Interreg

Danube Transnational Programme

URBforDAN

EUROPEAN UNION

WP3 and WP4 Outputs 3.1. and 4.4. URBforDAN UPF Planning and Management Guidelines

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Ljubljana

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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

ES	Ecosystem Services
IMMP	Integrated Multi-use Management Plan(s)
LP / PP	Lead Partner / Project Partner
UPF	Urban and Peri-urban Forest(s)
WP	Work Package

Why urban and peri-urban forests are so important for the sustainable future of cities?

Urban and peri-urban forests are not *"a new invention"*, but rather a constructive part of many European cities. However, due to fast urbanization and aggressive competition for space in and around urban areas in the last few decades, their importance was often underestimated and disregarded.

Nonetheless, the revived *"green and sustainable"* mentality in urban planning, combined with climate change responses and other challenges of urban development, revealed their true importance. The URBforDAN project team recognized the following key reasons for importance of Urban and Peri-urban Forests (UPF):

✓ **THEY ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CITIES** – Throughout history, forests were not just pushed aside, but were for various reasons embraced by our cities and made their integral parts. As cities grew, they absorbed not only previously rural surroundings, but also forests surrounding them. Today, it is almost impossible to imagine the landscape of many European cities without their forest, parks, tree-lines or even individual trees. Some of them are already protected as landscape protected sights, or even as natural and cultural heritage areas. Unfortunately, most of them are not.

✓ **THEY REDUCE CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES** – UPF are an already available and functioning part of the current urban climate change resilience system of many cities – reducing urban heat island effects, reducing wind speeds, retaining water, preventing erosion and co-creating micro-climate in urban areas. Furthermore, they are storing carbon, cleaning air pollution, reducing urban noise and other environmental pressures in urban areas.

✓ **THEY ARE THE URBAN BIODIVERSITY HOT SPOTS** – Of course UPF represent only a part of the existing green infrastructure in European cities. However, they are often less intensively managed, less visited and thus provide better living conditions for many species. Just as importantly, they provide *"stepping stones"* for many migratory species and thus ensure connectivity in urban areas.

✓ **THEY PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION** – Due to their location and easy access, UPF are perfect not only for the environmental education and awareness raising, but also for creation of *"classrooms in the open"* and execution of programmes like *"forest kindergartens"* or *"forest schools"*. They are also often used for execution of extra-curricular activities like boy-scouts, recreation and training polygons, etc. As such, UPF represent a re-connection link with nature for the urban population.

✓ **THEY MAKE CITIZENS AND VISITORS HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER** – One of most recognizable added values of UPF is their ability to provide space for recreation and relaxation. However, as discovered during the COVID-19 pandemic, they also became places for social interaction and stress relief. In combination with other stated characteristics, they proved to be one of the most important urban wellbeing locations for numerous citizens and visitors.

✓ **THEY PROVIDE IMPORTANT SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES** – Due to their attraction factor, many UPF became important tourist attractions or setting scenes for many tourism and leisure activities. In some cities though UPF retained its production role, enabling their owners to keep benefiting from wood and a diverse array of nonwoody forest products. In the end, let's not forget that UPF are even individual trees which greatly increase property value – an important information and food for thought for all urban developers.

Why and how seven URBforDAN cities decided to act?

Urban lifestyle is fast and intensive, thus vast numbers of citizens and visitors actively search for places to relax from daily stress. Often, there is no time for *"the escape from the city"*, so citizens look for alternatives. Traditionally, they find them in Urban and Peri-urban Forests (UPF).

Their status of *"the green city lungs"* is the main reason why Urban and Peri-urban Forests (UPF) in 7 project partner Cities (covering over 35 km^2) have so-far survived all urbanization pressures relatively intact. However, multiplication of activities and increasing numbers of citizens (6,5 mio in 7 cities) and visitors (over 15 mio per year in 7 cities) put UPF under unprecedented pressures. Even if many of UPF are protected as natural/cultural heritage, inappropriate management, overuse and poor coordination between key actors' plague most of UPF today.

City of Ljubljana, being The Green Capital of Europe 2016, composed the transnational URBforDAN partnership in order to capitalize on its so-far achievements and present new standards in sustainable and participatory UPF management.

Through the introduction of a participatory approach, URBforDAN project improved cooperation between stakeholders and actively involved them in development of 7 Integrated Multi-use Management Plans (IMMP) – delivering not only improved UPF management and utilization of ecosystem services, but also a constructive dialogue with citizens and mind-change needed to resolve concrete conflicts.

Due to active involvement of civil society, solutions proposed by the URBforDAN project are widely supported and fully implementable. Subsequently, URBforDAN project was able to greatly improve the current image of 7 UPF focus areas and turned them into places for socialization, relaxation, recreation, education and natural heritage experience for a diverse set of target groups. At the same time, it diversified and enriched *"the green content"* of 7 Cities – e.g. interpretation and sustainable use of exiting natural and cultural heritage in UPF focus areas – through new and improved services and products, accessible on over 1.200 ha.

