Interreg

EUROPEAN UNION

Danube Transnational Programme

URBforDAN

URBforDAN Integrated Multi-use Management Plans Planning Process Evaluation Report

Final Report

Developed by Slovenia Forest Service and ZaVita d.o.o.

Ljubljana

30.06.2021

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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
SFS	Slovenia Forest Service
UPF	Urban and Peri-urban Forest(s)
WP	Work Package

1. Introduction

1.1. About the URBforDAN Project

Management and Utilization of Urban Forests as Natural Heritage in Danube Cities (with acronym URBforDAN) is an EU co-financed project, which was designed to deliver a change in urban forest management and utilization of ecosystem services. URBforDAN project is being implemented in 7 Danube Cities – Ljubljana (SLO), Vienna (AT), Budapest (HUN), Zagreb (CRO), Cluj-Napoca (ROM), Belgrade (SRB) and Ivano-Frankivsk (UA). Its' implementation is closely observed by 3 associated partner cities – Prague (CZE), Sarajevo (BIH) and Podgorica (MNE), as well as by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Urban and Peri-urban Forests (UPF) in Danube Cities play extremely important role as "green city lungs" - preserving rich biodiversity of Europe and its vivid landscape. They also deliver many economically/socially important ecosystem services – UPF are key areas for experiencing natural/cultural heritage within cities, important tourist attractions, areas for recreation and high quality of living.

All URBforDAN Cities face similar challenges – all manage substantial natural heritage areas (mostly UPF) within their city limits. Due to their characteristics they attract many users (citizens, tourists…), but also have many stakeholders (managers, owners, interest groups…) trying to manage those activities. Today, this is usually done without proper coordination of all stated key actors. UPF also lack appropriate infrastructure and equipment to cope with ever increasing number of users. Thus, UPF are under increasing pressure from diverse set of activities, arising conflicts and unsustainable use of resources – all leading to deterioration of the natural heritage. Management of UPF in some cities is further challenged by the extreme fragmentation of the ownership (which is often mostly private).

This is why URBforDAN takes on the challenge of mobilization of key actors in URBforDAN Cities to ensure their active participation in integrated planning/management. Protection regimes, mapping/valuation of ecosystem services and development ideas will be combined through a participatory process to deliver Integrated multi-use Management Plans for UPF on strategic and operational level. UPF Danube Network will be established to strengthen the cooperation between key actors, ensure timely knowledge/best-practice sharing, dissemination/transferability of project outputs and enable further capitalization. UPF managers, owners and users will be equipped with management tools supporting multi-purpose use of UPF and exploiting new opportunities for sustainable development. Participatory Planning & UPF Management Guidelines will be developed, based on lessons learned and best practices used.

1.2. About the URBforDAN IMMP Planning Process

The subject of this evaluation is the entire URBforDAN IMMP Planning Process – represented by URBforDAN WP4 activities, alongside with its overlaps with WP3 and WP5. The key aim of this report is not only to present and explain the URBforDAN IMMP Planning Process, but also learn from it and improve it based on lessons learnt.

This document represents a deliverable *"D.4.3.5. Integrated multi-use Management Plans methodology/approach evaluation report"* of the URBforDAN Project. It was designed and developed by Slovenia Forest Service, supported by a team of external experts from the company ZaVita d.o.o., tasked to provide expert support to the City of Ljubljana (Lead Partner) and the URBforDAN Partnership.

2. Reasons behind Integrated Multi-use Management Plans Planning Process in the URBforDAN project

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 they look for alternatives. Traditionally, they find them in Urban and Peri-urban Forests (UPF).

Their status of "green city lungs" is the main reason why 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 and cultural heritage areas, inappropriate management, overuse and poor coordination between key actors reflect the reality of most of UPF today.

The 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 introduction of the Integrated Multi-use Management Plans (IMMP) planning approach and methodology, the URBforDAN project aimed to improve management of urban and peri-urban forests (UPF) in terms of sustainability and multifunctionality. Most of cities today, project partner cities being no exception, have no management plans that would specifically address the UPF. Their management is either included in the existing forest planning documents (i.e., forest plans), or in some sort of city strategies for green infrastructure – in this case forests are often treated as a marginal topic compared to other green infrastructure in the cities, such as parks, riverbanks, etc.

On the other hand, expectations towards forests in urban areas are very diverse and pressures more and more intensive. Expectations of various user groups often overlap, causing conflicts and subsequently increasing challenges for forest managers. In addition, these areas are limited in space and quickly overburdened. Thus, integrative, collaborative planning approach is urgent.

There is also a diverse set of actors that "manage" urban forests, from forestry administration, city administration, state in some cases, private owners, and at the same time, a huge public interest in all activities taking place near their residential homes. All these calls for an adopted approach of forest management planning that takes multiple ecosystem services of UPF into consideration, recognizes different planning levels (strategic, operational), encourages strong collaboration among key actors and a provides a comprehensive management framework enabling respect and enforcement of guidelines and measures from the plans, as well as their active implementation in a given timeline.

3. IMMP Planning Approach and Methodology

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 the methodological approach of work package 3 "Participatory Approach" (WP3).

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

The overall planning process can be broken down into the following key stages:

- ✓ Stage 0 – Internal training of trainers ensures proper implementation of the integrated multi-use management planning approach and methodology. It was delivered to all project partner staff working on the project in all three main stages of the planning approach (see bellow Stages 1, 2, 3).
- ✓ Stage 1 – Mapping of ecosystem services (ES) is an important first stage, as UPF provide multiple ES. Their early identification already at the starting point is crucial to develop all-encompassing Integrated Multi-use Management Plans (IMMPs) for UPFs. All project partners used the same common approach and adapted it to their specific circumstances and needs.
- ✓ Stage 2 – Elaboration of Strategic parts of integrated multi-use management plans for UPF - the aim of the Strategic part of the IMMP is to identify expectations towards UPF, potential conflicts between different forest uses, define strategic long-term management objectives in UPF, as well as to define priorities amongst management objectives and ES. The strategic part also defines management guidelines that represent the basis for the definition of operational goals and measures. The Strategic part of IMMP represents also a framework for the operational part elaborated for the focus areas in each URBforDAN city.
- ✓ Stage 3 - Elaboration of Operational parts of integrated multi-use management plans for UPF - Operational part of IMMP is a basis for actual multi-use management of UPF. It 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 area – in the case of URBforDAN project, selected focus area within each city. 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.

For easier understanding of WP4 and its most important links with other WPs, all stages and their steps are schematically presented on the URBforDAN development process model at the end of this chapter.

3.1. Internal training of trainers

To ensure adequate implementation of the planning approach, an internal training of trainers (ToT) was

designed. It was based on the assumption that all project partners 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. This is why ToT was directly linked to the topic and challenges of the URBforDAN project itself.

