



Nature-based Enterprises Guidebook: A Practical Guide for Cities



Acknowledgements

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IMAGE CREDITS

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1. Introduction

Everyone and everything depends on nature. Yet nature is in freefall, driven by the unsustainable use of natural resources, climate change, pollution, and other human pressures. As nature declines, the resilience of ecosystems is weakened, increasing risks to people, economies, and the planet. This contributes to more frequent and severe natural disasters and undermines nature's ability to provide the essential services on which all life depends (Kumar, 2021). Cities and communities are already experiencing the impacts through more frequent flooding, heatwaves, droughts and poorer air and water quality. Urban expansion consumes around 1000 km² of land annually, fragmenting habitats and worsening heat island and flooding risks (European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation et al., 2025).

At the same time, local governments are being asked to play a bigger role in restoring nature and building climate resilience because they are responsible for the planning, land-use, and service decisions that directly affect local ecosystems and communities. The EU Nature Restoration Regulation sets legally binding targets to restore at least 20% of Europe's land and sea areas by 2030. All Member States must prepare national restoration plans by September 2026, and cities will be important partners in delivering the actions in these plans. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are among the most effective ways for cities to respond to environmental and climate challenges. Reflecting their growing importance, the EU Biodiversity Strategy further requires cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants to prepare urban nature plans to support biodiversity recovery, climate adaptation, and improved quality of life for residents.

Nature-based solutions are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, and resilience and biodiversity benefits (UNEA, 2022).

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) restore, enhance and connect natural systems to address urban and rural challenges while delivering multiple co-benefits for biodiversity, climate resilience and quality of life. In particular, NbS can improve the environmental health of urban centres, reduce pollution and contribute to societal wellbeing, making them a key tool for delivering several biodiversity plans and strategies, including urban nature plans. Many cities already recognise the benefits of NbS, but delivering them can be challenging. Local authorities may not always have the in-house specialist skills, capacity, or resources needed to design, implement, and maintain these projects.



Source: Cartoonbase for NetworkNature (n.d.). NetworkNature – Nature-based Solutions Illustration. Available at: <https://cartoonbase.com/en/work/networknature-nature-based-solutions/>



Source: iStock (n.d.) Image Library.
Available at: www.istockphoto.com

This guidebook is designed to support cities in implementing nature-positive strategies that enhance biodiversity, restore ecosystems, strengthen climate resilience, and improve human well-being. The guidance can be applied across a range of local and regional plans, policies, and programmes aimed at increasing nature in cities.



Source: iStock (n.d.) Image Library.
Available at: www.istockphoto.com

One example is an urban nature plan, which can help cities translate nature-positive ambitions into coordinated and actionable measures. While approaches may vary depending on local priorities and governance contexts, the principles and guidance presented in this guidebook are broadly applicable across different planning frameworks.

An Urban Nature Plan (UNP) functions as a framework, a plan, and a process, encompassing adaptive management, planning, and concrete actions to increase nature in cities (Belle et al, 2025). By integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions (NbS) into planning, policy, and decision-making processes, UNPs can help cities address environmental, social, and economic challenges while contributing to climate resilience and nature restoration goals. The UNPplus Framework supports this ambition through a flexible 10-step process spanning preparation, action planning, implementation, and monitoring.

Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) can help cities plan, deliver, maintain and scale Nature-based Solutions, supporting the implementation and delivery of nature-positive strategies, including Urban Nature Plans (UNPs) and helping to translate strategic ambitions into practical actions on the ground.

Nature-based Enterprises can help cities:

- Access specialist expertise
- Deliver NbS projects more efficiently
- Improve long-term maintenance and stewardship of NbS
- Scale up nature restoration and climate adaptation actions
- Contribute to the creation of local green jobs and economic opportunities
- Encourage more innovation in NbS delivery and stewardship

The target audience for this guidebook includes managers and employees within local authorities who work in areas of relevance to NbS or Nature-based Enterprises (e.g., environment, finance, procurement, urban planning and development, enterprise and business).



2. What are Nature-based Enterprises?

Driven by a **mission to work with and for nature, Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs)** actively address some of the most pressing challenges of our time, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. Furthermore, nature-based enterprises (NbEs) are enterprises that use nature sustainably as a core element of their product/service offering for the planning, delivery and/or stewardship of NbS and are engaged in economic activity.’ (Kooijman et al., 2021).

In the image below, the green circles represent enterprises working directly with and for nature, while the pink circles represent enterprises that contribute indirectly to nature-based solutions (NbS) through supporting services. These indirect contributions include smart technologies (e.g., monitoring services), advisory and facilitation services (e.g., community engagement), financial services (e.g., nature credits), as well as education and research activities related to NbS.

These are the sectors where NbEs directly and indirectly contribute to nature



Source: (Kooijman et al, 2021)

Very often, the mission of nature-based enterprises is driven by more than just economics. Nature-based Enterprises are inherently motivated to restore, regenerate and protect nature and biodiversity, and often have a social mission that informs the development of the products and services they offer. Through their expertise in designing, delivering, maintaining and monitoring nature-based solutions, nature-based enterprises can play an important role in implementing urban nature plans, supporting cities across different stages of the planning process, from stakeholder engagement and co-creation through to project delivery, long-term stewardship and impact assessment.