Consequences of climate changes we are faced with reveal many mitigating effects UPF can provide to urban areas. Just as importantly, COVID19 crisis revealed the true importance of UPF for wellbeing of citizens, as they offer important escape and stress relief from epidemy-linked restrictions. Subsequently, UPF keep proving that they are and will remain to be of a great value for any modern city.
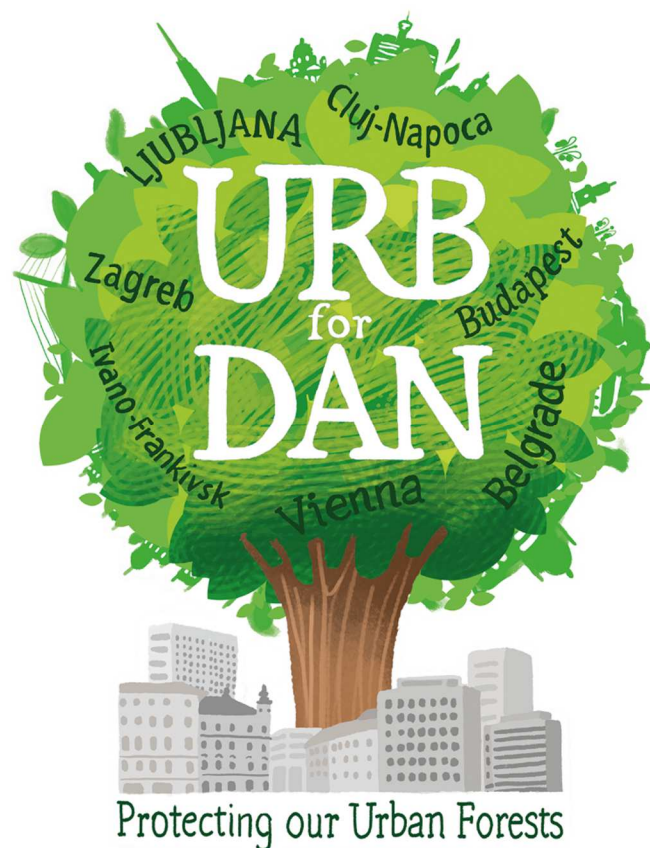
How to... The added value of the Participatory Approach

"Public participation is the process by which an organization consults with interested or affected individuals, organizations and government entities before making a decision. "

"Public participation is a two-way communication and a collaborative problem-solving process with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions."

Source: International Association for Public Participation
URL: www.iap2.org

As Urban and Peri-urban forests (UPF) represent areas where many interests overlap and sometimes collide, the participatory approach was built into the URBforDAN project as one of key methodological approaches. In fact, methodological approaches of all other work packages were based on the participatory approach.

This is also the main reason why the URBforDAN development process model (presented bellow) shows almost symbiotic relationship between all work packages – enabling active and dynamic cooperation between all involved parties, as well as integration of all information gathered through the participatory process.

The extensive use of the participatory approach was in the URBforDAN project understood as a key methodological advantage. However, if not implemented properly, it could also become an important methodological liability. To avoid this, we can provide the following advices.

ENSURE ADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING AND CAPACITIES ON THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

To avoid above stated risk and ensure proper implementation of the participatory approach by all project partners URBforDAN Participatory Approach Workshop Implementation Guidelines were developed with the aim to ensure common approach and establish universal understanding of all steps. Today, they can be used to equip less experienced cities with theoretical background and provide them useful "tips and tricks" from qualified experts – to ensure best possible implementation of the participatory approach in cities interested in replication.

Based on them, internal training of trainers can be delivered to all city planning teams – including custom-made training exercise based on a role-play game principle in order to prepare partners to respond to identified challenges in execution of the UPF planning and management processes.

LESSONS LEARNED:

If your capacities and experiences with participatory approach are low, you should consider hiring external support. If not, you are risking poor or even disruptive stakeholder participation.

INVEST IN MOBILIZATION OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Participatory approach demands active participation of all key stakeholders – owners, managers and users of urban and peri-urban forests (UPF). Thus, it is very important to mobilize all of them, as well as to address all key target groups:

- In case of owners, you can rely on existing land/forest ownership databases.
- In case of managers, institutions with any relevant management responsibilities or protection regimes should be invited to participate.
- In case of users, we suggest that lists of all known types of UPF users are prepared before you set-out out to create a contact list of all potentially interested institutions, organizations and individuals. Alternatively, you can publish an open call, or carry out a survey, to collect the contacts.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The process will run much smoother, if all key stakeholders are involved from the start. Any later involvement usually means at least a partial repetition of already taken steps.

Mobilization of key stakeholders can be achieved through various activities – in our case workshops, individual meetings, on-line and on-site surveys, active on-line and social media campaigns, as well as *"best project idea"* competitions were successfully used. However, there are no universal solutions. **It is just as important to get to know various key stakeholders,** as well as to understand their ambitions, motivation, capacities and operational capabilities. Only then you can guide them through the process, optimize their involvement and benefit from it.

ENSURE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Mobilizing key stakeholders is one thing, but gaining their trust is the key issue for all participatory decision-making processes. **Only by gaining trust, we can ensure long-term active and constructive participation of key stakeholders.** In our experience, open and constructive in-person communication and group work on resolution of concrete issues during meetings are the best tools to start gaining trust.

Start with less complicated issues and solve them before moving onto more important issues. Short-term goals and *"victories"* are just as important as the long-term vision, as they create an atmosphere of *"success"*, create a positive image – in turn, attracting more citizens to join the cause.

This must be followed by a continuous flow of feed-back information, continued work through time and integration of agreed solutions into project results. If successful, we can benefit from utilization of key stakeholders' unique knowledge, skills, capacities and understanding of UPF.

When done properly, key stakeholders will not only become our *"discussion group"* but rather *"partners in future development"*, able and willing to support practical implementation of selected activities.

However, participatory approach takes time and effort, especially when involving large and diverse groups of stakeholders, as in our case. This is why it is important to devote enough time, staff and resources to it – in case of poor internal capacities, involvement of external experts with participatory planning skills proved to be a highly effective option.

For easier understanding of the participatory approach used in the URBforDAN project framework and its most important links with other work packages please refer to the URBforDAN development process model (presented bellow). For more detailed information on actual implementation of the participatory approach, lessons learned and suggestions for improvements, please refer to the URBforDAN Participatory Approach Evaluation Report.

