The movie screenings are accompanied by a wide range of events such as lectures, discussions, competitions and workshops, as well as film camps for young people. Special screenings are organized for school groups. The extensive programme allows an exceptional glance at the fascinating diversity of nature worldwide, and is a great opportunity for discussions with producers and experts. In 2010, some 80 movies, classic nature films and thematic short movies were screened.

A jury awards the best contributions in the categories best film, best camera, best marine film, best ecological film, and others. The audience chooses

the best short film. Commemorating a German pioneer in nature filming, the Heinz Sielmann Award has been awarded every year since 2008, honouring films which allow rare insights into precious habitats and create an understanding of correlations in nature. Worth 5,000€, this is one of the best endowed nature film awards in Europe.

Green Screen© has developed into a forum for the international nature film industry, which brings together film makers, TV producers and the audience. Wildlife and nature film makers appreciate the festival for the extraordinary opportunity to interact directly with the audience. As such, Green Screen© has been a great success from the start: 4,000 people visited the first festival in 2007. By 2010, the number had risen to 10,000. Some 120 film makers from 30 countries participated in recent years.



Mórahalom: “With responsibility for the environmental consciousness of the generations of the present and future” efficient environmental education using interactivity and experience

COUNTRY: HUNGARY
SETTLEMENT: MÓRAHALOM
POPULATION: 6,072
SURFACE AREA: 8,314 HA
WEB SITE: WWW.MORAHALOM.HU

The programme was realized by the Móra Ferenc General Cultural Centre, which is the operator of the Green Community House and Forest School („Zöld Közösségi Ház és Erdei Iskola”).

The implementation of the principle objective of the program is environmental education of the future generations, to improve both the infrastructure of the Forest School and also its pedagogic methods.

An important objective of the Forest School Programme is to realize professional, economic and social sustainability according to the local demands. A social and economic objectives of the project is the establishment of a sustainable lifestyle, eco-education, enhancing the need for proper management of natural values, founding ecological sustainability by the shaping of attitudes of the future generations.

The activities of the project

The project activities are based on three pillars linked to the development of the qualified forest schools: preparation of educational material, education of the teachers, purchase of equipments: specialized, thematic field demonstration equipments, field laboratory equipments, field monitoring and measuring instruments, non-motorized transport equipments, indoor and outdoor activity tools and furniture renovation of infrastructure, including the environmental friendly conversion of existing facilities, constructions to expand the functionality and accessibility of objects.

The model house of Homokország (Country of Sand)

The teaching method of the forest school system is the learning at the spot. There are a lot of seasonal or hardly observable natural phenomena during the walks. Through interactive methods, the knowledge of primary school students can be enriched with knowledge which is hard to obtain during the field visits. By the presentation tools and by games, self-teaching methods a more complex, systematic knowledge can be acquired

by the students. These methods and tools improve the ability to systemize knowledge. By the visual and tactile senses they gain a deeper knowledge.

The first three topics are presented at a painted wall, with an information panel; by pushing the first button birds singing starts.

A huge puzzle (2m * 2 m) made of wood presents image information.

The last game is about touching: it is a table, which can be opened and hood can be put on the head of the pupil to hide the objects that placed inside the table and can be identified only by touching.

The house of folk traditions

The objective of the House of folk traditions is to present activities and tools for visitors.

The building has the following functions:

- Weaving, pottery and wood carving, practicing traditional folk activities;
- Viewing old folk instruments, getting to know them and their use;
- Exhibition of visual aids, which present life situations that are cannot be seen in practice or only rarely experienced for a variety of reasons.



© Local Government of Mórahalom

Zábiedovo – Program to increase environmental awareness of citizens

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA
MUNICIPALITY: ZÁBIEDOVO
POPULATION: 822
SURFACE AREA: 1,798 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.ZABIEDOVO.EU

Program to increase environmental awareness of citizens aimed at increasing environmental awareness of inhabitants of the municipality Zábiedovo. Under this program Children's eko-police began act in the municipality Zábiedovo in spring 2007. The reason for creating of this project has been a very poor participation of inhabitants to the waste separation. Thru the unusual procedure - educating the older by the youth, the head of the municipality managed to increase the number of households separate waste from 33% to more than 77% in the first year.

