



BLUE GREEN CITY

Blue and Green Infrastructure for Sustainable Cities



Action Plan

Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolis / Euromed
Cities Network

Contents

CONTENTS	2
1. GENERAL INFORMATION	3
2. POLICY CONTEXT	3
3. DETAILS OF THE ACTION ENVISAGED	4
1. BACKGROUND.....	4
❖ <i>Regional specificities</i>	4
❖ <i>Policy instrument context</i>	4
❖ <i>Policy instrument analysis</i>	4
❖ <i>Lessons learned from Blue Green City</i>	5
2. ACTION.....	7
❖ <i>Step 1: Influencing the conception of the ERDF instrument</i>	7
❖ <i>Step 2: Implementation of the ERDF instrument</i>	8
3. PLAYERS INVOLVED	9
4. TIMEFRAME.....	11
5. COSTS AND FUNDING	11

1. General information

Project: Blue Green City

Partner organisation: Metropolis Nice Côte d'Azur (NCA), Euromed Cities Network.

The Metropolis Nice Cote d'Azur is the Lead Partner of the project, through its dissemination department, Euromed Cities Network.

Country: France

NUTS2 region : Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region (Sud Region)

2. Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	X	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
		European Territorial Cooperation programme
		Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

ERDF funds 2021-2027: Strategic Objective 2, “A Greener Europe” - Specific Objective 2.4: “to promote adaptation to climate change, prevention of natural catastrophes, and resilience, by taking into account solutions based on ecosystem services”.

Nb.: The 2014-2020 ERDF programme is currently being finalised. The Blue Green City project was elaborated and submitted while the 2014-2020 ERDF programme was still operational, and when the elaboration of the 2021-2027 ERDF programme had not yet started. The implementation of the project was greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the meantime, the elaboration of the 2021-2027 ERDF programme started. It was therefore decided that it would be more relevant for Blue Green City to address directly the new 2021-2027 ERDF programme.

3. Details of the action envisaged

**Nature-Based Solutions
in the Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region's
2021-2027 ERDF Programme**

Type of change: change of strategic focus of the policy instrument – structural change

1. Background

❖ Regional specifics

The Sud Region is one of the richest French regions in terms of biodiversity, with the combination of elements of the natural heritage from the Mediterranean Sea and the Alps, and a strong diversity of landscapes and climates. This natural richness gives the Sud Region an enormous responsibility to reach the goals of national and European policies aimed at the preservation of natural habitats and species. However, it is also a region that is characterised by strong urbanisation pressures and increasing vulnerability to climate change, which is particularly evident in the coastal cities of the area.

For this reason, reducing the vulnerability of cities to climate change and increasing their capacity to adapt to climate change are of fundamental importance, and should be integrated in the territorial public policy. However, Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) is not yet mainstreamed into urban planning and development as part of the climate change mitigation strategy. In addition, implementation methodologies are missing and, as GBI objectives are mainly based on ecological functionalities, the other services they provide, especially for tackling climate change, are not familiar to the experts in the sector or to the general public.

❖ Policy instrument context

One of the strategic levers of the 2014-2020 ERDF operational programme on biodiversity was axis 3, “Energy transition and sustainable use of resources”, and investment priority 6d, “reducing pressure on biodiversity by intervening on blue and green infrastructure”. It was therefore essential to carry out actions on protecting and valorising the natural resources that constitute an essential wealth of the regional territory, in terms of quality of life and opportunities for economic development. However, this programme did not take into account the specific situation of urban areas.

This is the reason why, in the new 2021-2027 programming period (policy instrument addressed by Nice Côte d'Azur Metropolis as part of Blue Green City), it was decided to emphasise the situation of urban areas. The concomitance of the preparation of the 2021-2027 ERDF operational programme and the Blue Green City project enabled the Sud Provence Côte d'Azur Region to plan in order to integrate into the new ERDF instrument the results of Blue Green City, to enrich its proposal regarding urban biodiversity, notably.

❖ Policy instrument analysis

Metropolis Nice Côte d'Azur (NCA) has chosen to examine priority 6d, under Axis 3, which concerns the protection and restoration of biodiversity, and favours services connected to ecosystems including through

NATURA 2000 and green infrastructure. The specific thematic objective is OS6d – reducing pressure on biodiversity by working on green and blue infrastructure (GBI).

