



SAFEGUARD

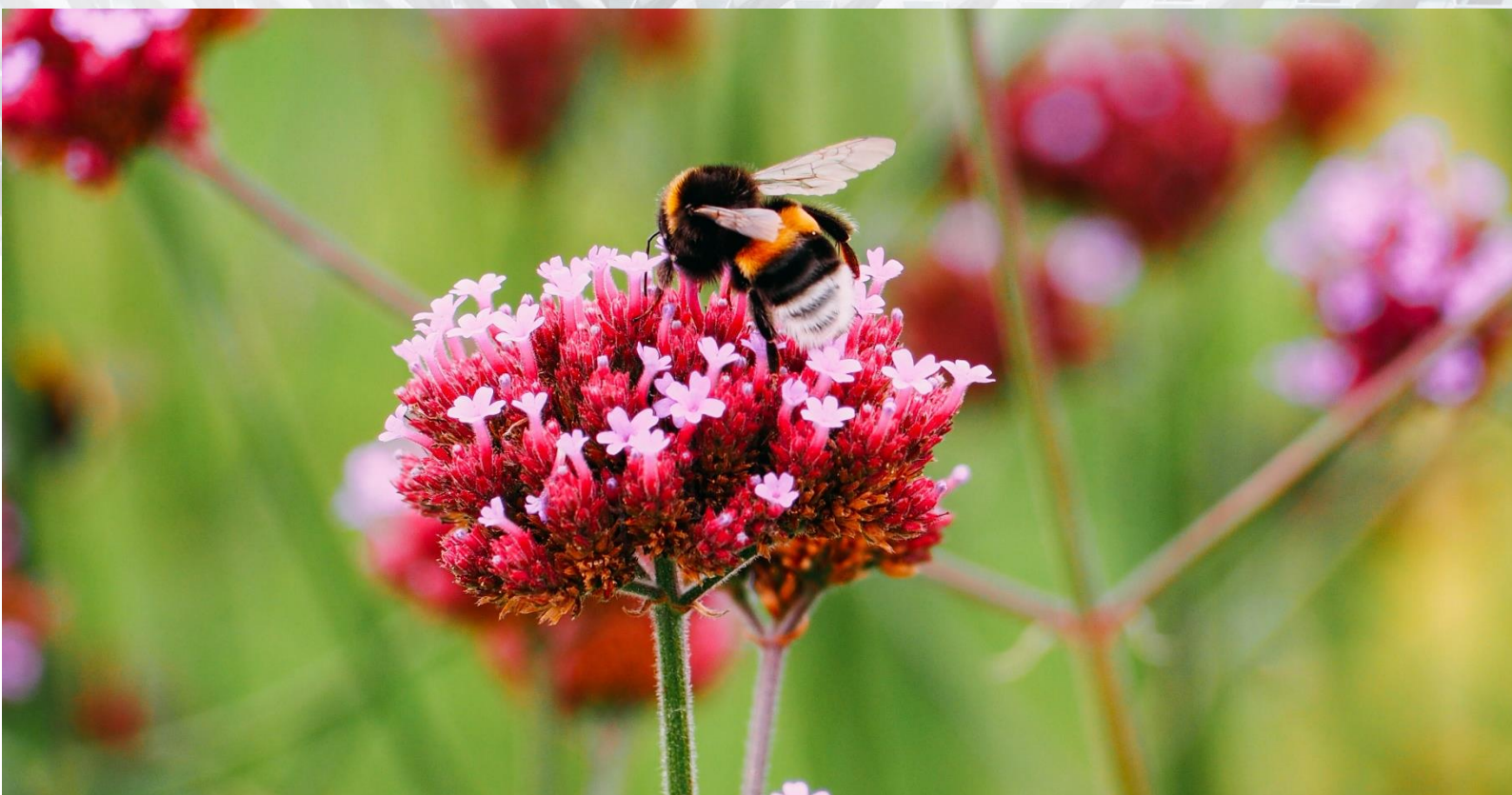


EURO  
CITIES

Webinar – 20/09/23

Urban pollinators: how can cities protect  
pollinators and build resilience to climate  
change?

*Report*



WHO: organised by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and Eurocities with help from IUCN for the [Safeguard project](#).