Step 0.1 – Development of URBforDAN Ecosystem services mapping and IMMPs methodology Guidelines

Guidance packages were developed based on three key methodologies:

- ✓ Ecosystem services (ES) mapping/valuation methodology and its implementation;
- ✓ Methodology for the preparation of the Strategic part of IMMP;
- ✓ Methodology for the preparation of the Operational part of IMMP.

The main objective of ecosystem services (ES) mapping was to get a good basis for preparation of strategic and operational parts of IMMP for urban and peri-urban forests (UPF). We developed criteria for mapping and detailed instructions for maps.

The overall aim of the methodology for the preparation IMMP was to support URBforDAN partners in the development of Strategic and Operational parts of IMMP for the strategic area and pre-selected focus area of their UPF. The methodology served as a guide and as a support tool for PPs, providing them with a clear joint methodology / approach and a universal template.

The template for Strategic part of IMMP consists out of:

- ✓ Basic data for the area;
- ✓ Description of relevant ES;
- ✓ Description of the main target groups;
- ✓ Definition of the main strategic priorities and
- ✓ Main strategic objectives and guidelines for UPF management.

The template for Operational part of IMMP consists out of:

- ✓ Detailed description of the state of the forest;
- ✓ Fundamental concepts and management objectives;
- ✓ Description of the target groups/visitors;
- ✓ Guidelines for forest management;
- ✓ Identification of forest activities and
- ✓ Detailed description of the planned activities with assessment of financial quantification.

The guidelines for both strategic and operational part take in the account the participatory manner in which plans are prepared, with the involvement of all-important stakeholders identified earlier in the project.

Step 0.2 – URBforDAN Integrated Multi-use Management Plans Planning Process Training of Trainers

All three guidance packages were presented to PPs on project partnership meetings and trainings were organized after each presentation in order for PPs to work on templates and truly understand all the segments of the mapping guidelines and templates for both parts the IMMP. After the trainings an on-line help-desk was established in order to enable PPs to consult with Slovenia Forest Service via Skype, email and telephone regarding any open issues. All draft documents of the maps and plans were checked and commented by the SFS, in order to improve them, and then returned to PPs for finalization.

The whole ToT process was conducted in the following steps:

1. Development of ES mapping guidelines by SFS;
2. Presentation of ES mapping guidelines by SFS to PPs on the 2nd PP meeting (Zagreb). During this meeting, PPs were also trained on ES mapping with the help of SFS and external experts;
3. Development of the guidelines for the preparation of the strategic parts of IMMPs;

4. Presentation of guidelines to PPs on 3rd PP meeting (Belgrade), presentation of the draft of the Ljubljana's Strategic part of IMMPs (as example) and training on the preparation of the draft documents;
5. Presentation of drafts of Strategic parts of IMMPs by all PPs at the 4th partnership meeting (Ivano-Frankivsk);
6. Revisions of all PP Strategic plans with recommendations for finalization by SFS;
7. Preparation of guidelines for operational parts of IMMPs;
8. Presentation of the draft guidelines for operational part of IMMPs at the at 4th partnership meeting (Ivano-Frankivsk) and final work on open questions regarding the strategic parts of IMMPs.
9. Finalization of Strategic parts of IMMPs of all PPs.
10. Finalization of the guidelines on Operational part of IMMPs with detailed explanations.
11. Presentation of the operational parts of IMMPs at the at 5th partnership meeting (Budapest) and final work on open questions regarding the operational parts of IMMPs.
12. Finalization of operational parts of IMMPs of all PPs.

Step 0.3 – WP4 implementation on-line help-desk

Throughout URBforDAN project SFS together with external experts of the lead partner held an open on-line help-desk with a clear aim, to support project partners in best possible implementation of the Integrated multi-use management plans planning process. Through this tool, all project partners were able to express any open issues or obstacles they faced and received concrete problem-oriented counseling.

3.2. Mapping of Ecosystem Services

The main objective of Ecosystem Services (ES) mapping is to get a good basis for preparation of IMMPs for urban and peri-urban forests (UPF). Firstly, criteria were developed for mapping, alongside with detailed instructions for 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.

Step 1.1 – Identification of all relevant Ecosystem Services

All PPs firstly needed to identify the main ES that are relevant for their focus areas. In order to do that, they used the existing data gathered in the staring phase of WP4.

Step 1.2 – Identification of experts and their involvement in the mapping process

All PPs identified and created a group of experts, which were responsible for the ES mapping. In the majority of cases, these were experts from forest planning and forestry administration of the city administration, which were already a part of URBforDAN team. However, in some cases, additional support of the external experts (also GIS experts) was used.

Step 1.3 – Mapping of Ecosystem Services

A detailed list of criteria for mapping was elaborated by SFS for all ES (provisioning, supporting, cultural, regulating) having in mind the urban character and the planning goal (which is different compared to economic valuation of ES). PPs used the same list of criteria, but adopted it slightly – for example, when data was not available or due to other objective reasons.

Step 1.4 – Identification of key issues in the mapping procedure

At the end, PPs had the opportunity to write down all issues they encountered during the mapping procedures. These enabled us to document ES mapping learning process, up-grade the methodology and prepare a sound basis for overall URBforDAN process guidelines which will be elaborated as one of the main results of the URBforDAN project.

3.3. Elaboration of Strategic parts of IMMPs

The main goal of this activity was the elaboration of 7 Strategic parts of IMMPs for the whole strategic UPF area of an individual URBforDAN project partner city. The work was strongly connected to the activities in WP 3 "Participatory approach", as the workshops and other participatory methods were one of the main sources of data to elaborate the IMMPs – especially in identifying demands towards IMMPs, conflicts among users, and in finding solutions for sound multiple-use of UPFs. Success in this activity was therefore closely connected to the success of the WP3, and was crucial also for successful implementation of WP5.

Each partner city elaborated the strategic part of their own IMMP, a document defining strategic long-term UPF management objectives, demands towards forests, potential conflicts among different forest uses, priorities among management objectives and ecosystem services, as well as long-term UPF management strategy. It also defined management guidelines – the basis for defining operational goals and measures.

Strategic part of IMMPs were prepared in a participatory manner. A group of experts (e.g. from forestry institutions, municipality representatives, external experts, etc.) lead the process of plan preparation. However, the input of different disciplines that have competences in forest use in UPF (e.g. representatives of landscape parks or nature conservation agencies) were also considered, either through meetings, exchange of spatial information and guidelines. All the available documents (Forest management plans, Municipality spatial plans, Decrees on city forests, etc.) and legal documents were considered when preparing the strategic parts of IMMPs. Legal basis was respected and clearly listed in the document (e.g. Forestry Act, Regulations on Forest planning and management, Decree on urban forests, Act on protection forests, Forest management plans etc.).