Within the project the web side with the documents relating to the order in the village and waste management was established. There was Children's eko-police established equipped with the marks and cameras, aiming to track the waste sorting in individual households, quality of sorted waste and record separated components of waste and its quantity.

There were the lectures realized focused on protection of environment specifically for children, youth and adults using laptop and projector with the current introduction of the website and its use by the citizens. Most responsible households in waste sorting were publicly awarded.

Because of the lasting interest of children to work in the Children's eko-police and positive feedback from the citizens, the municipality of Zábiedovo continues on the activities even after the end of the program in order to maintain the positive trend of further increase of the number of households sorting the waste and also to maintain the positive trend of further increase the amount of sorted waste by individual households.

Meanwhile, the municipality of Zábiedovo has established a separation of biodegradable waste for compost production and its utilization by the municipality and its inhabitants. The municipality of Zábiedovo also started with the „green management system“ that means that all of the operations and activities realized by the municipality office are environmental friendly, according the agreed environmental standards e.g. the use of recycled paper, using the environmental friendly products for cleaning etc. . Thru this activities the municipality Zábiedovo fulfills also its obligations of membership in international association „The Climate Alliance“. Involving the public into various projects also fulfills one of its priorities - participation of citizens of all ages in public affairs.



© Ing. Ján Banovčan

On the lookout for exotic invasive species in Gijón

COUNTRY: SPAIN
MUNICIPALITY: GIJÓN
POPULATION: 277,554
SURFACE AREA: 18,160 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.BOTANICOATLANTICO.ORG

Through the Atlántico Botanical Garden, Gijón City Council has set up an interactive platform for mapping invasive plants in Spain. The information is updated thanks to the participation of citizens who include the exact locations of invasive species they observe in their immediate surroundings.

The initiative aims to increase the degree of knowledge of society about invasive plants, which are considered as such, why they are a threat to our ecosystems and why it is necessary to halt their expansion processes.

The city council has succeeded in dealing with this topic from an innovative standpoint, by setting up digital tools and applications to complement the traditional methods of diffusing information which considerably increases the diffusive potential.



© Gijón Town Hall

Urban planning best projects

Feyzin: Development and implementation of the local green plan

COUNTRY: FRANCE
MUNICIPALITY: FEYZIN
POPULATION: 9,357
SURFACE AREA: 1,052 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.VILLE-FEYZI.FR

Feyzin is a small city – a little more than 9300 inhabitants - located south of Lyon. Its surface can be divided into three distinct parts: one third for habitat, one third for industry (as for example a Total refinery), and one third for natural and green spaces, which represent 426 hectares. Among those can be found many urban parks such as the “Trois Cerisiers”, the “Europe” or else the town hall’s park; and many other green spaces, such as the fort’s woods in the heart of the city, the “Grandes Terres” agricultural plateau, the Guinet pool and the Rhône banks. Feyzin has developed a rich commercial life, and stands as an attractive and dynamic city since it gathers no less that: five schools, one high school, a multimedia library, two stadiums, a cultural center including a locally famous auditorium, a summer swimming pool, a music school, 90 associations, six district councils, a social center and a community center.

Since 2004, the city started a “local green plan” or else “urban vegetal scheme”, aiming at defining each year a program of actions to be undertaken to improve the quality of life (landscape function of green spaces), as well as protection and promotion of biodiversity (ecological function of the green infrastructure). The aim is to integrate green spaces as a part of urban development, through a global and coherent project which takes into account the ecological corridors. Feyzin’s green plan is threefold:

- The first part, dedicated to diagnosis, helped define the landscape’s identity, its characteristics, potential and dynamics. This “evaluation” made it possible to detail the different characteristics of Feyzin’s landscape and lifestyle. A complete report listing both assets and weaknesses for each of the specific landscape units was established to serve as basis to help define stakes and actions.
- The second part helps defining, on the basis of the evaluation, “Feyzin’s challenges”. It synthesizes the different challenges listed in several urbanism documents: Territorial Development Policy, the Territorial Coherence Scheme, the Land Use Planning, as well as their impact on Feyzin.
- The third and last part is more operational and defines the program of actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the intended goals. This program is updated yearly and brings coherence to the actions of the different partners on the territory.

