



## Mainstreaming Urban Nature-Based Solutions

# Facilitate community-based action

Economic incentives can significantly advance the integration of urban nature. Nature-based solutions can be positioned as an investment in climate adaptation, such as the example of proposed lower taxes for Dutch households with green roofs that reduce pressure on the sewage system. Funding bodies can require urban development to integrate green and grey infrastructure. EU funding on green infrastructure sparked multidisciplinary cooperation on green infrastructure across Budapest municipal departments. Quantifying environmental costs and benefits is often used as an incentive for urban greening but can also be incorporated into taxation measures to disincentivise activities that prevent urban greening. A German environmental association lobbied for property taxes to be based on the value of land rather than the value of property, discouraging land speculation that increases pressure on urban green spaces.



The green roof subsidy in Hamburg, Germany, which receives 40-50 applications per year, was developed in response to significant flooding and loss of space to infrastructure and real estate development. Regional public banks and investment banks have played an important role in providing the necessary financial instruments. Most of the subsidy has been used for simple green roofs, with very few requests for multi-functional and intensive green roofs or ones that include solar panels. A trade-off exists between voluntary subsidies and including green roofs as a mandatory component of large real estate housing projects. Since green roofs will soon become mandatory in large projects, one option for continuing subsidies is using them to enhance the quality of green roofs.



# Mainstreaming Nature Based Solutions

Promising Pathways for Sustainability Goals



## Climate Change

With the race to reach 'net zero' targets and build back resilience, nature-based solutions are increasingly seen as a critical tool for responding to climate change. Whether by cooling cities and reducing energy demand or providing new ways of managing flooding, nature-based solutions are gaining support globally. We identify four pathways through which mainstreaming is taking place: recognising their potential as a climate solution; investing to reduce climate risk; integrating climate action with other sustainability goals; and learning through practical experience on the ground.

## Biodiversity

As the world seeks to develop a transformative agenda for biodiversity over the next decade, we explore how mainstreaming nature-based solutions can enable cities to conserve, restore and thrive with nature. Four pathways are identified based on regulating for 'no net loss' of biodiversity, developing co-governance arrangements for public-private finance, integrating biodiversity with existing sustainability priorities, and integrating biodiversity into urban development and the built environment.

## Social Inclusion

Nature-based solutions such as new parks, rooftop gardens, and tree-lined streets play an important role in improving wellbeing and enhancing community spaces. However, the potential for gentrification and displacement of lower income groups means that these solutions must actively foster social inclusion and tackle inequalities. We identify three pathways that strengthen social inclusion: broadening community participation, securing genuine political commitment and policies that support social inclusion, and pursuing social inclusion measures as a way of achieving health and wellbeing.

## Economic Regeneration

Nature-based solutions can create economic regeneration through increasing economic activity and employment and by improving the quality of life. Nature-based solutions both directly contribute to economic vitality and well-being, and leverage new forms of economic activity in cities that generate opportunities. Mainstreaming for economic regeneration takes place through developing partnerships for investment, increasing our knowledge of their economic value, seizing opportunities emerging from other sustainability initiatives, and stimulating market demand for nature-based solutions.

## Sustainable Development Goals

To achieve the SDGs, urban development must prepare for growing populations while also creating sustainable and inclusive cities. Nature-based solutions can address a range of sustainability goals from climate resilience to health to economic development. For example, green space provides cooling, reduces pollutants, and encourages physical activity. Pathways that engage urban nature-based solutions to address SDGs include: involving diverse actors, strengthening local engagement, addressing multiple sustainability objectives simultaneously, establishing institutional arrangements that integrate sustainable development, and monitoring and assessing sustainable urban transformation.