> *LESSONS LEARNED:*
>
> *Once activated, communication and coordination with key stakeholders becomes an on-going and never-ending process. Thus, adequate long-term staff and resources should be planed.*

How to… The added value of Ecosystem Services

The main purpose of Ecosystem Services (ES) mapping is to collect all relevant information from various sources, improve the understanding of the area and its specifics, and develop a sound basis for preparation of Integrated Multi-use Management Plans (IMMPs) for urban and peri-urban forests (UPF).

For this purpose, special Methodology for Ecosystem Services Mapping and Valuation was developed. Criteria were developed for mapping, alongside with detailed instructions how to create maps. The guidance package was designed in a way that all ecosystem services must be identified, evaluated according to their importance in the specific urban areas, and then included in the strategic and operational plans.

## IDENTIFY AND MAP RELEVANT ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

In the first step, Ecosystem Services (ES) relevant for a specific UPF focus areas need to be identified. Alongside this process, institutions linked to ES can also be identified in order to gather all available data.

To map relevant ES, a detailed list of criteria for mapping (provisioning, supporting, cultural, regulating) can be used, having in mind the urban character and the planning goal (which is different compared to economic valuation of ES). However, the criteria can be adapted, especially if data is not available or due to other objective reasons. Missing data can be replaced by
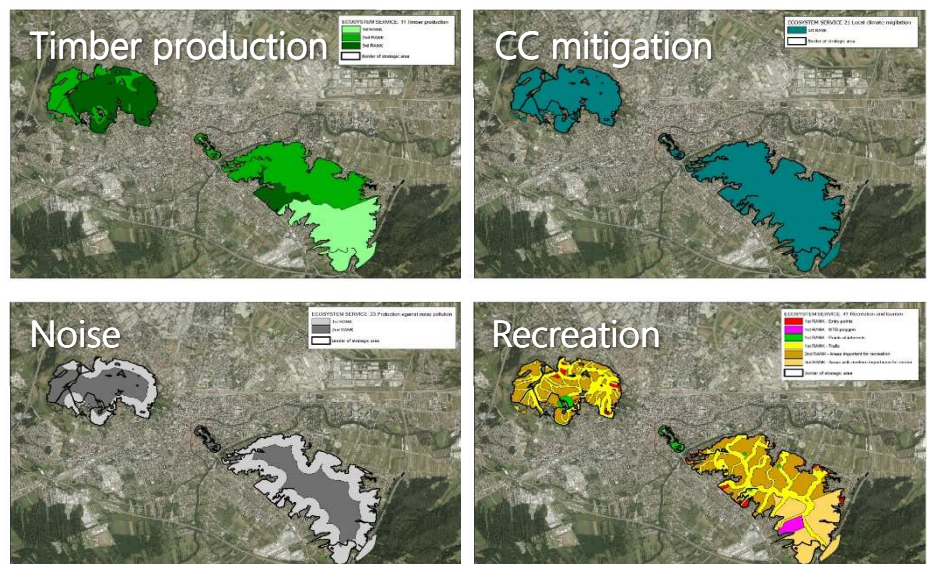
expert assessments, field-visit monitoring or even expert-group discussions within the participatory process. Such modifications must however be taken into account during data interpretation process. Partial results of such an ES mapping process on Golovec hill in Ljubljana (Slovenia) can be seen on accompanying pictures.
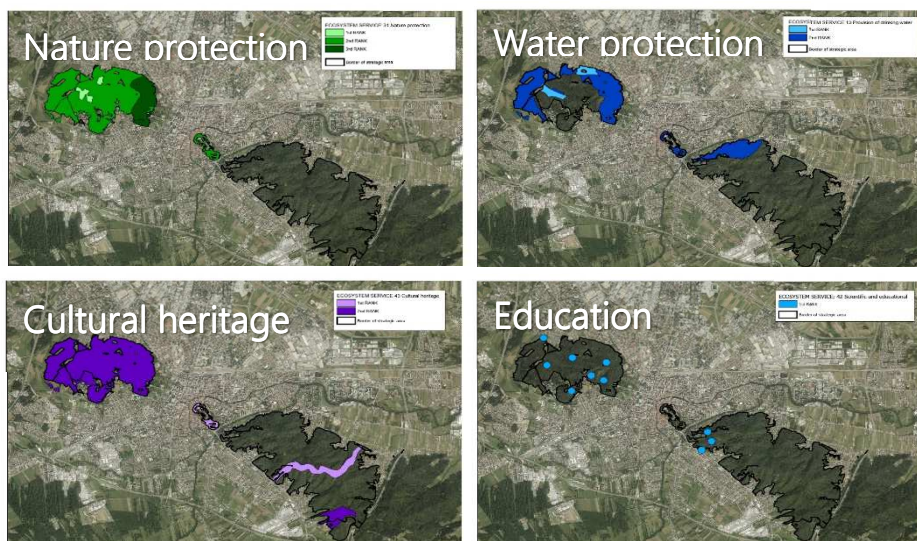
Partial ES maps can be at a later stage combined in order to reveal important overlaps and identify potential conflicts between various types of ES or human activities.

ALWAYS USE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES FOR A PRE-DETERMINED AND SPECIFIC PURPOSE

ES mapping proved to be a useful tool not only to collect information about UPF and its services, but also to identify the needs and spatially-explicit expectations towards UPF form their owners and users. Thus, ES mapping significantly improves the level of input data in any UPF planning or management process.

As such, ES mapping can serve as a "focal point" or a "catalyst" for discussion within any participatory process on the current state of UPF, open issues, arising conflicts, as well as a good starting point for search of potential solutions and prioritization of activities. However, ES mapping criteria should always follow the aim of the mapping, which in our case, was the elaboration of the plan. Subsequently, it was much different from other types of ES mapping – e.g. for economic evaluation purposes, national reporting purposes etc.