WHEN: 20 September 2023, Online, 1h45. 10:30-12:15.

Number of participants: 66 connections (125 registered, including 50 city representatives, 30 from environmental organisations/think tanks, 13 researchers, and citizens).

## How can cities optimise synergies between climate adaptation strategies and pollinator conservation?

This webinar created an opportunity for a **science-policy discussion** to help city managers identify how they can best integrate pollinator conservation and climate objectives into their urban planning.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 calls on European towns and cities of at least 20,000 inhabitants to design urban greening plans. These plans should lay out urban strategies to increase urban green space quality and area to support both biodiversity and ensure climate adaptation, relevant to the EU Pollinators Initiative, the proposed EU Nature Restoration Law, and the EU climate adaptation strategy.

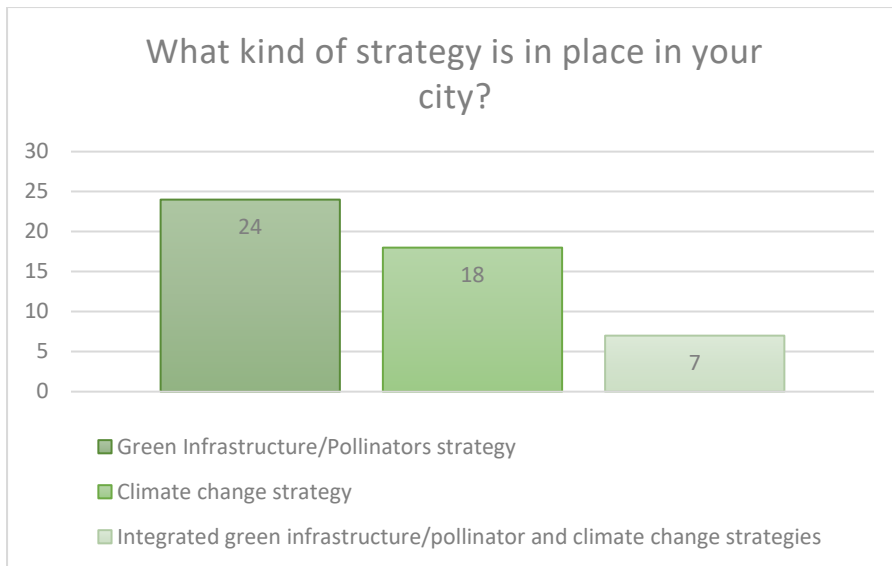
Designing urban greening plans for climate adaptation and increased nature in cities will be critical in the context of a warming climate, with the urban heat island effect and more frequent extreme weather events and droughts exacerbated in cities. Climate change is an additional stress on pollinators in cities; at the same time, urban areas can be refuges for pollinators compared to intensive agricultural areas. Pollinators can be good indicators of quality of urban greening – which can create co-benefits for humans and pollinators if the different needs of pollinator populations and their dynamics are taken into account.