Step 2.1 – Identification of experts and their involvement in the planning process

Firstly, a group of experts was established in each city, which was responsible for the elaboration of the strategic part of IMMP. Four out of seven partners used the help of external experts in the elaboration of the strategic part of IMMPs, other relied on internal resources.

Step 2.2 – Gathering data

Gathering data included gathering all existing forest plans, spatial plans, consultations with forest planners, other natural resource managers, city administration, data from WP3 participatory workshops.

Step 2.3 – Involving stakeholders

Project partners involved stakeholders in order to contribute in preparation of Strategic parts of IMMPs. The major group were the users of the urban forests (including also forestry managers, city council representatives and other natural resource managers), while in some cases (when urban forests also include private land), forest owners were also included in the preparation of the strategic part of IMMPs. The stakeholders were included in the following aspects:

- ✓ Identification of key users;
- ✓ Revealing the problems related to forest use;
- ✓ Defining the needs and direction of the desired development of the place;
- ✓ Collection of the feedback on the draft strategic plan and objectives of the plan.

Step 2.4 – Preparing the draft text

Setting strategic priorities for each UPF represented the core of the document. Their definition was based on the overview of important ecosystem services in the area; recognized conflicts; challenges in forest management and legal and planning frameworks.

Determining priorities for the UPF area is one of most important steps in elaboration of the Strategic part of IMMP (i.e. which ecosystem services are most important). The ES mapping was a basis for the preparation of the strategic map of priority areas for selected ecosystem services and consequently for defining management objectives and guidelines for forest management. In the strategic map of ES, priorities among ES were clearly set.

Defining management objectives and guidelines – in this step, objectives and guidelines were set for each strategic priority. This was the main part of the document and gave a firm framework in the way UPFs should be managed in the future (approximately 10 years). Guidelines considered existing planning documents, but were more detailed in order to consider the urban forests only. Guidelines for a specific objective, responsible institutions, participation of relevant stakeholders, coordination with other objectives (ES), and positive and negative outcomes of the activities were developed. These also set a framework to set operational guidelines and measures in Operational part of IMMPs (see below).

Defining the governance framework – Finally, governance framework was defined. It included the definition of management arrangements: organization of management, responsibilities for the management plan and support of the measures by financial instruments. Consultations among the responsible relevant actors was crucial here.

Step 2.5 – Revision of the text

The draft text of the plan was firstly revised by each city and forestry administration. Then, the text was sent to Slovenia Forest Service which made a final revision. In addition, SFS was constantly in contact with each partner to offer support during the plan preparation and final revision.

Step 2.6 – Finalization of the Strategic part of IMMP

After the comments of SFS were integrated into the final version of the plans, each partner city finalized the plan. Then, in some partner cities, the plans were sent to city administration for confirmation and acceptation. In other cities, the plans were presented as a possible amendment of the forest plans, depending on the formal possibilities.

3.4. Elaboration of Operational parts of IMMPs

The main goal of this activity was the elaboration of 7 Operational parts of IMMPs for the whole strategic UPF area of an individual URBforDAN project partner city. The work was strongly connected to the activities in WP 3 "Participatory approach", as the workshops and other participatory methods were primarily based on pre-selected UPF focus areas, and served as one of the main sources of data to elaborate the IMMPs – especially in identifying demands towards IMMPs, conflicts among users, needs for better use of these areas and finding solutions for sound multiple-use of UPFs. Success in this activity was therefore closely connected to the success of the WP3, and was crucial also for successful implementation of WP5 (especially for the plan of urban equipment).

Step 3.1 – Setting the basis for the plan preparation

This part included the definition of the purpose of the plan, its obligations and validity (e.g. Relation to forest management and other planning bases, responsible for plan preparation, Preparation of the plan, time validity). Communication between the forestry administration and the city administration was extremely important during this step. To reinforce the team, all seven partners involved external experts in this step.

Step 3.2 – Gathering data

Gathering data included gathering all existing forest plans, spatial plans, consultations with forest planners, other natural resource managers, city administration, data from WP3 participatory workshops.

Field visits and field data gathering including visitors counts and surveys were a crucial step in the data gathering.

Step 3.3 – Preparing the draft text

Introduction – the purpose of the plan, its obligations and validity (e.g. Relation to forest management and other planning bases, responsible for plan preparation, Preparation of the plan) were developed in this part.

Determining priorities within the pre-selected UPF focus area included defining key ecosystem services in the focus area, as well as key target groups that have interests in them.

In the state of the forests and forest use, all relevant information regarding the state of the forests (forest stands, infrastructure, ownership etc.) and their use (visitors' numbers, conflicts among users, etc.) were collected and analyzed.

Management objectives and guidelines were set as a core of the document. Firstly, main management objectives for the pre-selected UPF focus area were set and main guidelines were determined. Then, as the central part of the document, project activities were elaborated, including detailed guidelines for implementing the management objectives, e.g. for preparation of urban equipment, setting the grounds for forest education, creating a communication strategy with the public, etc.

Defining the governance model was developed as the next step. Similar to the strategic part, but in greater detail, the governance model included the definition of the responsible bodies in charge for the implementation of the plan during the URBforDAN project and after that, and the means of maintenance of the urban equipment and infrastructure.

In monitoring part, partners listed how to control the success of all implemented activities and forest management measures. In addition, the potential revision process was defined, i.e. in which case the revision should take place and who should be responsible for it.

Costs and financing were the last, but crucial part of the plan. Here, partners assessed the overall costs of the plan implementation. Costs were shown separately for the duration of the project URBforDAN and after its closure.

Step 3.4 – Revision of the text

The draft text of the plan was firstly revised by each city and forestry administration. Then, the text was sent to Slovenia Forest Service which made a final revision. In addition, SFS was constantly in contact with each partner to offer support during the plan preparation and final revision.

Step 3.5 – Finalization of the Operational part of IMMP

After the comments of SFS were integrated into the final version of the plans, each partner city finalized the plan. Then, in some partner cities, the plans were sent to city administration for confirmation and acceptation. In other cities, the plans were presented as a possible amendment of the forest plans, depending on the formal possibilities.

3.5. Elaboration of dissemination, transferability and replicability activities

The URBforDAN partnership was composed out of 7 cities on purpose, to allow implementation of proposed UPF solution in 7 different cases/environments, thus building relevance, resilience and robustness of project outputs. However, to further test the transferability and replicability of project results 3 ASP cities and FAO (an influential international organization), were invited to observe and comment the implementation of the URBforDAN project from their own perspectives. Essentially, dissemination, transferability and replicability activities revolved around the following 4 components:

UPF Danube Network – this transnational on-line project result dissemination was one of the first activities to be delivered by URBforDAN project and was used as one of key dissemination channels throughout all implementation phases. Relevant partners from all Europe and other relevant networks joined and several presentations of the project and its results were held within the SilvaMed Working Group.