We can conclude that, with successful implementation of the methodology in 7 diverse environments (legal, operational, environmental, social, economical, etc.), the URBforDAN project provided a unique, effective, but also easily transferable ES mapping methodology. However, more profound and clear mapping criteria might be needed in specific cases, especially when faced with different existing data-sets or very site- or environment-specific challenges. This is why we recommend that methodology remains flexible and is appropriately calibrated before its implementation.
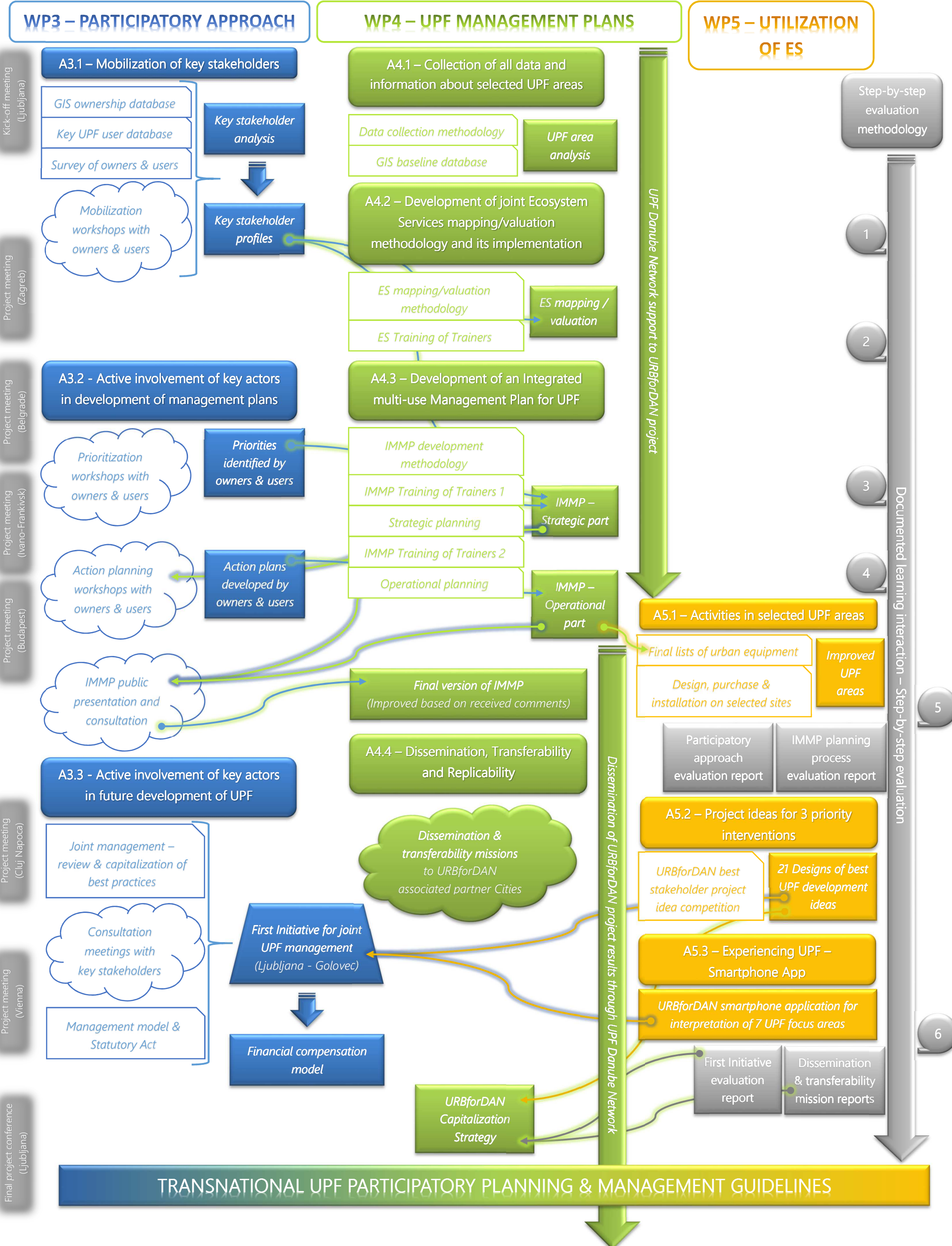
LESSONS LEARNED:

We found ES mapping to be an important UPF planning and management tool, especially in countries where no system of forest functions or ES mapping already exists. However, in such cases the support from GIS experts proved to be essential.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The effort to adjust the methodology to UPF scale proved to be extremely important, as many existing ES mapping methodologies are applicable only on a large-scale and based on national level data.

For easier understanding of the ecosystem services-based approach used in the URBforDAN project framework and its most important links with other work packages, please refer to the URBforDAN development process model (presented bellow). For more detailed information on actual implementation of the ecosystem services-based approach, lessons learned and suggestions for improvements, please refer to the URBforDAN Integrated Multi-use Management Plans Planning Process Evaluation Report.

URBforDAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS MODEL

(as implemented by an individual URBforDAN partner City)

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WP3 – PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

WP4 – UPF MANAGEMENT PLANS

WP5 – UTILIZATION OF ES

A3.1 – Mobilization of key stakeholders

- GIS ownership database
- Key UPF user database
- Survey of owners & users

Key stakeholder analysis

Mobilization workshops with owners & users

Key stakeholder profiles

A4.1 – Collection of all data and information about selected UPF areas

- *Data collection methodology*
- *GIS baseline database*

UPF area analysis

Step-by-step evaluation methodology

A4.2 – Development of joint Ecosystem Services mapping/valuation methodology and its implementation