DO YOU KNOW?

The term “Nature-based Enterprise”, coined by Kooijman et al (2021), is now used in EU policy and research? However, it is still not a common term used among practitioners who may prefer to use sectoral classifications, e.g. green buildings company, ecosystem restoration. Keep this in mind when applying the term Nature-based Enterprise to your own local context. What is an equivalent term in your local language? Does it make sense to practitioners operating in a specific sector/region/city?

Although the term “Nature-based Enterprise” is relatively new (see box above), these types of businesses have always existed. They are operating in your region or city, and may already have existing relations with your public authority as landscape architects, ecologists, marine scientists, horticulturalists, arborists, farmers, land managers, and social entrepreneurs.

2.1 How do you know if an organisation is a Nature-based Enterprise?

While research in this area is still emerging, Kooijman et al. (2021) identified 5 key questions that will help to determine whether a business can be labelled a nature-based enterprise.

1

Are you an independent entity?

i.e., are you an independent business or if you are part of a larger business, is the main element >50% related to nature restoration, regeneration or biodiversity protection and conservation?

2

Is the core mission of your business to address climate change and biodiversity challenges?

3

In your enterprise, do you contribute to the regeneration or restoration of nature?

i.e. is your enterprise nature-positive?

4

Do your enterprise’s activities contribute towards a just, fair and equitable society?

5

Are you committed to measuring the impact of your enterprise activities and operations in terms of environmental, economic/ financial, and social impact?

If a business can answer yes to these questions, they are a Nature-based Enterprise.



Source: iStock (n.d.) Image Library. Available at: www.istockphoto.com

2.2 Characteristics of Nature-based Enterprises

The infographic presents insights from a 2024 survey of 124 Nature-based Enterprises (NBEs) across 34 countries, conducted as part of the EU-funded Invest4Nature and NBS EduWORLD projects (Tedeschini et al., 2024).

8 Characteristics of Nature-based Enterprises

*Based on a survey of 122 NbEs from 34 countries (7 countries outside Europe) conducted as part of the Invest4Nature and NBS Eduworld projects between Jan-Apr 2024.

Nature-based enterprises (NbE) are driven by a mission to work with and for nature to address climate change and biodiversity challenges.

1 **Size 97%**
 identify as an SME with the majority employing <10 employees

2 **Main goal 69%**
 of NbEs report hybrid goals balancing economic and non-economic (environmental and social) goals

3 **Sectors**
 Survey respondents were active in agriculture, forestry, water management, coastal and urban markets

4 **Emerging sector**
 over **60%** of NbEs were established within the last 10 years

Time Period	Percentage
Before 90's	6%
1991-2000	7%
2001-2010	9%
2011-2020	47%
2021-2024	21%

5 **Stage of development 34%**
 have a sustainable business model

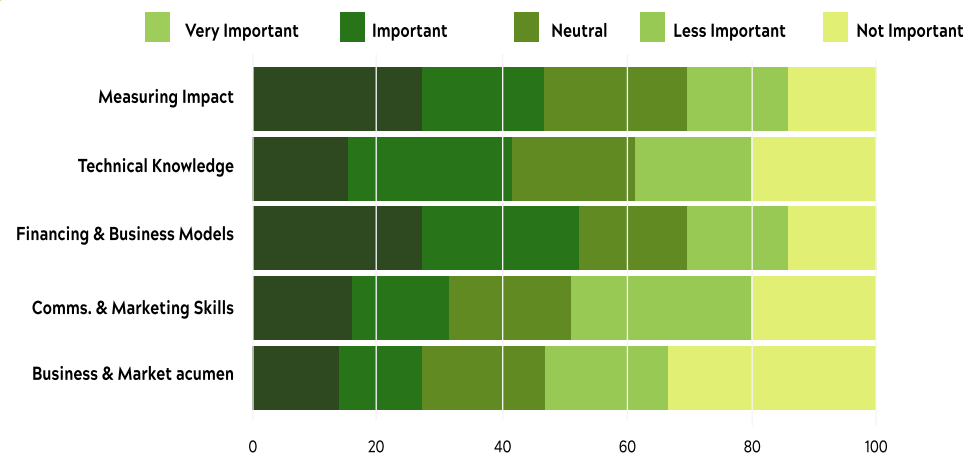
Stage of Development	Percentage
Start-up	19%
Scale-up	21%
Sustainable	34%
Growth-up	12%
Established	14%

6 **Growing market demand 89%**
 of NbEs see an increase driven by increased awareness and regulatory change

Market Demand Change	Percentage
Strong increase	47%
Slight increase	42%
No change	7%
Slight decrease	2%
Strong decrease	1%