Dissemination & transferability missions – were implemented in 3 ASP Cities (Prague, Sarajevo and Podgorica) in order to deliver first partial transfer of URBforDAN project results and outputs to other Cities. Originally, they were designed as 4–5-day workshops. However, due to the COVID-19 related restrictions – especially limitations linked to the ability to organize in-person meetings and number of allowed participants – the dissemination & transferability mission to ASP cities were re-designed into a 3-day events. They were on-purpose divided into 2 parts:

- Day 1 was organized as an on-line webinar. Its aim was to present the URBforDAN project, its methodologies, tools and results to the widest possible audience.
- Days 2 and 3 were organized as a combination of in-person filed trips and workshops to the pre-selected UPF focus areas – allowing representatives of key stakeholder groups to actively participate in dissemination activities, as well as to discuss transferability of URBforDAN results to their cities.

Recommendations for transferability and replicability of URBforDAN outputs was discussed as the final step of all missions.

UPF Participatory Planning & Management Guidelines will be compiled based on lessons learned from implementation of WP3, WP4 and WP5 activities in 7 PP Cities and partial transfer to 3 ASP Cities. They will directly respond to FAO & DTP needs, while ensuring transferability and replicability of or capitalization on project results in case of UPF or other NH areas in Danube cities and beyond. The final 2-day transnational conference on management of UPF as important natural heritage within city limits will be organized in Ljubljana, as the main promotional, awareness raising and dissemination event. As both stated activities will be developed after this report is finalized, they are not included in the following evaluation.

URBforDAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS MODEL

(as implemented by an individual URBforDAN partner City)

Interreg — Danube Transnational Programme — URBforDAN

WP3 – PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Kick-off meeting (Ljubljana)

A3.1 – Mobilization of key stakeholders

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

→ *Key stakeholder analysis* → *Key stakeholder profiles*

Mobilization workshops with owners & users

Project meeting (Zagreb)

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

Project meeting (Belgrade)

Prioritization workshops with owners & users → *Priorities identified by owners & users*

Project meeting (Ivano-Frankivsk)

Action planning workshops with owners & users → *Action plans developed by owners & users*

Project meeting (Budapest)

IMMP public presentation and consultation

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

Project meeting (Cluj Napoca)

- *Joint management – review & capitalization of best practices*
- *Consultation meetings with key stakeholders*
- *Management model & Statutory Act*

→ *First Initiative for joint UPF management (Ljubljana - Golovec)* → *Financial compensation model*

Project meeting (Vienna)

Final project conference (Ljubljana)

WP4 – UPF MANAGEMENT PLANS

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

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

→ *UPF area analysis*

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

- *ES mapping/valuation methodology*
- *ES Training of Trainers*

→ *ES mapping / valuation*

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*

- *IMMP Training of Trainers 2*
- *Operational planning*

→ *IMMP – Operational part*

Final version of IMMP (improved based on received comments)

A4.4 – Dissemination, Transferability and Replicability

Dissemination & transferability missions to URBforDAN associated partner Cities

UPF Danube Network support to URBforDAN project

Dissemination of URBforDAN project results through UPF Danube Network

WP5 – UTILIZATION OF ES

A5.1 – Activities in selected UPF areas

- *Final lists of urban equipment*
- *Design, purchase & installation on selected sites*

→ *Improved UPF areas*

Participatory approach evaluation report

IMMP planning process evaluation report

A5.2 – Project ideas for 3 priority interventions

- *URBforDAN best stakeholder project idea competition*

→ *21 Designs of best UPF development ideas*

A5.3 – Experiencing UPF – Smartphone App

URBforDAN smartphone application for interpretation of 7 UPF focus areas

First Initiative evaluation report

Dissemination & transferability mission reports

URBforDAN Capitalization Strategy

Step-by-step evaluation methodology

1 2 3 4 5 6

Documented learning interaction – Step-by-step evaluation

TRANSNATIONAL UPF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING & MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

4. Evaluation of IMMP Planning Approach and Methodology

Evaluation of the development of the URBforDAN Integrated Multi-use Management Plans as a process was performed as a continuous project activity that took place in parallel to the development of the IMMP's. After each step of the IMMP development, project partners were provided with a structured questionnaire in order to evaluate the step – assessing whether the provided trainings, materials were useful, guidance's reasonable and applicable and if they see the benefit of this approach in their work.

The main benefit of such approach was that the feedback to the provided material and guidance was more or less instant – shortly after it was used by the project partners. Thus, the comments provided were relevant and reasonably augmented, resulting in immediate modifications of the approach and provided material.

4.1. Evaluation of the process of ES mapping

Through on-line survey, partners evaluated the tools developed and support provided in the process of Ecosystem Services mapping by WP4 leader – Slovenia Forest Service.

While almost all project partners (6 out of 7) were *"very satisfied"* with the ES mapping guidelines (score 5 of 5), their satisfaction with the ES mapping training was in average one score lower (score 4 of 5).

In the end, ES mapping methodology proved to be useful in practice since 5 project partners used the methodology as it was designed One partner had to slightly modify it, while only one partner had to use their own methodology for ES mapping due to specific local conditions and data availability.

4.2. Evaluation of the process of preparation of Strategic parts of IMMPs

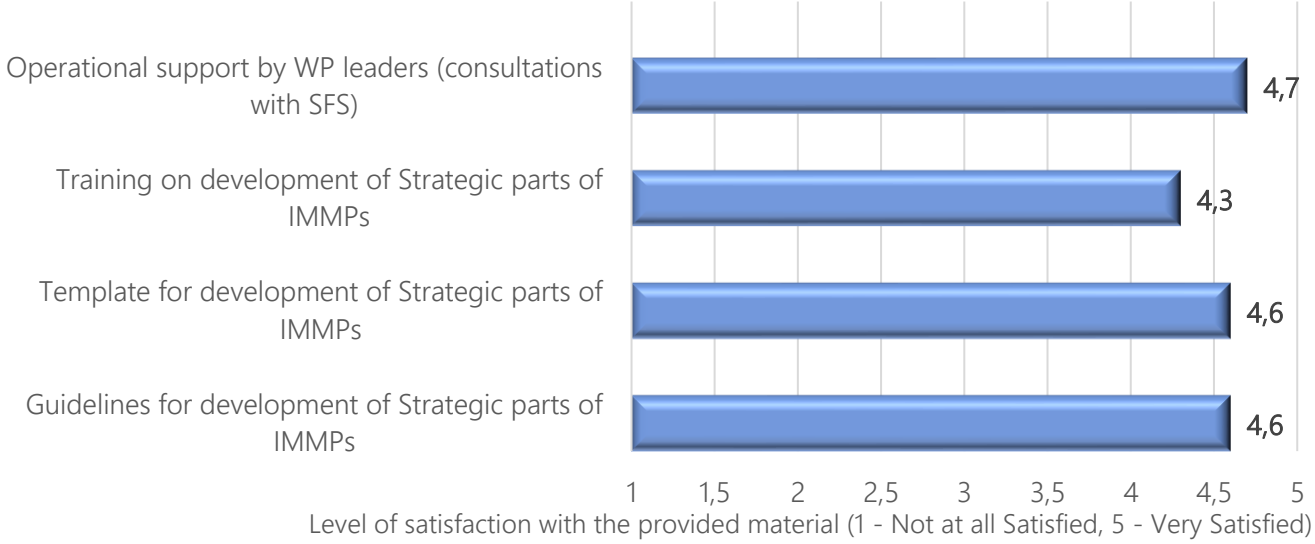
Satisfaction of project partners with provided tools and support