### **The presentations and recording of the webinar are available here:**

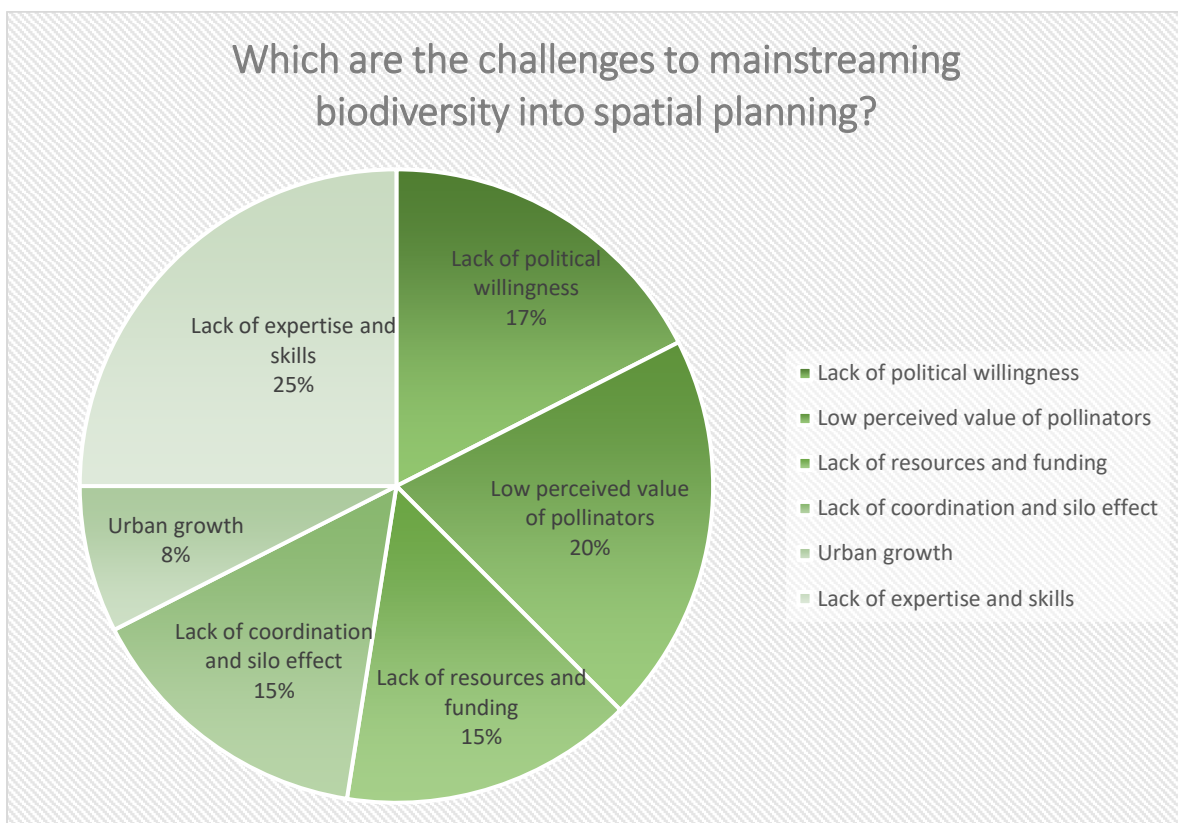
The **presentations** are available on the Safeguard's website [media centre](#) (tab 'workshops'). Click [here](#) for the **recording**.

## What are cities doing and what challenges do they face?

A mentimeter survey kicked off the webinar to gather inputs from city managers on the kind of strategies in place in their cities and challenges relevant to mainstreaming biodiversity into spatial planning. The results are displayed below.



The majority of city representatives report having a green infrastructure or pollinator strategy in their cities (24), which shows the importance of urban greening and biodiversity conservation for urban planners.



Among 37 respondents, lack of expertise and skills was identified as the main challenge for mainstreaming biodiversity into spatial planning, followed closely by low perceived value of pollinators and lack of political willingness.

The issue of perceptions of the value of pollinators covers various different aspects. Respondents referred to conflicts of use between recreational and nature conservation functions, the underestimation of the importance of green spaces and the unfair competition between cheap 'business as usual' grey infrastructure planning versus the complexities and costs associated with

green infrastructure planning. The issue of mainstreaming biodiversity into spatial planning is also connected for some respondents to a lack of understanding of the intrinsic value of biodiversity of pollinators and an neat esthetic vision of what urban spaces should be like (incompatible with biodiversity friendly infrastructures).

## Presentations

- **Climate change and pollinator conservation in urban environments**, presentation by Costanza Geppert, Safeguard scientist, DAFNAE University of Padova.

After recalling the role of pollinators and the importance of green areas in urban areas, the presentation focused on the poorly documented subject of climate change impacts on pollinators, based on results from a study conducted by the researcher in Rome in 2022. Temperature was found to be the main driver of wild bee communities in Rome.

Warmer temperatures increased the abundance of individuals and the species richness, but it was observed that the dominant species shared the same functional traits. While heat-tolerant wild bee species will benefit from increasing temperatures, these heat tolerant communities will be dominated by polylectic and small-bodied bees, rather than the specialist (oligoleptic) bees and the larger bees such as bumblebees. In that context, Ms Geppert underlined the importance of high quality green spaces for providing flower and nesting resources as well as offering a climate change refugia for pollinators in urban environments.