7

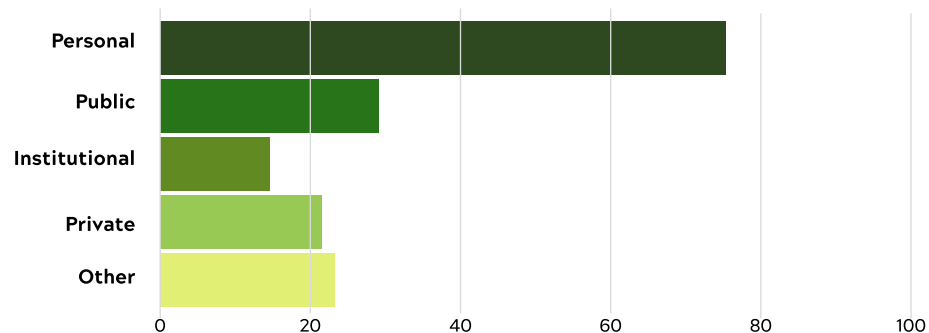
Capacity & skills gaps



‘Financing and Business models’ and ‘Measuring Impact’ were the most important knowledge gaps identified

8

Sources of financing during start-up stage



NbEs are more likely to self-finance at start-up stage than use institutional finance

Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) are characterised by a strong alignment between environmental purpose and economic activity. They are typically small and emerging businesses, often locally rooted, with a clear mission to work with and for nature while addressing challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

Many NbEs operate in sectors closely linked to natural systems, such as agriculture, forestry, water management, and urban development, and are part of a rapidly growing market driven by increasing awareness and supportive policies. Despite this growth, they often face capacity and skills gaps, particularly in areas like financing and impact measurement, and tend to rely on self-financing in the early stages. Overall, NbEs are innovative, purpose-driven, and evolving enterprises that combine sustainability with practical, scalable solutions.

The top 3 external barriers faced by Nature-based Enterprises:

1. Lack of awareness of nature-based solutions among decision makers.
2. Lack of focus on environmental criteria in public procurement.
3. Lack of common policies to support nature-based solutions across the public sector.

The top 3 enablers of Nature-based Enterprises:

1. Strong partnerships and networks within the nature-based, environmental and urban development sectors.
2. Access to education and skills development.
3. Evidence of the effectiveness of nature-based solutions.

2.3 Examples of NbEs supporting the delivery of NbS

BIOTONOMY, SPAIN

Sector: Green Buildings & Urban Landscapes

Location: Spain

Biotonomy, based in Malaga, Spain, stands at the forefront of transforming the built industry, offering a range of benefits that are as diverse as they are impactful. The company pioneers autonomous, regenerative buildings and infrastructures that harness biomimicry, renewable energy, and circular water systems to reduce carbon emissions, energy use, and resource consumption while enhancing biodiversity and wellbeing.

Their core services include:

- Designing autonomous buildings that generate clean energy, treat and reuse water, and operate with up to 100% lower energy needs for heating and cooling.
- Delivering green infrastructure like vertical ecosystems and living walls that clean the air, regulate temperatures, and revitalise urban spaces. They use greywater recycling and hydroponic systems to create self-sustaining biophilic environments.
- Providing architecture, engineering, construction, and maintenance services grounded in nature-based design principles.



Source: Biotonomy (n.d.).

Available at: <https://biotonomy.com/projects>

TERRAPRETA

Sector: Ecosystem Restoration

Location: Italy

Terrapreta uses natural solutions to restore damaged land and improve urban environments. The company focuses on soil restoration, biodiversity protection, and sustainable urban planning, using nature-based methods instead of relying only on industrial solutions. Terrapreta contributes to the environment by cleaning polluted soil, supporting biodiversity, and helping fight climate change through carbon storage and ecosystem restoration, creating greener and healthier spaces for long-term sustainability.

Their core services include:

- Soil restoration
- Bioremediation of polluted land
- Biodiversity protection
- Sustainable urban planning
- Ecosystem regeneration
- Nature-based environmental solutions
- Climate resilience and carbon storage initiatives



Source: Nature-based landscape design (Terrapreta, n.d.).

2.4 Why should Cities Work with NbEs?

- Nature-Based Enterprises (NbEs) deliver Nature-based Solutions (NbS).
- NbS are essential to help cities reach their NRR and biodiversity targets and national targets.
- Nature-based Enterprises help maximise the environmental, social and economic returns of Nature-based Solutions by combining specialist nature expertise with long-term sustainability goals, often delivering wider co-benefits compared to conventional suppliers or traditional infrastructure approaches.
- More NbEs are needed to help cities meet the demand for NbS.

Furthermore, there are a variety of frameworks, strategies, and planning approaches that cities, regions, and towns can use to embed biodiversity, nature-based solutions (NbS), and nature-positive outcomes into policy and practice. While these approaches may differ in structure and focus, they all aim to support the protection, restoration, and enhancement of nature while improving outcomes for people and communities. For this guidebook, the Urban Nature Plan (UNP) 10-step process is used as an illustrative example to demonstrate how cities can engage with nature-based enterprises (NbEs) throughout the development and implementation of nature-positive actions.

The examples provided highlight the different stages at which NbEs can contribute to the UNP 10-step process, and can be adapted across different city frameworks, strategies, plans, and governance contexts. Examples of NbS are also included.