In the frame of integrated multi-use Management Plans methodology/ approach, the following tools and support were offered by Slovenia Forest service (and external partners) to the project partners:

- Guidelines for development of Strategic parts of IMMPs;
- Template for development of Strategic parts of IMMPs;
- Training on development of Strategic parts of IMMPs;
- Operational support by WP leaders (consultations with SFS).

In general, most of the partners were either *"more than satisfied"* or *"very satisfied"*.

Figure 1: Level of satisfaction of the project partners with provided material and support for preparation of Strategic parts of IMMPs (Source: Survey among project partners)



As indicated in the figure above, the operational support by WP leaders was given the highest score (4.7), followed immediately by the Guidelines and the Template for development of Strategic parts of IMMPs (4.6, respectively). Two partners gave score 3 to the Training on development of Strategic parts of IMMPs, which slightly lowered the score for this support tool, although it is still quite high (4.3).

Some project partners stated that only the time limit, set by URBforDAN project timeline, was the reason why the Strategic part couldn`t be done perfectly. None of the project partners need to modify the content of the stated tools to the specific needs of the city.

Involvement of key stakeholders in the preparation of the Strategic part of IMMPs

6 partners involved stakeholders (6 of them involved forest users, while 3 also involved forest owners) in order to contribute in preparation of Strategic parts of IMMPs, while one did not. Three reasons why stakeholders were not included in that case were listed:

- *„Strategic planning is our internal procedure and not something to be constantly consulted with stakeholders. "*
- *„We obtained all needed information already in the previous steps. "*
- *„Lack of responsiveness and competent representatives on the side of stakeholders. "*

This shows, that not all societies are ready or willing to fully integrate the participatory planning processes in all steps. Nonetheless, even in such cases, participatory approach was used in key steps of the planning process.

The difference between the level of competences partners have in preparing the strategic part of IMMPs before and after the training

One of the main indicators showing the quality of the offered support and tools was the difference between the level of competences partners have in preparing the Strategic part of IMMPs before and after the training. Before the training, 3 partners felt *"not at all competent"*, 2 *"partly competent"*, 1 *"competent with limited experiences"* and 1 "*competent with some experiences"*.

After the training, the results were very satisfying: all 7 partners felt *"competent"*; while 3 felt *"competent with limited experiences"*, 3 *"competent with some experiences"* and 1 partner felt *"very competent with adequate experiences"*. Thus proving, that the URBforDAN project did manage to enhance the capacities of the participating institutions, despite lower satisfaction of project partners with the provided training.

General satisfaction with the strategic part of IMMPs

At the end, the vast majority (six out of seven) partners were *"fully satisfied"* with their Strategic part of IMMPs. Thus, proving that the entire process, apart for being an important learning experience for the project partners, had also an applicable in-process and on-site impact. The one partner being only *"partially satisfied"* listed as the key reason "*missing some details, but having a good general orientation"*.

To what extent does the strategic part of IMMPs reflect the needs of stakeholders

In general, all project partners believe that the strategic parts of IMMPs reflect the needs of their stakeholders. While 2 partners are confident that they *"reflect their needs to the full extent"*, 5 thought that they *"reflect them to the feasible extent"*.

This result indicates that all project partners recognized the importance of the participatory planning process and increased awareness of this within all participating organizations that it really makes a difference – resulting in a better strategic orientation, higher quality, understanding and ownership.

On the other hand, all involved also understood that only feasible and realistic needs of the stakeholders can be included. This means that during the strategic planning process project partners relied on open

discussion to prioritize, make compromises and focus on effective solutions to real problems. This was far from easy and required repetitive consultations and more time than planned with project implementation schedule.

The usefulness of the strategic part of IMMPs for the further steps of the project

All 7 project partners identified the strategic part of IMMPs as *a "very useful input for all further phases of the project"*, proving that before making investment orientated on-site actions, a reflection has to be made which has to include all potential stakeholders. This may be more time consuming, but results in the widely-accepted, better and more applicable outcome.

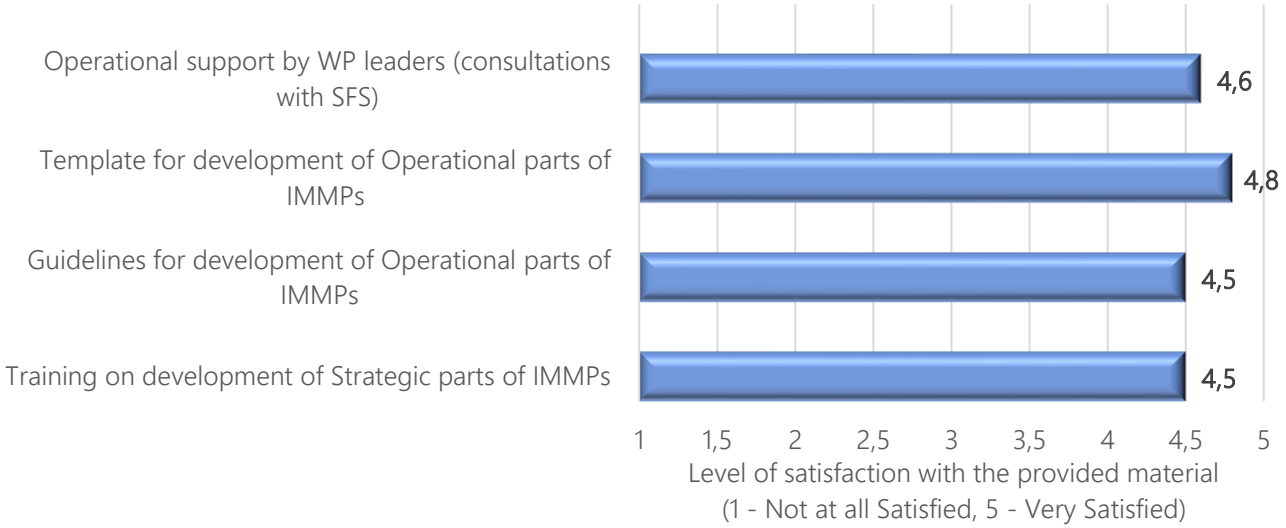
4.3. Evaluation of the process of preparation of Operational parts of IMMPs

The satisfaction of the partners with the offered tools and support

In the frame of integrated multi-use Management Plans methodology/ approach, the following tools and support were offered by SFS (and external partners) to the project partners:

- Training on development of Strategic parts of IMMPs;
- Guidelines for development of Operational parts of IMMPs;
- Template for development of Operational parts of IMMPs;
- Operational support by WP leaders (consultations with SFS).