ES mapping/valuation methodology

ES Training of Trainers

ES mapping / valuation

1

2

A3.2 - Active involvement of key actors in development of management plans

Prioritization workshops with owners & users

Priorities identified by owners & users

A4.3 – Development of an Integrated multi-use Management Plan for UPF

IMMP development methodology

IMMP Training of Trainers 1

Strategic planning

IMMP – Strategic part

3

Action planning workshops with owners & users

Action plans developed by owners & users

IMMP Training of Trainers 2

Operational planning

IMMP – Operational part

4

A5.1 – Activities in selected UPF areas

Final lists of urban equipment

Design, purchase & installation on selected sites

Improved UPF areas

IMMP public presentation and consultation

Final version of IMMP
(Improved based on received comments)

Participatory approach evaluation report

IMMP planning process evaluation report

5

A4.4 – Dissemination, Transferability and Replicability

A3.3 - Active involvement of key actors in future development of UPF

A5.2 – Project ideas for 3 priority interventions

Joint management – review & capitalization of best practices

Dissemination & transferability missions to URBforDAN associated partner Cities

URBforDAN best stakeholder project idea competition

21 Designs of best UPF development ideas

Consultation meetings with key stakeholders

First Initiative for joint UPF management (Ljubljana - Golovec)

A5.3 – Experiencing UPF – Smartphone App

Management model & Statutory Act

URBforDAN smartphone application for interpretation of 7 UPF focus areas

6

First Initiative evaluation report

Dissemination & transferability mission reports

Financial compensation model

URBforDAN Capitalization Strategy

UPF Danube Network support to URBforDAN project

Dissemination of URBforDAN project results through UPF Danube Network

Documented learning interaction – Step-by-step evaluation

TRANSNATIONAL UPF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING & MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

How to... The Integrated Multi-use Management Planning process

"Key steps for integrating urban forests in municipal planning process:

1. Addressing UPF in urban plans;
2. Fostering dialogue between UPF and other planning components;
3. Including a UPF evaluation checklist or guidelines among the technical and legislative norms of city development strategies;
4. Taking on adaptive management approach to urban forest resources;
5. Planning for the long-term maintenance of urban forests."

Source: FAO Guidelines on Urban and Peri-urban Forests
URL: http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6210e.pdf

Urban and Peri-urban forests (UPF) are complex and unique subjects of many overlapping interests, diverse management competences and important social and ecological aspects, which can only be considered through a comprehensive planning framework. Subsequently, an integrated planning approach was built into the URBforDAN project as one of key methodological approaches. Due to the need for collaborative planning approach, it was strongly based on participatory approach, as described in previous chapters. The overall planning process can be broken down into the following key stages.

ENSURE ADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING AND CAPACITIES ON THE INTEGRATED MULTI-USE MANAGEMENT PLANNING APPROACH

Just as in the case of the participatory approach, internal training of trainers ensured unified understanding of the integrated multi-use management planning approach and process, greatly contributing to its proper implementation in 7 URBforDAN cities. It was delivered to all project partners staff working on the project in all three main stages of the planning approach described bellow. Special guidelines, as well as templates were prepared, based on key methodologies:

✓ Methodology for the preparation of the Strategic part of IMMP;
✓ Methodology for the preparation of the Operational part of IMMP.

Both methodologies were designed to serve as a guide and a support tool for cities, providing them with a clear joint methodology and a universal template. They can easily be reused in other cities. However, during replication, one must take note that the training was based on the assumption that city teams already possess basic understanding of the planning processes (their existing experience) and staff capable of its execution – or that the adequate external experts would be brought in to support them.

SELECT YOUR UPF STRATEGIC AREAS AND YOUR UPF FOCUS AREAS IN ADVANCE

UPF in cities are usually fragmented, which is why any city has to determine its UPF strategic area (area encompassed by the Strategic part – usually all or at least several UPF areas) and at least one UPF focus area (area encompassed by the Strategic part – usually one area on which the methodology is tested).

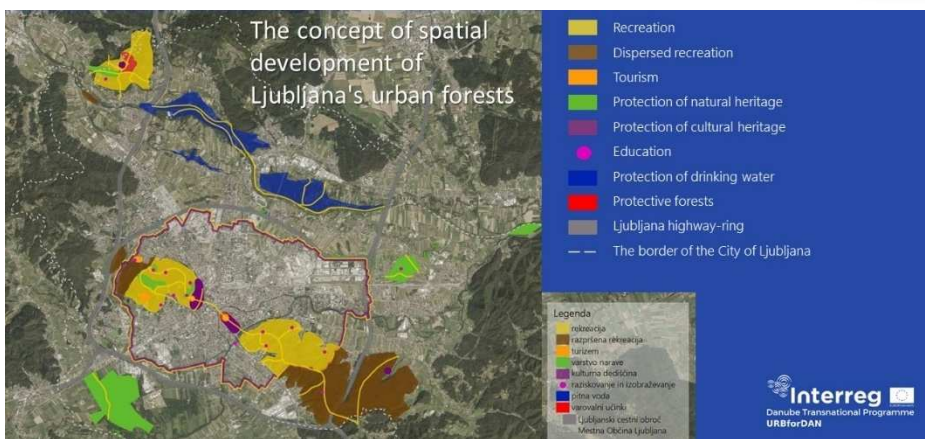The result of such a selection process in Ljubljana (Slovenia) can be seen on the accompanying picture.