UNP Steps	How Cities Can Engage with NbEs	Examples of NbS Interventions
Step 1. Secure a long-term political commitment	Use NbEs to showcase best practices to demonstrate the social, environmental, and economic value of NbS and build the case for political support.	Demonstration rain gardens, school greening projects, green roofs on public buildings, and small pollinator-friendly planting schemes.
Step 2. Establish a working structure	Include NbEs in governance structures, advisory groups, or stakeholder forums to bring practical delivery expertise.	Input from companies delivering urban greening, sustainable drainage, habitat management, or green roof projects.
Step 3. Establish a co-creation process	Include NbEs to participate in workshops and stakeholder engagement activities to co-design NbS interventions.	Street tree planting projects, pocket parks, community gardens, rain gardens, and biodiversity planting in public spaces.
Step 4. Develop a long-term vision and goals	Use NbEs to help identify emerging opportunities, innovation, and market potential to help shape realistic and ambitious objectives.	Expanding urban tree cover, increasing green roofs on municipal buildings, and improving biodiversity in parks.
Step 5. Analyse the current state of nature and biodiversity	Collaborate with NbEs that provide ecological assessments, mapping, monitoring, or biodiversity expertise.	Habitat surveys in parks, tree inventories, biodiversity audits of public spaces, etc.
Step 6. Set indicators and targets	Work with NbEs to identify measurable indicators and targets for NbS performance and impact.	Number of trees planted, area of pollinator-friendly planting created, and number of green roofs installed.
Step 7. Agree on priorities, actions, responsibilities, timelines, and financing	Partner with NbEs to identify priority projects, delivery models, funding opportunities, and investment mechanisms.	Prioritising school greening programmes, park enhancements, tree planting schemes, green roof retrofits, or rain garden installations.
Step 8. Develop a communication, education, and public awareness strategy	Engage NbEs in awareness campaigns, training programmes, demonstration projects, and citizen engagement activities.	-
Step 9. Establish a monitoring, reporting, and evaluation system	Contract or collaborate with NbEs to monitor, evaluate, and report on NbS outcomes and impacts.	Monitoring tree survival rates, pollinator abundance, vegetation establishment, or the performance of rain gardens and other drainage features.
Step 10. Adopt, publish, and implement the plan	Partner with NbEs to design, implement, maintain, and scale NbS interventions identified in the UNP.	-

2.5 How to Identify Nature-based Enterprises in your city

Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) are already active in many cities, although they may not always describe themselves using this term. For cities looking to scale up NbS, understanding how to identify and engage with these organisations is an important first step.

NbEs can range from small local businesses and social enterprises to larger specialised companies and consultancies. What connects them is that they use nature as a core part of the products, services or solutions they provide, while also contributing to environmental and social goals.

For cities, identifying the right nature-based enterprises can help strengthen local capacity, improve project delivery and create long-term partnerships to meet climate adaptation and nature restoration targets.

In practice, NbEs can often be identified from among the following categories:

- Landscape architecture and urban design firms
- Ecological and environmental consultancies
- Green infrastructure and sustainable drainage companies
- Arborists and urban forestry specialists
- Horticultural businesses and native plant suppliers
- River restoration and water management companies
- Environmental technology and monitoring companies
- Social enterprises managing parks, gardens or community spaces
- Biodiversity and habitat restoration organisations
- Sustainable agriculture and food initiatives
- Community-led environmental organisations

Some NbEs work directly on the physical delivery of projects, while others provide specialist planning, technical advice, monitoring, maintenance or community engagement services.

Cities should therefore look beyond traditional environmental contractors and consider the broader ecosystem of organisations contributing to nature restoration, climate resilience and sustainable urban development.



Source: iStock (n.d.) Image Library. Available at: www.istockphoto.com

2.6 Where can cities find Nature-based Enterprises?

Cities can identify and connect with nature-based enterprises through a variety of existing networks, platforms, programmes and partnerships. In many cases, NbEs may already be working within local authority supply chains, participating in environmental projects, or delivering services linked to urban greening, biodiversity, water management or climate adaptation.

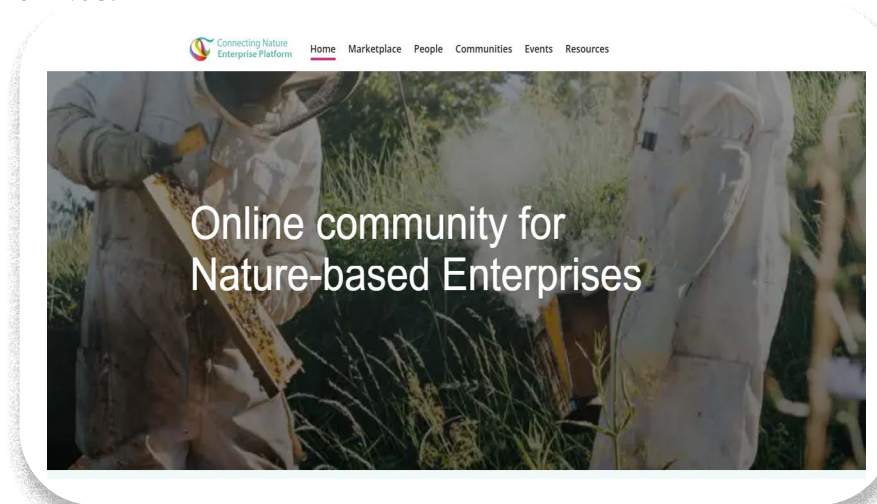
However, because the nature-based enterprise sector is still emerging and highly fragmented, it can sometimes be difficult for cities to identify skilled and experienced suppliers of NbS. Many organisations may not formally describe themselves as NbEs, even though they are already delivering nature-based products and services.