Figure 2: Level of satisfaction of the project partners with provided material and support for preparation of Operational parts of IMMPs (Source: Survey among project partners)



As indicated in the figure above, project partners were *"more than satisfied"* or *"very satisfied"* with the tools and support offered to them by the WP leader in implementing operational part of IMMPs. They were most satisfied with the template for development of Operational parts of IMMPs (average score 4.8), followed by Operational support by WP leaders (one-on-one consultations with SFS) (4.6) and Training on development of Strategic parts of IMMPs (Training in Ivano-Frankivsk) and Guidelines for development of Operational parts of IMMPs (both 4.5).

Regarding the Guidelines, partners noted that guidelines themselves were useful, however some part of the template needed more detailed clarification. Partners mentioned that the template for development of Operational parts was not that flexible in order to accommodate the local particularities, and that some parts may be too detailed or are repetitive. Otherwise the template was scored as very good. Regarding the support by WP leaders, partners noted that they were provided with a satisfactory feedback and high-quality support. The key reason for lower score were time limitations.

Involving stakeholders in preparation of the operational part of IMMPs

All partners involved stakeholders in the preparation of the operational part of IMMPs. They all included forest users, while 5 partners also involved forest owners. The stakeholders were included via workshops of users and owners (see WP3), detailed meetings with certain focus groups and face-to-face meetings in the field. The participation of stakeholders was important for:

- In-depth knowledge and understanding about the different kind of problems and needs;
- Formation of some sort of initiatives (public debates on major public issues);
- Defining steps for preparation of the Strategic part of the IMMP;
- Collecting interests and ideas on the potential uses, identification of the conflicts between different users;
- Collecting concrete spatially located interests and wishes of the users;
- Discussing the problems, solutions and the points in question.

The difference between the level of competences partners have in preparing the operational part of IMMPs before and after the training

Before the training, 3 partners felt *"partially competent"*, 1 *"competent with limited experiences"* and 3 *"competent with some experiences"*. After the training, 1 partner felt *"competent with limited experiences"*, while 6 partners felt *"competent with some experiences"*.

As we can see, the initial level of competence of project partners was already quite high, which can be expected, due to the fact that participants were primarily employees of city administrations or institutions responsible for UPF management and already had preliminary experience with operational planning processes. In most cases, the training managed to further increase capacities of PPs.

General satisfaction with the operational part of IMMPs

At the end of the planning process, majority of project partners (5 out of 7) were *"satisfied"* with the operational part of IMMPs. The 2 partners *"not being satisfied"* identified the following key reasons:

- 1 partner warned about the "lower" interest from the side of stakeholders in their city, which could be improved through one-on-one meetings.
- 1 partner was not able to involve experts (financial issues) to help with plan development.

This result delivers an important message that in the process of stakeholder involvement, mobilization and motivation is just as important as communication itself. If the stakeholders are not properly mapped, mobilized and motivated, the benefit of their involvement can not reach its full potentials. Just as importantly, no level of participation can substitute proper expert support to guide and exploit it.

To what extent the operational part of IMMPs reflects the needs of stakeholders

As for the strategic part, the majority of partners (6 out of 7) believe that operational parts of IMMPs reflect the needs of their stakeholders; 1 partner is confident that they *"reflect their needs to the full extent"*, while 5 thought that they *"reflect them to the feasible extent"*. On the other hand, 1 partner stated that the operational part *"does not reflect the needs of stakeholders"* and that it would be better to be done without their participation. The reason the partner stated is connected to the tight timeframe of gathering demands and predominant private ownership that presents a challenge for providing public services. This rises an important aspect of planning of each phases and activities of the participatory process, including also a relevant aspect of the mandate of the plan.

The usefulness of the operational part of IMMPs for the further steps of the project

Despite the previous conclusion, all 7 partners identified the operational part of IMMPs as a *"very useful input for all further phases of the project"*.

4.4. Evaluation of the dissemination, transferability and replicability activities

UPF Danube Network – It was used as one of most important dissemination channels, where all major URBforDAN project outputs and results were publicized and circulated amongst expert audience. Relevant partners from all Europe and other relevant networks joined the network and several presentations of the project and its results were held within the SilvaMed Working Group as a direct consequence. Today, URBforDAN Network has 102 active members, predominantly urban forestry experts and representatives of cities. It is a fully-pledged members of the Trees for Cities Initiative with a direct outreach to 873 of its members. Both operate under FAO umbrella with over 70.000 members in its world-wide network.

Furthermore, exchange of information with several other EU projects and networks occurred during the project lifetime, expanding the circle of knowledge and enhancing transferability and replicability potential of the project. Subsequently, we can conclude that it performed as expected and served its purpose within the URBforDAN project framework.

The URBforDAN Project Capitalization Strategy recognized this channel as not only one of long-term communication and dissemination, but also one of key transferability and replicability potentials of the whole project. This is why it proposed *"continued active participation of URBforDAN partners in URBforDAN Network and FAO SilvaMed communication platforms"*, as well as to *"use it as one of key tools for mobilization of appropriate project partners for development and execution of follow-up projects"*.

Dissemination & transferability missions – Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, the URBforDAN team was able to execute missions to Sarajevo and Podgorica in full, while only day 1 of the mission to Prague was executed. As proved by city visits to Sarajevo and Podgorica, on-line execution of days 2 and 3 makes little sense, as all key messages from URBforDAN project were transferred to ASP City of Prague during day 1, while days 2 and 3 rely heavily on work performed on-site (in Prague) and with active participation of local stakeholders. The City of Prague proposed that days 2 and 3 could be executed as planned early in September 2021 (proposed dates are 16th and 17th September 2021). Although less than optimal, without other alternatives, the URBforDAN team was forced to accept this proposal. Of course, the risk that COVID-19 related strictions will prevent this plan still exist. In such case the city visit to Prague would have to be canceled.