Ljubljana's urban forest areas

Integrated Multi-use Managemnt Plan:

✓ Strategic part → for all Ljubljana's Urban Forests

✓ Operational part → only for the selected focus area – Golovec hill

■ Urban forests
▬ Ljubljana highway-ring
- - - The border of the City of Ljubljana
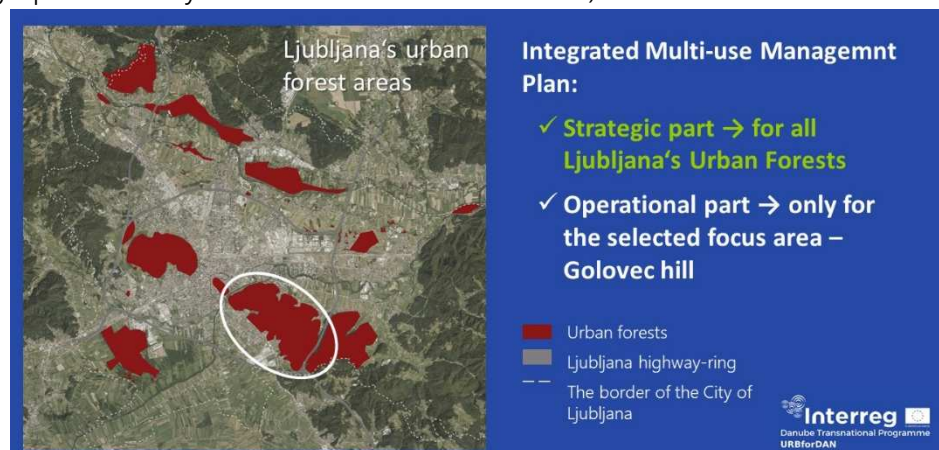
"LOOK AT THE FOREST, BEFORE LOOKING AT INDIVIDUAL TREES" – STRATEGY COMES FIRST

Mapping of ecosystem services is understood as the first stage of the URBforDAN integrated multi-use management planning approach - the main objective being to get a good basis for preparation of strategic and operational parts of IMMP for urban and peri-urban forests (UPF).

Development of IMMPs was the core of the URBforDAN management planning process. The overall aim of the Strategic part of the IMMP is to define expectations towards UPF, potential conflicts between different forest uses, define

> *LESSONS LEARNED:*
>
> *UPF planning is more than just adapted forest management planning. It is a complex system of social and environmental planning within UPF areas, based on their ecosystem services.*

The concept of spatial development of Ljubljana's urban forests

strategic long-term management objectives in UPF, as well as to define priorities amongst management objectives and ES. The result of such a strategic thinking process in Ljubljana (Slovenia) can be seen on the accompanying picture.

The strategic part also defines management guidelines that represent the basis for the definition of operational goals and measures, as well as defines the governance framework. Furthermore, the Strategic part of IMMP represents a framework for the Operational part elaborated for the preselected focus areas in each URBforDAN city.

Operational part of IMMP includes elements of a tactical and operational plan. It is developed within the framework of the Strategic part of IMMP, but focuses on a specific UPF focus area. It is the basis for the implementation of the activities and measures in selected UPF, enabling appropriate management and sustainable use of desired ecosystem services. It defines management objectives and guidelines, as well as the governance model, monitoring, needed resources, financial framework and funding sources.

Both parts of the IMMP should be prepared in a participatory manner in order to fully benefit from the participatory approach.

For easier understanding of the approach used to develop IMMPs in practice within the URBforDAN project framework and its most important links with other work packages please refer to the URBforDAN development process model (presented above). For more detailed information on actual development of IMMPs, lessons learned and suggestions for improvements, please refer to the URBforDAN Integrated Multi-use Management Plans Planning Process Evaluation Report.

> *LESSONS LEARNED:*
>
> *A common and well understood framework for the Strategic part proved to be crucial for cities to develop a good Operational part– especially as involvement of stakeholders in the planning process is highly beneficial.*

> *LESSONS LEARNED:*
>
> *The right balance between enthusiasm, knowledge, experience and action is needed - involving interdisciplinary group of experts is just as important as involving stakeholders - especially in case of low internal capacities.*

How to... Implementing the IMMPs in practice

The key reason behind the idea to actually utilize ecosystem services within the URBforDAN project framework, was to make sure that *"the URBforDAN theory, plans and ideas"* are actually put into practice during the lifetime of the URBforDAN project and within its operational and financial framework. There were several good reasons for that:

✓ **To ensure first implementation steps of IMMPs, imaginary future roles were actually taken**, thus showing how operational parts of IMMPs should be implemented in practice, as well as making sure they will not be *"forgotten in some drawer"* after URBforDAN project ends.

✓ By doing so, **people responsible for implementation of IMMPs were put in their future roles as *"operational implementors"* of IMMPs**, embedding IMMPs in their mindsets, creating operational decision-making chains and standard operating procedures, empowering them for active implementation and creating ownership.

✓ **Sending out a clear message from project partners to all stakeholders, that IMMPs will be implemented.** Meaning, that their participation and cooperation was not in vain – thus, reinforcing trust and expressing long-term commitment to operational UPF management. Furthermore, via best idea competition project partners clearly showed their citizens, that their ideas are taken seriously and that they can help in UPF management process – thus, building ownership and creating relationship between users and UPF. Subsequently, delivering the much-needed mind-change and change in behavior of UPF users.

This being explained and achieved by our project partners, it is obvious that the URBforDAN project clearly supports such approach and recommends it to any cities interested in its replication.

START IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES IN UPF FOCUS AREAS

It is of course impossible to expect full implementation of IMMPs. Nonetheless, it is important to identify key activities which can be implemented in order to kick-off the implementation process.

Within the URBforDAN project all project partners opted to start with the installation of different types of urban equipment needed to manage and guide various activities already present in pre-selected UPF focus areas.

For example, the following types of urban equipment were installed – entrance/info points, markings of trails (hiking, cycling...), rest areas (benches, tables, waste baskets...), outdoor recreation (fitness equipment, recreational polygons...), interpretation of natural heritage (quiet zones, bird-baths...), education in nature (educational paths & points, learning tools...), etc.

All needed activities and implementation steps were identified in Operational parts of IMMPs for individual UPF focus areas in all 7 URBforDAN cities and were implemented in line with them. In practice, external or internal expert supervision of purchased equipment proved to be of high importance, as the equipment was developed from natural materials and needed to be adapted to local climate conditions.