Useful places to identify NbEs include:

- Review lists of existing municipal suppliers and contractors to identify NbEs
- Local business and innovation networks
- Universities and research centres
- Enterprise and start-up support agencies
- Environmental NGOs and community organisations
- Chambers of commerce and industry associations
- Climate adaptation and biodiversity projects
- EU-funded projects and networks focused on NbS
- Green infrastructure and sustainability events
- Procurement and tendering platforms

Cities can also use dedicated NbS and NbE platforms to connect with suppliers, innovators and experts working in the sector.

One example is the Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform, which is an online platform to raise awareness of nature-based enterprises and connect buyers to suppliers of nature-based solutions. Through its marketplace, cities and organisations can identify skilled NbEs, explore new ideas and innovations and connect with other stakeholders working on NbS.



Source: Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform

Early engagement with nature-based enterprises during NbS project development can help improve project design, identify innovative solutions and strengthen collaboration across sectors and ideally should not be left until suppliers are sought through the procurement stages.

Other areas where nature-based enterprises could be identified are through developing relationships with industry networks and local innovation hubs, looking to previous NbS demonstration projects, and through working with experienced developers who have connections with nature-based enterprises. Mapping local NbEs can further help cities identify existing strengths, skills gaps and opportunities that exist for nature-based enterprises within their region. This can enable more strategic planning, targeted business support and stronger local supply chains for nature-based solutions over time.



3. Strategies to support Nature-based Enterprises

3.1 How to promote an enabling environment for Nature-based Entrepreneurship in your region/ city?

As demand for Nature-based Solutions (NbS) grows, cities and regions have an important role to play in supporting the development of Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs). By creating the right conditions for NbEs to scale and grow, cities can strengthen local skills, encourage innovation and improve the long-term delivery of Nature-based Solutions and Urban Nature Plans.

Supporting Nature-based Enterprises is not only about supporting individual businesses. It is also about building a stronger local ecosystem for NbS through collaboration, awareness raising, partnerships and access to opportunities. Cities and regions can help create an environment where NbEs are able to develop, connect and contribute to local environmental, social and economic goals.



Source: Nature restoration through planting initiatives (Pinterest, n.d.).

This chapter outlines three key steps that cities and regions can take to support Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs). These steps focus on building awareness, strengthening collaboration and creating targeted support measures to help NbEs grow in number and scale of operation and contribute to the delivery of Nature-based Solutions.

Cities can start at any point depending on their local context, priorities and existing level of engagement with NbEs. Measuring progress and impact throughout the process can also help cities strengthen long-term support and delivery over time.



Key Steps Cities can take to support NbEs

3.2 STEP ONE: Understanding the local context

Build awareness and align with local priorities

It is important to establish a clear understanding of Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) within different city departments, to share the value they deliver to cities and citizens, and how they contribute to the environmental, social, and economic goals of the city or region. Developing this shared understanding among city officials helps to identify areas where NbEs could collaborate on different infrastructure projects.

Further education and training on Nature-based Entrepreneurship across city departments leads to a greater understanding of the challenges faced by these businesses, and also serves as a source of inspiration. To help broaden awareness and understanding of NbEs at an internal level within the city department, some key actions are:

- Map the local NbE landscape and identify existing enterprises, networks and expertise across relevant sectors.
- Identify how Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) can support regional, national and EU policy goals, as outlined in local plans, policies and development strategies, including the Nature Restoration Regulation. Mapping policies can help to identify priority areas for attention, align strategic goals with project delivery, and transition away from traditional grey infrastructure projects.
- Build awareness among political leaders and departmental heads of the value that Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and NbEs can deliver for cities and regions. Host a lunch'n learn workshop, post articles in online newsletters, and have informal conversations with colleagues and department heads.
- Raise awareness of the role and value of NbEs among policymakers, stakeholders and the wider public.
- Showcase existing NbEs and demonstrate the products, services and benefits they can provide to cities and communities.

3.3 STEP TWO: Creating Support Actions for Nature-based Enterprises

Alongside continuing to build understanding and awareness of Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs), cities can also take steps to strengthen the wider ecosystem that enables these enterprises to grow, collaborate and deliver Nature-based Solutions effectively.

Key Actions for Strengthening the NbE Ecosystem and Enabling Collaboration

- Map the key stakeholders, organisations and expertise needed to support the local NbE ecosystem, including public authorities, universities, NGOs, investors, business support organisations and community groups. Consider running an awareness campaign to build knowledge of the sector.
- Identify with the ecosystems what support exists for Nature-based Enterprises. Involve Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs) directly in discussions and planning processes to ensure support measures respond to real needs and challenges.
- Encourage collaboration across local government departments, recognising that Nature-based Solutions (NbS) contribute to multiple policy areas including climate adaptation, biodiversity, health, economic development and urban regeneration.
- Create opportunities for networking, partnership building and knowledge exchange between enterprises, researchers, policymakers, communities and investors.
- Support collaborative and co-design approaches that bring together different stakeholders to develop shared goals and solutions for NbS.