- **Towards pollinator friendly cities: a glimpse at the global and european policies**, presentation by Shreya Utkarsh, Nature-based solutions and Biodiversity officer, ICLEI

Shreya recalled the need for robust and specific policies to safeguard pollinators, and she described the pollinator relevant policies of the EU Green Deal (the proposed EU Nature Restoration Law, and the EU Pollinators Initiative). The presentation highlighted the potential of nature-based solutions to deliver for pollinators, and how important it is to monitor pollinators so that the effect of policies and measures is visible.

- **Nature-based solutions supporting pollinators and climate change adaptation in Paris**, Jonathan Sorel, Advisor to the Mayor of Paris on public space, transport, mobility and nature in the city. [Jonathan.sorel@paris.fr](mailto:Jonathan.sorel@paris.fr)

Jonathan presented the diversity of green spaces and pollinators in the city of Paris (collected in the [Paris Nature Atlas](#), 2020) and addressed the ecological management of green spaces as well as efforts to directly protect biodiversity. He then presented that nature-based policies set up by Paris to reconcile climate and biodiversity targets: planning of additional green spaces, planting trees with the [tree plan](#), the [city new bioclimatic masterplan](#), the [city's biodiversity strategy for 2018-2024](#), initiatives for citizen involvement.

- **Berlin pollinator strategy and the project “More bees for Berlin. Berlin is blooming!”**, Anja Proske, project manager for the Berlin wildbee project at the German Wildlife foundation (Deutsche Wildtier Stiftung) [A.Proske@DeutscheWildtierStiftung.de](mailto:A.Proske@DeutscheWildtierStiftung.de)

Anja presented the project “[More Bees for Berlin](#)”, developed in 2018 aimed at improving the living conditions for pollinators in Berlin. She shared the key steps of the project (site selection, maintenance, etc ) and some of its achievements. She underlined the importance of establishing effective collaboration with partners and of carrying out educational activities for the public.

## Summary of the panel discussion

Moderator: Costanza Geppert

### Public perception

Successful urban greening policies rely on public acceptance and the reconciliation of potentially conflicting visions. The discussion touched on the issue of conflicts between pollinator conservation objectives and public expectations of urban greening aesthetics – that tidy and neat green spaces are not very compatible with pollinator conservation. How can the public perception be changed towards a positive view of green spaces with unmown ('messy') grass and flowers and more diverse ('untidy') and wilder vegetation and open spaces?

Costanza Geppert explained the results of her recent study (under review) on the willingness of rural and urban citizens to undertake pollinator conservation actions. It was carried across three European countries (Germany, Italy and the Netherlands) with an online questionnaire to 4,541 respondents stratified by nationality, environment, age and gender. The experience of green areas was found to be the strongest predictor of willingness to help pollinators, compared to education and gender.

Anja Proske shared that in Berlin, perceptions have been changing over time, as illustrated by perceptions on mowing: citizens used to complain about the city not mowing – nowadays they complain about green areas being mown. She underlined the importance of informing the public to maximise acceptance, for example with information boards. It is important to repeat and simplify messages to effectively influence public perceptions on urban greening and pollinators.

### Bridging the research and policy gap

Shreya Utkarsh shared insights about the potential for research and nature-based solutions to help bridge the gap between science and policy/practice. Over the last few years, strong efforts have been delivered by EU policy makers to involve local governments on the topic of nature-based solutions.

Monitoring projects could also help bridge this gap. Data from pollinator monitoring tends to be fragmented, due to the existence of different monitoring approaches across various scales. It is therefore a challenge to connect data (to ensure interoperability) and get the wider picture. The EU wide initiative to roll out standard approaches to pollinator monitoring (see the EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme – [EU PoMs](#)) funded by the European Commission is actively addressing these issues, and the Safeguard project is actively supporting this by developing EU wide data sets and tools.

### Cooperation and skills

Jonathan Sorel explained how the city of Paris manages and develops the skills of its urban greening staff to increase the ecological value of the city's green space. The ecological management of green spaces involves new skills (knowing how to select the right perennial plants and climate adapted trees, for example) and understanding (for example, not cutting down freshly planted saplings or retaining ecologically important plants whilst mowing an area). The Parisian employees are developing their skills and knowledge thanks to support from the administration.