The green plan enables a regular programming of ecological and landscape improvements such as in the Razes forest: for example the planting of typical Rhone valley trees, and the recycling of vacant lots to preserve biodiversity in zones of technological risk.



"Buffer strip – extension of the Razes forest" © Natureparif

Improvement of the living environment in the city district Richtsberg

COUNTRY: GERMANY
MUNICIPALITY: MARBURG
POPULATION: 80,783
SURFACE AREA: 12,393 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.MARBURG.DE

The city district Richtsberg of the city of Marburg was built in the 1960s as a typical housing areas from that period: little job opportunities, very few cultural offerings, and a limited infrastructure. Even today, many people are public welfare recipients or are unemployed, many inhabitants have an immigration background. To avoid potentially problematic social developments, the city of Marburg began an extensive urban development programme for the district 25 years ago. Ecological and social goals were specifically added to the urban development plans: with the population actively involved, formerly monotonous green spaces were redesigned more naturally. Gardens were created, rows of trees planted, the open spaces between apartment buildings were turned into ecologically sound, park-like areas. What used to be a rather dull part of the city now offers its citizens manifold options for meeting neighbours, having intercultural experiences, to relax and recreate.

An “intercultural garden” was set up and designed to create a better community and to promote integrating people from different nationalities. Some

30 families from various cultural backgrounds cultivate their own fruit and vegetables together. Many activities have developed in addition to the gardening: juice squeezing events in autumn, pruning classes, and classes for making natural cosmetics, even a garden choir has started up and has already had several public appearances. From the start, this communal garden was planned to be a place to meet people and promote intercultural understanding. Many families in the city district would like to join the gardening project but cannot due to limited numbers – this shows the desire of people to be part of such places where they can participate in crosscultural activities and enjoy nature at the same time.

Two intercultural gardens and one intercultural school garden have been created in Marburg so far, as well as an adventure garden, where children can plant and build natural play areas together. Integration and intercultural understanding are not some remote ambitions in Marburg but have become a part of everyday life.



"International gardens in Marburg" © Helga Pukall

Budaörs: The Naphegy educational trail, Tűzkőhegy educational trail, Törökugrató system of educational trails

COUNTRY: HUNGARY
SETTLEMENT: BUDAÖRS
POPULATION: 28,329
SURFACE AREA: 2,359 HA
WEB SITE: WWW.BUDAORS.HU

Most of the forests within the borders of the settlement are landscape conservation areas and the parts of the Buda Landscape Conservation area. The state-owned forests are managed by the Pilisi Parkerdő Ltd. Forestry of Budapest; while the forests owned by the town are managed by the Local Government of Budaörs.

At the rocky, stony, shallow soils of the forests of the Tűzkőhegy and the Naphegy the stocks of the black pine (*Pinus nigra*) are deteriorated. At certain places new species appeared: *Crataegus monogyna*, (Common Hawthorn), *Berberis vulgaris* (European barberry), European Cornel (*Cornus mas*), as well as deciduous tree species (oak, downy oak, flowering ash). Artificial restoration; seeding plantation and cultivation of trees started years ago aiming to help natural phytocoenosis. However, the process is slow; needs decades because of the shallow soil.