- Strengthen links between NbEs, universities and research organisations to support innovation, technical expertise and skills development.
- Support local innovation ecosystems through initiatives such as living labs, innovation hubs, clusters, and communities of practice focused on NbS and green entrepreneurship.
- Improve access to procurement and market opportunities by recognising the wider environmental, social and economic benefits delivered by NbEs.
- Connect NbEs with relevant funding, finance and investment opportunities to support growth and long-term development.
- Facilitate peer-learning, training and capacity-building opportunities to strengthen local knowledge, skills and collaboration across the NbS ecosystem.

3.4 STEP THREE: Test and Refine Support Programmes for Nature-based Enterprises

Cities can use pilot programmes to test and refine different ways of supporting Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs). Pilot initiatives can help cities better understand local needs, identify effective support measures and build stronger relationships with enterprises and other stakeholders.

Support programmes should be tailored to the local context and designed in collaboration with NbEs to ensure they respond to real challenges and opportunities. Depending on local priorities, programmes may focus on business development, innovation, procurement access, partnership building, skills development or supporting the delivery of Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

Key Actions for Testing and Refining NbE Support Programmes

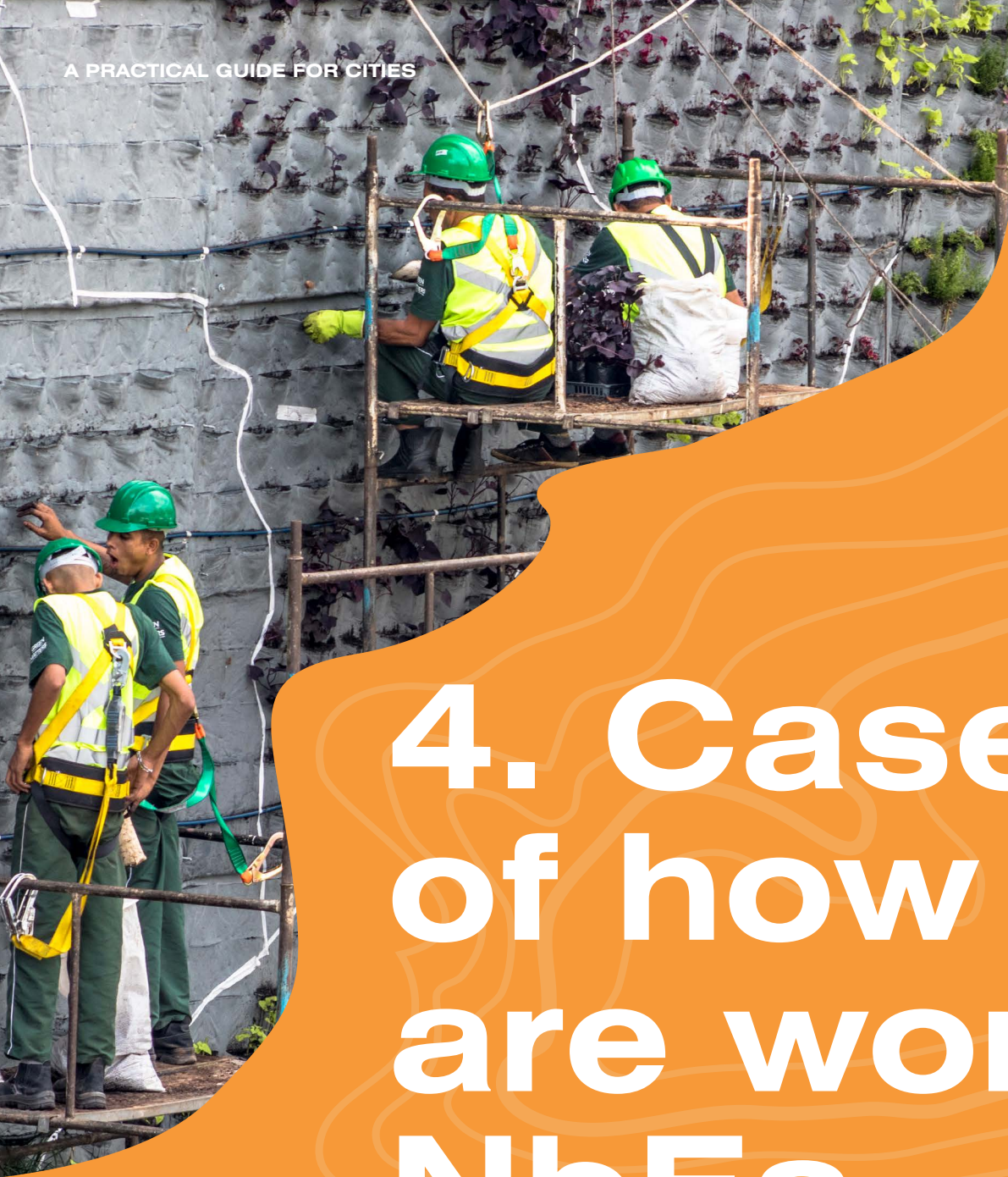
- Design and deliver tailored support programmes that respond to the needs and challenges of local NbEs.
- Support business development and entrepreneurship activities, including idea generation, innovation support and networking opportunities.
- Draw on expertise from across local government departments, as well as external specialists, researchers, investors and business support organisations.
- Provide practical support measures such as improving access to procurement opportunities, technical guidance, mentoring and funding information.
- Create opportunities for NbEs to test and demonstrate Nature-based Solutions through pilot projects, living labs and demonstration sites.
- Encourage collaboration between NbEs, communities, researchers and other stakeholders to support co-design and innovation.
- Monitor and evaluate pilot activities to understand what works well and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Use lessons learned from pilot programmes to refine future support measures and strengthen long-term support for Nature-based Entrepreneurship.