The issue of collaboration between national and city administrations was also part of the discussion. Shreya touched on the challenge of strengthening collaboration between the city and the region (or the national government). National biodiversity strategies should reflect local strategies/plans in place

since the real on-the-ground activities happen within municipal administration boundaries. There are great opportunities for synergies between urban Greening Plans with the National restoration plans in the context of the Nature Restoration Law proposal.

### The role of the Safeguard project and expected policy impact

The webinar was attended by urban greening policy makers from 36 cities, who are directly responsible for shaping the policies in their cities. Feedback received from the webinar was very positive. Many participants commented on the quality of the presentations and informativeness of contents: excellent webinar and/or presentations (x10), interesting (x3), inspiring/motivating (x4), well organised (x2). 15 participants expressed their thankfulness for the organisation of the webinar.

The webinar recording, the presentations, and the materials will be available on the Safeguard website and communicated to a wider audience to increase the reach. The Safeguard project will follow up a guidance document on pollinator monitoring and indicators for urban greening planning.

The Safeguard project contributed new research findings and scientific expertise from the University of Padua and University of Budapest research teams.

### Resources

EU Pollinator Information Hive:

- A guide for pollinator-friendly cities: <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/EUPKH/Pollinator-friendly+cities>
- Success stories in cities: <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/EUPKH/Cities>

The ICLEI pollinator friendly cities guidebook: <https://iclei-europe.org/publications-tools/?c=search&uid=b07XuqQ5>

Biodiversity-friendly-design briefs for urban planners: <https://networknature.eu/product/29463>

The EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (EU PoMS):  
<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=23462107>

The Pollinator Academy online platform: <https://pollinatoracademy.eu/> - building pollinator recognition skills and training taxonomists

LIFE BEEadapt project on pollinators: <https://www.lifebeeadapt.eu/>

All-Ireland pollinator plan: [www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie)

Manchester City Biodiversity Strategy, with a commitment for pollinators and species action plans: [Biodiversity and wildlife | Biodiversity and wildlife | Manchester City Council](https://www.manchester.gov.uk/biodiversity-and-wildlife)

Blog on Scotland's pollinator projects: <https://scottishpollinators.wordpress.com/>

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Aszalós, R, Batáry, P, Deák, P, Kovács-Hostyánszki, B, Kovács, A, Máté, A, Edina, M, Török, K, Orsolya, V (2023). ELKH Centre for Ecological Research Pollinator-friendly cities. Opportunities to support pollinating insects in the urban environment (in Hungarian). <https://ecolres.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Beporzo-barat-varosok-online-0313.pdf>

Proske, A, Lokatis, S, Rolff, J, A meta-analysis on the impact of mowing frequency on arthropod abundance and diversity in urban habitats. Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, Volume 76, 2022, 127714, ISSN 1618-8667, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1618866722002576>

## Annex

<b>Agenda - Urban pollinators: how can cities protect pollinators and build resilience to climate change?</b>		
10:30 – 10:40	Welcome and poll questions: What kind of strategy is in place in your city? Which are the challenges to mainstreaming biodiversity into spatial planning?	City managers Facilitator: Heather Brooks, Eurocities
Scientific background		
10:40 – 11:00 including 5 min Q&A	How does temperature affect pollinators in urban environments? Why is urban greening critical to increase pollinator resilience to climate change? What are the optimal responses urban green spaces can offer?	Costanza Geppert (University of Padua, Italy)
Good practices examples from cities + Q&A		
11:00 – 11:40 Berlin, Paris 12-15 min each + 10 min Iclei	How are cities increasing pollinator resilience while contributing to climate adaptation?  Presentations of the strategies and examples from Paris and Berlin for developing pollinator-focused Nature based solutions	Shreya Utkarsh, ICLEI Anja Proske, project manager for the Berlin wildbee project at the German Wildlife foundation (Deutsche Wildtier Stiftung) Jonathan Sorel, Advisor to the Mayor of Paris on public space, transport, mobility and nature in the city Facilitator: Costanza Geppert (UNIPD)
Panel discussion and questions		
11:40 – 12:10	Interview style discussion between academic and city presenters on recommended actions cities can take to adapt to climate change and boost (native) pollinators & questions from the audience	Anja Proske Jonathan Sorel ICLEI speaker Facilitator: Costanza Geppert (UNIPD)
12:10 – 12:15	Wrap up and conclusion	