> *LESSONS LEARNED:*
>
> *Implementation of IMMPs should start right after their adoption, as then the interest, will power and understanding amongst all stakeholders is on its highest. This also reinforces trust and solidifies partnerships with concrete actions.*

> *LESSONS LEARNED:*
>
> *Well equipped UPF attract new visitors and increase the popularity of the area, which can be a double-edged sword. Make sure you manage visitors and direct them away from most sensitive areas.*

If you are interested in replication of the URBforDAN approach, you can of course select other initial activities for implementation, but it is important to start.

PROMOTE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IMMPs IN UPF FOCUS AREAS

Once completed, any implemented activity should be promoted – not just to *"cut the red tape"*, but to send out a clear message that IMMPs are being implemented. In URBforDAN project, opening events were joined with awareness raising campaigns in order to reach a wider audience, but also to show that IMMPs are being implemented alongside other on-going complementary activities. Appropriate communication channels must be used to reach out to different target groups and make sure information gets through.

LESSONS LEARNED:

In most cases, stakeholders and citizens alike were endorsing "less is more" principle in UPF, sending a clear message that forests should stay forests and not become parks or well-equipped recreation areas.

It is also wise to develop clear and effective communication and awareness raising tools (presented below) in order to attract key target groups. In our case educational/awareness raising posters and leaflets were developed in order to be distributed to schools, while a UPF code of conduct was developed as a visitor management and awareness raising tool. Also, due to COVID-19 related reasons, some project partners decided to film additional educational/awareness raising videos in order to reach out to schools, teachers and children. All such attempts resulted in increased interest of target groups and individual citizens to visit UPF.

ATTRACT CITIZENS TO HELP YOU IMPLEMENT IMMPs IN UPF FOCUS AREAS

Three quite different approaches were used in the URBforDAN project to attract citizens and stakeholders and involve them in IMMP implementation process.

✓ Project ideas for 3 priority interventions were selected for each pre-selected UPF focus area, based on a best idea open public tender competition held in all 7 cities. Citizens were encouraged to deliver innovative and attractive ideas. Appointed review committees selected 3 best ideas in each city and developed design concepts for them. Out of 21 design concepts a transnational level review board selected 3 transnational winners, which were presented on the URBforDAN final conference. Furthermore, many cities decided to implement at least one of the wining project ideas – thus, reinforcing implementation of IMMPs and trust in the participation process.

✓ Due to multiplication of activities and increasing numbers of UPF visitors, it was vital to ensure proper UPF presentation, as well as a navigation and awareness raising tool in a smart and easy way. In todays' information rich environment and culture, it is important to harness the advantages of modern technologies and use them to our advantage. As a response a smartphone App was developed, which connected all 7 pre-selected UPF areas, as well as provided easily accessible information to UPF visitors. The App is available in the English language for all focus areas, as well as in 7 national languages for specific focus areas on this link.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The amount of time and energy needed to be invested in communication, coordination and collaboration with any key stakeholder group – especially forest owners – should not be underestimated. However, it is well worth the effort!

✓ As a pilot activity, an attempt was made to form the First Initiative for joint UPF management on Golovec hill in Ljubljana. During the project lifetime, 143 private and public forest owners (out of 550 forest owners) expressed interest for joining this initiative. That

represents 26% of all forest owners, which is more than doubled expected result (over 10% were expected), clearly proving high quality results of the participatory approach and good work of all involved actors. Furthermore, improved level of cooperation between all relevant actors was clearly expressed by 4 jointly implemented UPF management activities on Golovec hill. Namely, 1 joint activity in 2019, 1 in 2020 and 2 such activities in 2021 – all together caried out on over 15 ha of UPF – show an encouraging trend, further supporting above conclusions about evoked interest of forest owners for cooperation. Unfortunately, the URBforDAN team was, due to COVID-19 related delays, unable to formally establish the initiative. However, a Financial Compensation Model and draft Statutory Act were developed and circulated amongst interested owners and we expect the initiative to be established as a project follow-up activity.

> **LESSONS LEARNED:**
>
> *Participatory UPF management is a "marathon", not a "sprint"!*

For easier understanding of the approach used to implement IMMPs in practice within the URBforDAN project framework and its most important links with other work packages please refer to the URBforDAN development process model (presented above). For more detailed information on actual implementation of IMMPs, lessons learned and suggestions for improvements, please refer to the URBforDAN Utilization of Ecosystem Services Evaluation Report, as well as to the URBforDAN Participatory Approach Evaluation Report.

How to... Monitoring and learning from gained experience

URBforDAN project was from the start designed as the approach and methodology testing project with several pilot actions. This is why it was really important to document not only the project implementation process, but also all lessons learned and suggestions for improvement.

From the start the URBforDAN project team set-up an on-line progress monitoring system, which proved to be successful and we can recommend its re-use in other similar projects. An on-line survey tool 1Ka was used, as it is an open-source platform, with regular support, advanced statistics and can be used in multiple languages. Of course, other on-line survey tools can be easily used.

On-line surveys were done periodically after each important URBforDAN methodology step. This allowed the URBforDAN core team to **collect all comments on the methodology and the process, other important information, lessons learned and suggestions for improvement**, as they were still fresh. One survey was filled out by all project partners coming form the same city – making sure various types of project partners conformed their views, discussed them and came-up with common view of the situation. Subsequently, intensifying the cooperation and decision-making process on the city-level.

All responses were reviewed by the URBforDAN core team and work-package leaders. This allowed a quick response and correction measures, especially in the early project development phases. On the other hand, this also allowed the URBforDAN core team to document the whole process, evaluate the methodology, learn from the process and compose these Guidelines.