3.5 Measuring Progress and Impact

Cities should monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions to better understand what is working, identify areas for improvement and strengthen long-term support for Nature-based Enterprises (NbEs). **Measuring progress across the different steps can also help to demonstrate the wider environmental, social and economic value of supporting Nature-based Enterprises.**

Possible indicators may include:

- Number of NbEs engaged or supported through programmes and initiatives.
- New partnerships, networks or collaborations established.
- Number of enterprises completing training and capacity building programmes.
- Innovation outcomes (new products/services developed).
- Business growth indicators (revenue, jobs created).
- Contribution to environmental and social goals.
- NbE participation in public procurement.
- Stakeholder satisfaction and perceived programme value.
- Uptake of tailored support programmes by mainstream business training providers (i.e. enterprise support agencies).
- Number of NbEs plugged into the mainstream business support ecosystem (i.e. local innovation cluster, Chambers of Commerce, industry associations).



4. Case Studies of how cities are working with NbEs

4.1 Poznan, Poland

An exemplar of the Nature-based Entrepreneurship approach is found in Poznań, following the creation of a network of nature-oriented playgrounds across its dense city centre. The project faced challenges such as limited knowledge of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) within the City Hall and private sector, along with dependence on a small number of external contractors from other regions of Poland. The **NbE support strategy** focused on developing local knowledge and skills through training programmes on NbS for landscape architects, gardening companies, local decision-makers, councillors, and contractors. Following this, the city planned to expand the initiative through the “NbS Academy,” which would support other projects such as floating gardens, eco-demonstrators, and other urban greening initiatives. The strategy aimed to promote NbS while creating local economic and entrepreneurial opportunities linked to sustainable urban development.



Mud kitchen in the garden of Kindergarten No. 87 in Poznań, Piotr Bedliński
Source: the City of Poznań

4.2 Glasgow, Scotland

Another exemplar of a Nature-based Entrepreneurship support strategy is Glasgow’s, Scotland Open Space Strategy, which aims to create well-managed, connected, and accessible green spaces across the city. A major challenge was ensuring long-term governance and sustainability through greater involvement from local communities and the private sector. The **NbE support strategy** included piloting an accelerator programme where participants developed and pitched business plans for Nature-based Enterprises. A good example of a business supported through this programme was **Halo Gardens**, which focused on sustainable urban greening and Nature-based Solutions linked to the long-term stewardship of Glasgow’s green spaces.



Nature-Based Accelerator Project

4.3 A Coruna, Spain

The city of A Coruna, Spain also engages in a Nature-based Entrepreneurship approach through the development of a network of urban gardens connecting different initiatives across the city. While urban gardens were already popular, challenges included low awareness of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) among professionals and limited private sector engagement and ownership. The NbE support strategy addressed this through the “Gardeniser” programme, a gardening training course aimed at improving the employability of unemployed people while also teaching skills in project and enterprise creation. The strategy also included an incubator programme for Nature-based Enterprises, supported by the city’s Entrepreneurship Department, and the creation of opportunities for NbEs to tender for contracts related to maintaining urban gardens in schools and delivering educational programmes.



Members of A Coruna community garden network

4.4 Nicosia, Cyprus

A supportive environment for Nature-based Enterprises is emerging in Nicosia, Cyprus, with the development of an urban network of connected open and green spaces centred around the National Forest Park of Athalassa. A key challenge was the limited awareness of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and NbEs among the public and businesses. The **NbE support strategy** focused on creating opportunities for Nature-based Enterprises to design, implement, and manage parks through the “Adopt-A-Park” scheme, which encourages local businesses to support and maintain small pocket parks. In addition, Nicosia introduced a pilot NbE incubator programme in collaboration with local accelerators to encourage the growth of nature-based businesses and innovation.



Falcon School Adopt-a-Park Ceremony, Strovolos (October 2021)

4.5 Aarhus, Denmark

An enabling environment for Nature-based Entrepreneurship is also evident in Aarhus, Denmark, where political support is in place to convert more agricultural land to nature and forest. To achieve their goals, Aarhus Municipality is putting in place a support strategy (yet to be initiated) for farmers in the area to transition to nature stewards. Key challenges include farmers' limited knowledge of NbE models, as well as the lack of stable financial models that can absorb the loss of converting farmland to nature. Aarhus Municipality's NbE support strategy (if funding for implementation is secured) aims to create partnerships between public and private stakeholders, identify and develop new financing models for farmers, and provide capacity building and training for farmers to make a full or partial transition to nature stewards.