Nonetheless, missions to Sarajevo and Podgorica were successful, not only in their execution, bat also in achieved goals. In both cases, a limited number of stakeholders (due to COVID-19 related restrictions) participated. However, they were carefully selected to represent key stakeholder groups of both focus areas. Both missions resulted in 2 days of on-the-job exercise, open discussion about key challenges in UPF management, identification of key ecosystem services, as well as identification of opportunities improved UPF management brings. At the end of missions, stakeholders put together a list of concrete recommendations for transferability and replicability of URBforDAN outputs – based on the current situation in both cities, taking into account legal and operational frameworks, as well as environmental and cultural specifics. All results are in detail described in dissemination & transferability mission reports.

Furthermore, both cities openly considered potential application of URBforDAN solutions transfer project to one of cross-border programmes they both participate in. Subsequently, we can conclude that dissemination & transferability missions performed as expected and served its purpose within the URBforDAN project framework.

5. Lessons learned with recommendations for improvement

5.1. ES mapping

The URBforDAN team can expose the following lessons learned after 5 steps of self-evaluation:

1) ES mapping proved to be a useful toll 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, significantly improving the level of input data in any UPF planning or management process.
2) On the other hand, ES mapping also proved to be a good tool for presentation of importance of UPF and their services – not only to their owners and users, but also to the general public, making it also an awareness raising tool.
3) 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.
4) ES mapping can be an important UPF planning and management tool, especially in countries where no system for forest functions or ES mapping already exists.
5) The effort to adjust the methodology to UPF scale proved to be extremely important, as many exiting ES mapping methodologies are applicable only on a large-scale and based on national level data (where all UPF are usually dealt with in just one category, if at all).
6) ES mapping criteria should always follow the aim of the mapping, which in our case, is the elaboration of the plan. Subsequently, it is much different from other types of ES mapping – e.g. for economic evaluation purposes, national reporting purposes etc.
7) We are glad to conclude that project partners, despite our initial fears linked to already described diverse environments, have elaborated maps without evident problems. To our delight, they also had very few questions about the methodology itself and delivered very good results. Subsequently, we can conclude that URBforDAN ES mapping methodology is clear, calibrated to the level of UPF and applicable in a diverse set of environments.
8) Project partners used the help of GIS experts in some cases, which was very valuable and recommended, especially in countries where no ES maps or other mapping procedures exist.

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, as in any methodology development and testing process, there is still room for improvement. This is why we are listing the following recommendations for further improvement of the URBforDAN ES mapping methodology:

- The URBforDAN project confirmed that the methodology can be quite easily applied in a diverse set of environments. It originates from Slovenia's forest planning system, but was appropriately modified to fit a wider set of circumstance. However, more profound and clear criteria might be needed in some 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.

- Before its implementation, it is very important to think about the aim of ES mapping. As described, URBforDAN ES mapping methodology was developed for the planning process purposes. Nonetheless, we feel confident that it can be modified to serve other purposes also and recommend to any potential users to adapt it to desired purposes.

5.2. Elaboration of the IMMPs

The URBforDAN team can expose the following lessons learned after 5 steps of self-evaluation:

1) An Urban Forest Plan on its own represents a unique, innovative and a profound tool, which is adapted to the specific situation in urban forests. Which is why an integrated and multi-use planning methodology or approach is needed – or even better, necessary! Its dual concept – with separated Strategic and Operational part – allows the planning team to go beyond borders of existing planning units (especially in countries where forest planning has an already established tradition), before zooming onto specific UPF areas and dealing with their specific issues. In countries with no or less developed forest planning tradition it represents a completely new tool for sustainable management in UPFs.
2) Results of the URBforDAN project clearly show that UPF planning is more that just adapted forest management planning. It is a complex system of social and environmental planning within UPF area, based on their functions.
3) Strategic parts of IMMPs proved to be crucial for all other URBforDAN project phases. They allowed project partners to discuss and resolve broader and trans-sectorial issues on a strategic and conceptual level with national level authorities, city administrations, UPF managers and other policy linked stakeholders. Thus, allowing project partners to focus and work on concrete issues and activities on the level of Operational parts of IMMPs together with forest owners and users. We also noticed that this division was also well accepted by all stakeholders, which felt more competent to participate in most suitable part of IMMPs, where their support in search for concrete solutions was most needed.
4) A common and well understood framework for the Strategic part of IMMPs proved to be crucial for project partners to develop a good plan. As in many cases, some of the partners lacked competences in the planning procedures, some other only lacked competences in the urban forest planning. In some countries the traditional forest planning is practiced, but social and ecological functions are not considered in the plans to a high extend. Therefore, the template included detailed guidelines on each chapter and topic was designed to enable project partners to select priorities, set objectives and plan adequate guidelines and measures appropriate for their own set of conditions.
5) However, any template or framework needs to be flexible enough to allow project partners from different cities with a diverse set of conditions (e.g. in relation to the size of the strategic areas, ownership structure, importance of forests, forest management approaches – for example the prevalence of segregated or integrated approach, the competences over forest management etc.) to use it. We found our template to be flexible enough to be used in all 7 project partner cities.
6) Involvement of stakeholders in the preparation of both the strategic and operational part of IMMP is very important. They help to reveal the demands towards forests, issues regarding forest use, collect ideas on how to resolve issues etc. It is important to identify and involve the whole set of users and, in the case of private ownership, a diverse set of private owners as well (for details, see WP3).

7) However, participatory approach takes its time, especially when involving large and diverse groups of stakeholders. If we try to rush it or put too much pressure on stakeholders, they will refuse to participate or will not deliver expected quality of results. This is one of the hardest lessons learned in URBforDAN projects, which is also evident from above presented analysis and documented by project partners. During URBforDAN application phase, the team underestimated the timeframe needed to implement the participatory approach. It was also one of key reasons why the partnership in the end requested a prolongation of the project – 4 additional months were approved, which enabled us to finalize the IMMP planning process. This underestimation happened in-part due to overestimation of capacities and capabilities of project partners to implement the participatory approach in an efficient and effective way. Subsequently, more training, external support, communication efforts and time was needed.

8) Involving other experts in the preparation of the strategic and operational part of IMMPs is just as important. These are for example 1) Experts from regional forest planning offices who can verify that the plan is in accordance with existing planning documents and can suggest guidelines and measures to manage UPF based on their long-term planning experiences in the area; 2) Experts from city council who can assure that the elaborated plan will be adopted, embedded into the strategic and operational framework in the future city administration planning, as well as properly funded and executed; 3) Experts from different disciplines with relevant experiences for specific topics (e.g. for forest education, nature protection, visitor management, communication, etc.).