The deterioration of the pines at similar habitats is typical all around Hungary; and although there is no agreement about the reasons, the age of the pines, the long drought and physiological debilitation of the trees together with infections of insects and fungus all contributes to it. The southwest part (Mountain Huszonnégy-ökrös) of the forest was cut out due to fire damage. The Pilisi Parkerdő Forestry Ltd, cut and toppled the trees, and used them to protect the soil at the hilly surface, thus they succeeded to protect hill side from further erosion. Then oaks were seeded; as well as several other species were growing naturally: the prunus mahaleb, the flowering ash, or rowan tree barberry, red berry and buckthorn.

In 2006, the city was granted to develop the environment of the Naphegy and the Tűzkőhegy. The results are the education trail, the information boards, and the presentation of the natural values. Benches, tables were placed for resting of visitors and information boards to guide them. Artificial nests, and feeding places are built for the birds. Wooden bridges are built over the trenches of the Tűzkőhegy.

The second phase of the Naphegy and the Tűzkőhegy education trail was built in 2009;

shelters and a gate (a guardhouse) were completed. At the same time the education trail system of the Törökugrató was started. It leads from different starting points along a forest education trail with ten information boards presenting the forest ecosystem. Moreover, along the trail ten sport instruments were installed for those who want to do physical exercises.

In 2010 the *Fumana procumbens* educational trail was developed; it leads to the highest panoramic point of the Törökugrató from the former mine, and to the dolomite meadow.

The main aim of the education trails is to present the natural values, to deliver knowledge without disturbing natural environment, and also to control invasive species, for example the tree of heaven, or *Ailanthus altissima*.

The development of the trails help to protect the grassland (no more damage because of squelching), and also help the visitors to walk around.

As a result of the project the number of visitors increased, they use only the marked trails, behave more consciously, more aware of natural values and the spread of invasive species slowed down.



© Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency

Prešov – Spatial Plan of the City

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA
MUNICIPALITY: PREŠOV
POPULATION: 91,205
SURFACE AREA: 7,118 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.PRESOV.SK

The city of Prešov pays a great attention to the implementation of nature protection in the spatial planning documentation. Some intact green spaces are located on the city's territory which cannot be reduced. The intact spaces are directly transposed in the spatial planning backgrounds. Moreover, these spaces are defined not only for public areas (owned by the city) but also for private ones.

There are following measures, part of the spatial plan of the city, to protect green spaces:

- untouchability of forest
- intact green spaces in the built-up territories
- territorial system of ecological stability, biocorridors
- biotopes of European and national importance.

The city of Prešov simultaneously implements various water retention measures adopted in the form of a general binding regulation, executing the binding part of the city's spatial plan.

In accordance with the spatial plan of the city, a pre-project preparation of a Central Urban Park started in 2007. A public architectonic and urban planning competition was held, based on which two alternative solutions were presented. In the next stage, a Zone Spatial Plan for the Central Urban Park was completed. Next steps will be implemented according to the procedures in arranging the legal and proprietary formalities related to the territory affected.



Objective in Barcelona: To ensure that each resident of the Ensanche district has a green area within a distance of at most 200 metres

COUNTRY: SPAIN
MUNICIPALITY: BARCELONA
POPULATION: 1,673,075
SURFACE AREA: 10,120.97 HECTARES
WEB SITE: WWW.BCN.ES/

The city council has set up a programme for recovering the blocks in the Ensanche district, aimed at ensuring that almost 270,000 inhabitants have a green area within 200 metres of their home. This means that one out of every nine blocks will have a public green area. The evolution of this initiative has been extremely positive: in 1996 there were 9 interior gardens with a total surface area of 26,000 sq m, and at the close of

2009, 40 areas had been recovered occupying a surface area of 87,000 sq m, for public use as green and leisure areas. At 1 December 2010, 43 blocks had been recovered, making a total of 92,634 sq m. In addition, 18,066 sq m are in the process of being recovered, thereby allowing the opening of 11 new interior gardens over the short and mid term. These green areas have children's play areas and urban fixtures.



© Teresa Franquesa

Project partners



National sponsors and cooperation partners



The project is supported through LIFE, a programme of the European Union. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed some 3.104 projects, contributing approximately €2.2 billion to the protection of the environment.