Hasselager Wildforest a year after planting.



Hasselager Wildforest a year after planting.



5. Portfolio of Tools

For further insights into Nature-based Enterprises and practical examples of how cities are collaborating with them, please refer to the resources outlined below.

- [Entrepreneurship interview with the city of Glasgow \(City involved in the Connecting Nature project\)](#)
- [Entrepreneurship interview with the city of Poznan \(City involved in the Invest 4 Nature project\)](#)
- [Entrepreneurship interview with the city of Barcelona \(City involved in the UNP+ project\)](#)
- [Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform](#)
- [Horizon Nua Resource Section](#), including previously published Guidebooks on NbEs.
- **Connecting Nature Resource Centre: Nature-based Enterprises** - A collection of reports, guidance documents, research papers, and case studies focused on Nature-based Entrepreneurship. [Connecting Nature NbE Resources](#)
- **European Commission Urban Greening Platform** - Guidance, tools, and resources to support cities in enhancing biodiversity, urban nature, and climate resilience. [Urban Greening Platform](#)
- **UNaLab: Introducing Nature-based Solutions in Your City** - A practical introduction to planning and implementing NbS in urban contexts. [Introducing Nature-based Solutions in Your City](#)



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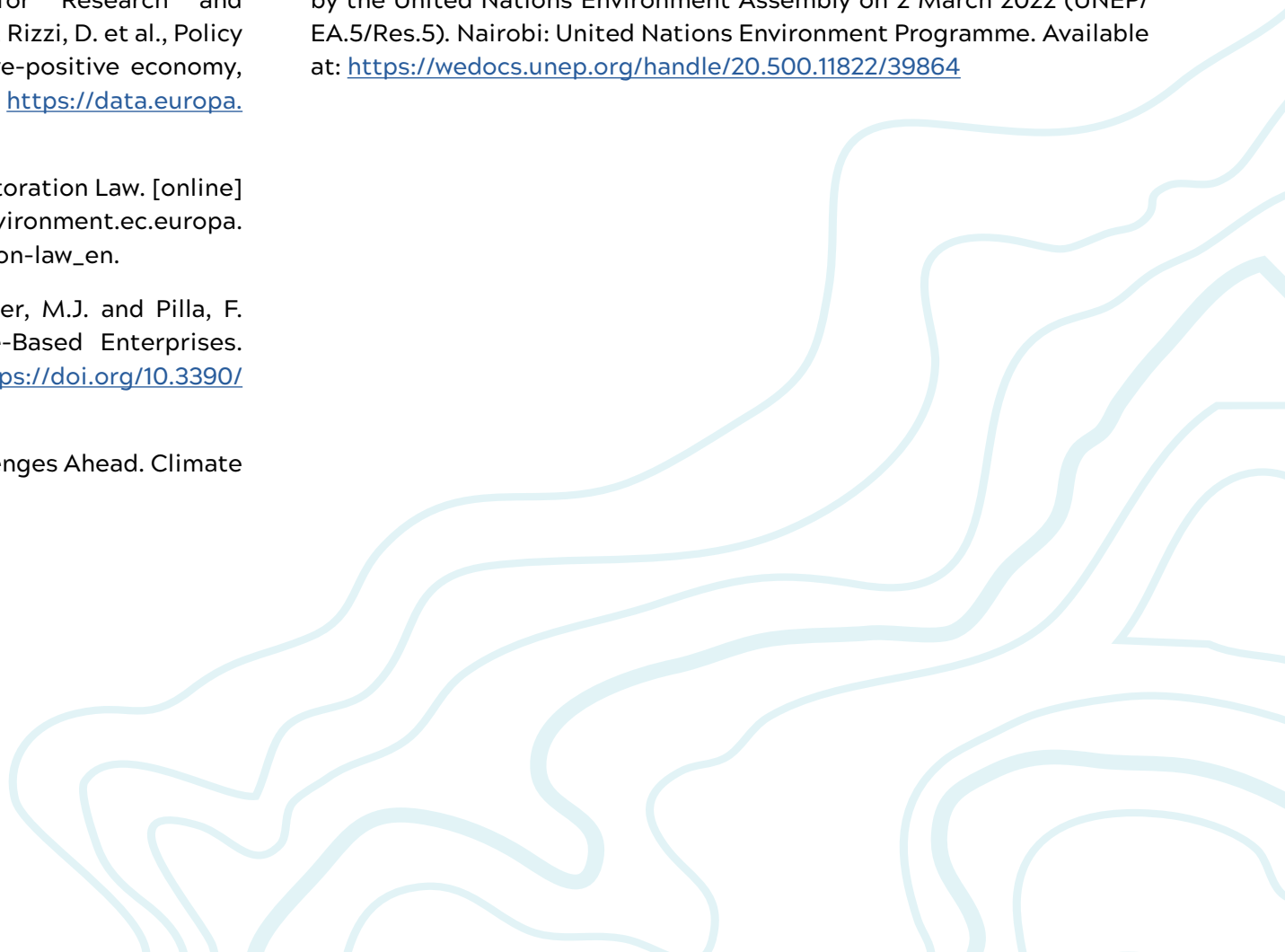
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