9) Involving external experts in the IMMP planning process greatly increases the quality of the plan, especially, if the project staff is lacking competences. However, in case of poor cooperation and communication, even the best experts struggle – resulting in a difficult and prolonged planning phase. Thus, the right balance between enthusiasm, knowledge, experience and action is needed.

10) Regardless of so-far lessons learned, some partners faced the biggest challenge in the end of the IMMP planning process, as in some cases partners did not ensure proper internal communication within their city administrations and/or institutions. This led to a specific situation, where we ended up with well understood and widely accepted IMMPs by stakeholders, while they were being challenged internally, by project partner management structures. In all such cases URBforDAN city-level teams were able to resolve all open issues and ensure also internal support to IMMPs. However, this was an unexpected challenge, which could, in case of poorer response, sabotage all efforts. This is why we have to emphasize the importance of internal and external communication and participation in UPF planning and management processes.

Just as for the ES mapping methodology, we can conclude that, with successful implementation in 7 diverse environments (legal, operational, environmental, social, economical, etc.), the URBforDAN project provided a unique, effective, but also easily transferable IMMP development methodology.

However, as in any methodology development and testing process, there is still room for improvement. This is why we are listing the following recommendations for further improvement of the URBforDAN IMMP development methodology:

1) In line with above presented evaluation of all 5 steps from project partners, we must recommend adequate initial capacity building for both – the participatory approach and IMMP methodology. According to our experiences, the training to implement the IMMPs was the greatest step in providing support; it should be even more goal-oriented, with more details on some topics (we assumed in some cases partners were competent enough and therefore simplified guidelines, but it is better to explain things to a greater detail at the beginning). Also, it would be useful to send partners a draft of the plan elaborated by the WP leader so they could be acquainted with the exact

content, but we were unable to do it because of our own long-lasting planning procedures. On the other hand, partners were forced to be unique, to use their own ideas and to start from scratch, which can produce a more valuable and original results, as well as a more vivid learning experience in the end.

All described shortcomings were successfully addressed with on-line helpdesk support to project partners, one-on-one meetings of planning teams and hiring additional experts where lacking capacities or capabilities were recognized.

2) Involve forest users and forest owners from the beginning of the planning phase, but with a clear aim. Templates should be prepared in parallel to the workshops, so that partners would have a clear idea on the desired feed back already from the first set of workshops on.

3) The division of the content between strategic and operational level needs to be clear. Still in some cases, the final text of IMMPs felt repetitive. This should be avoided to the greatest extent possible. If possible, help from external experts can be used.

4) The distinction between the strategic area (relevant for the strategic part of IMMP) and the focus area (relevant for the operational part of IMMP) should be clear from the start. The focus area should present a rounded area within the whole complex of urban forests that has specific situation and should be addressed separately from other focus areas. Also, the size of the focus area should be large enough to allow for a comprehensive operational planning. All presented was emphasized at the start of the project. However, some partners decided to use the same UPF area for their strategic and focus areas, which caused unnecessary confusion.

5) Involving external experts (e.g. Faculties, Institutes, Private companies) in the preparation of the strategic planning improves the quality of the plan and was in cases of some project partners almost necessary. However, it is better to include them as a support, rather than to simply let them lead the whole planning process – the forestry administration and city administration must be one of the leading authors of the plan. Otherwise, problems with ownership and in-depth understanding might arise.

6) More time should be intended for the elaboration of the IMMP (e.g., at least two years – one for operational and one for strategic part of the IMMP), as data collection, consultations, workshops, revisions etc. take a lot of time and often unplanned circumstances occur. For example -in our case, COVID19 related restrictions seriously delayed the public consultation process.

7) As already explained in lesson learnt no. 10, communication – both internal and external – is most crucial part of the planning process. Thus, we recommend that more emphasis is put on int and more proactive approach undertaken.

8) Templates should be even more simple, with clear instructions, repetitions should be avoided and when listing data from other documents, only references should be made – we saw in some cases that many information obtained from other documents was included in IMMPs which makes the plan less clear. The main text should be original, developed within the planning phase and linked directly to the focus area.

9) If possible, there should be a logic developed on how to integrate both the strategic and operational part of IMMPs in the existing municipal and forestry planning documents already from the beginning, which was not always the case. It is good to inform both forestry and city administration about the preparation of the plan already at start and start to look for possibilities to give the IMMPs some sort of legal status, or at least to consider them in next forest plan revisions or in municipal spatial planning. However, every country has their own rules and each partner

should consider this. Nonetheless, these considerations are crucial for the long-term importance, acceptance and implementation of IMMPs.

5.3. Dissemination, transferability and replicability activities

The URBforDAN team can expose the following lessons learned from implemented dissemination, transferability and replicability activities:

1) URBforDAN Network proved to be an effective and efficient tool for dissemination of project results, especially within the scientific and expert communities – especially as it was directly linked to a well established EFUF network. COVID-19 pandemic only enhanced the importance of on-line dissemination channels, as the URBforDAN team was not able to disseminate through "regular" in-person channels.
2) It is important to have Partners or Associated Partners with a wide and heavy out-reach, as in our case FAO proved to be an important asset – not only for its status and expert support, but also for promotion and dissemination of project results and outputs.
3) Dissemination & transferability missions proved to be an effective tool to test transferability and replicability of project results and outputs. Not only did this ensure that associated partners remained active throughout the project lifetime (as at the end there was a clear task for them), they also created ownership on their part and even a feeling of remorse that they were not full partners in the project. Having two associated partners discussing potential follow-up project application on one of cross-border programmes in order to transfer/replicate URBforDAN project solutions is the ultimate proof of success of the used approach.
4) On the other hand, it has to be noted that used approach is a complex one, and has to be taken into account already in the project design phase, to be able to ensure proper funding, personnel and operational support to implement them. It also requires willingness and active support from associated partners, which is not always present in such projects.
5) Dissemination & transferability missions also proved that there is real added value if any project is able to actively involve Associated Partners – not only did the URBforDAN project receive direct and concrete feedback about its results and outputs, both visited cities were extremely satisfied to host and benefit from the missions.

However, as in any methodology development and testing process, there is still room for improvement. This is why we are listing the following recommendations for further improvement of the URBforDAN Dissemination, transferability and replicability activities:

1) All dissemination channels are only as effective as you make them – if you don't take time to use them, upload and promote your results, their performance will be poor. This has to be recognized as a separate and regular activity, as well as an obligation of a concrete team-member, otherwise it is easily neglected.
2) In normal working conditions, it would be advisable to implement the dissemination & transferability missions, as originally planned – in a form of a 4-5-day city visits, with more time for not only discussion, but also first concrete planning steps. It would also be advisable to bring to ASP cities at least one or two representatives of partner cities to enable direct communication on challenges and transfer of knowledge and experiences between cities themselves, rather than having expert-to-city transfer.