> **LESSONS LEARNED:**
>
> *Documenting the project progress and learning process is of key importance for any methodology testing or pilot-project oriented project. Using external experts to gain an unbiased external view is recommended.*

However, the true value of the documented learning interaction from the URBforDAN project will only present itself in the coming years, through attempts to transfer and replicate the URBforDAN approach and methodology and follow-up projects.

How to... Examples of key communication and awareness raising tools

All awareness raising materials can be downloaded from the URBforDAN project library and reused.

URBAN FOREST CODE OF CONDUCT

Urban forest is just one step away from the city.

It enriches us with its beauty, improves public well-being and health and provides space for socializing, recreation and relaxation. Urban forest also provides us with wood, mushrooms, nuts and other fruits, improves environment, increases biodiversity and mitigates climate change. Urban forest code of conduct reminds visitors of urban forests of proper behaviour, by respecting property, admiring and discovering its beauty and secrets.

Urban forest is the best outdoor classroom for all its visitors. Let's preserve it this way.

I RESPECT NATURE.

I Leave No Trace.

I collect all waste and dispose it into designated bins or at municipal collection points. I never leave or dispose waste in nature.

No Fire In Forest.

Fire destroys plants and animals. Therefore, I use fire in properly prepared fire pits or fire rings only. I put it out and clear the area completely before departure.

I Use Trails.

I use trails to minimize my impact on nature and ensure my own safety. I do not walk on meadows, fields, in vineyards, orchards and close to beehives.

I Learn About Nature And Contribute To Its Conservation.

I find out information on natural values and protected areas. I only observe plants and animals, I don't damage, disturb or take them from their natural environment. I collect plants, mushrooms and wild fruit only where permitted and regulated. I hunt and fish according to the rules. I never enter forest reserves and no disturbance zones in the forests and protected areas.

I Do Not Disturb Animals.

Wild animals are very shy and flee if they notice visitors. I alert animals of my presence by talking so that they can retreat. I do not approach wild animals and do not feed them. I keep my dog on a leash due to large numbers of visitors and other dogs. I do not cause unnecessary noise and I respect the right to keep calm in nature.

I RESPECT OTHERS.

I Give Priority To The Weaker.

On trails, I give priority to those weaker than myself. Pedestrians take priority over cyclists and cyclists take priority over motorists.

I Take Care Of Safety.

According to the knowledge I possess, my judgement of circumstances and the way I react to them, I try to help others by using my abilities without jeopardizing my own safety. In case of an accident, I call 112 and follow instructions.

Motor Vehicles Only On Designated Roads.

I only drive motor vehicles on designated roads and trails. By doing so, I respect that driving in natural environment is restricted.

I Park In Parking Spaces.

I park my vehicle in designated parking spaces and in a way that I do not obstruct others. I serve as an example to others.

I RESPECT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

I Learn About And Respect Local Customs.

During my visit, I learn about local customs. I respect and observe them to support the local community.

I RESPECT PROPERTY.

I Avoid Worksites.

I avoid sites where farming and forestry works are performed, ensuring safety for myself and for others.

Where can I find more information and how can my city join the cause?

Key lessons learned during the URBforDAN project, as well as suggestions for improvement of the used methodology, were compiled in the following evaluation reports. In case you are looking for more information, we invite you to follow below provided links:

✓ URBforDAN Participatory Approach Evaluation Report
✓ URBforDAN Integrated Multi-use Management Plans Planning Process Evaluation Report
✓ URBforDAN Utilization of Ecosystem Services Evaluation Report

You can learn more about concrete project results in all 7 URBforDAN Cities by visiting our URBforDAN project library. Or even better… You can join the UPF Danube Network, become an active member of our community and join us in our future activities.

What happens after the URBforDAN project?

As the URBforDAN project already received a project extension from the Danube Transnational Programme, we are confident that this is only the start of our journey. For this purpose, we developed the URBforDAN Capitalization Strategy, which is focusing on the following key objectives:

✓ To ensure implementation and evolution of the URBforDAN concept in URBforDAN cities
✓ To ensure visibility and promote transferability of the URBforDAN concept within URBforDAN countries
✓ To ensure visibility and promote transferability of the URBforDAN concept across Europe
✓ To promote evolution, transfer, up-scaling and main-streaming on the EU level

The City of Ljubljana also plans to apply the URBforDAN approach towards management of urban and peri-urban forests for the status of *"the urban good practice"* under the URBACT Programme framework and for the status of *"the good practice"* under the INTERREG EUROPE Programme framework.

We also plan to widen the URBforDAN network of cities, and would like to use this opportunity to invite you to join us in future activities and follow-up projects.

	URB for DAN — Protecting our Urban Forests		
Lead partner: **City of Ljubljana**	City of Ljubljana		
Project partners: **Slovenia Forest Service** **City of Belgrade** **Srbijašume**	ZAVOD za GOZDOVE SLOVENIJE — Slovenia Forest Service	City of Belgrade	Србијашуме
City of Budapest **Fökert** **City of Cluj-Napoca**	BUDAPEST — A VÁROS, AMELY EGYESÍT	FŐKERT FŐVÁROSI KERTÉSZETI NONPROFIT ZRT. — BUDAPEST	PRIMĂRIA ŞI CONSILIUL LOCAL CLUJ-NAPOCA
Cluj Metropolitan Association **City of Ivano-Frankivsk** **City of Vienna**	Asociatia de Dezvoltare Intercomunitara Zona Metropolitana Cluj		Wiener Gewässer
City of Zagreb **Hrvatske šume**		HRVATSKE ŠUME	
Associated partners:	**Canton Sarajevo**	**City of Podgorica**	**City of Prague**
		FAO, UN	

	Project URBforDAN
	Management and Utilization of Urban Forests as Natural Heritage in Danube Cities
	Project co-funded by European Union Funds (ERDF, IPA, ENI UA)
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