Axis 3 comes within the scope of the section on the sustainable growth of the Europe 2020 strategy for intelligent, sustainable, and inclusive growth. Its objective is to reach a low carbon economy, and resilience to climate change in the scope of Horizon 2050, allowing the EU to reach its objectives regarding reducing emissions and preserving biodiversity. This strategy, combined with the existing European directives, is implemented through the Sud Region's 'Regional Scheme for Ecological Coherence'.

The policy instrument considers biodiversity as a common heritage as well as a resource for inhabitants and visitors. A major part of the attractiveness of the Sud Region revolves around its biodiversity, which faces several pressures: destruction and fragmentation of natural environments, pollution, over-exploitation of natural resources, invasive alien species, and climate change.

However, the Policy instrument should be improved by integrating a GBI strategy, nature-based solutions (NBS) and an ecosystem services (ES) approach in the urban planning process. Following regular exchanges with the Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region (Sud Region), which is directly responsible for the policy instrument, NCA has decided to focus on the development of GBI as nature-based solutions. This would enable the adaptation of urban and peri-urban areas to climate change, as well as contribute towards the fight against the loss of biodiversity, while at the same time responding to specific needs (e.g. flood prevention, water treatment, development of recreational/cultural areas).

❖ **Lessons learned from Blue Green City**

NCA's Associated Partner, the Sud Region, is itself a partner of the Nature For City Life project (EU LIFE programme), which has the same thematic focus as the Blue Green City project.

NCA and Sud Region have explored the idea of **creating synergies between the Blue Green City and Nature For City Life projects, in order to understand how the Blue Green City project could influence the instrument of regional policy.**

NCA shared with Sud Region the good practices of the Blue Green City partners, relating to urban planning, GBI, NBS and ES:

- [The “Los Damas!” sustainable landscape plan for the territory \(PP3 – Regione Piemonte, Italy\):](#)
 - A multiscale analysis based on Landscape Ecology, Ecosystem Services (ES), Vulnerability and Resilience, is used to integrate landscape complexity within the Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) plan.
 - The effectiveness of the method relies on the analysis of the genetic characters of the metropolitan landscape to highlight its diversities and vulnerabilities and, from those, the needs in terms of ES to be provided by the new GBI plan.

- Reducing vulnerability and improving resilience are the final goals of the process, which is reached through the development of a participatory plan integrating ES and GBI. In this process, ES play a dual role:
 - as a tool to describe the Landscape Units (LU) and their diversity, helping to understand the LU features, their vulnerability and their own role within the overall landscape mosaic;
 - as a tool to orient the plan, highlighting those related ES able to reduce vulnerability itself.

- **The integration of ecosystem services in spatial planning (PP8 – Växjö, Sweden):**
 - A municipal green infrastructure strategy that integrates ecosystem services in the spatial planning process, at every step of the process, to avoid losing the benefits of GBI in the process.

 - Integration of ES in the comprehensive plan, in the geographical information systems, in the zoning plans, in the education of planning team members, in the detailed planning process, in the guidelines for compensatory measures, in the education of land managers, in land allocation competitions, and in land lease guidelines.

 - This example shows the importance of analysing the process as it is, to see where it would be most efficient to add some new routines or activities that could strengthen GBI and ES in the long term.

- **“Animal-Aided Design” (PP6 – Ingolstadt, Germany):**
 - Animal-Aided Design (A-AD) is a methodology for the design of open spaces which combines landscape architecture and nature conservation. The basic idea of A-AD is to include the needs of wild species in the planning process, such that they are an integral part of the design. For A-AD, target and threatened species are chosen at the beginning of a project, and their requirements, i.e., their life cycles, are then set as boundary conditions and serve as an inspiration for the design.

 - The Animal-Aided Design tool is flexible and can be used in any biogeographical region of Europe, provided that planners have local biological and ecological knowledge.

These good practices, focusing on urban planning in relation to GBI, NBS and ES, will help NCA, together with Sud Region, to improve the policy instrument by:

- **Creating a better management strategy to set up GBI to restore ecological continuities**
- **Raising awareness of ES, both in terms of the preservation of biodiversity and the fight against climate change.**

To do so, NCA and Sud Region aim towards making the policy instrument evolve by integrating GBI strategies, NBS and ES in the land use and urban planning of the territories, with the double aim of fighting against the erosion of biodiversity and enabling the adaptation of urban and peri-urban areas to climate change.

2. Action

“Nature-Based Solutions in the Sud Provence-Côte d’Azur Region’s 2021-2027 ERDF Programme”

The action is two-fold:

- Step 1: Influencing the conception of the ERDF instrument
- Step 2: Implementation of the ERDF instrument

❖ Step 1: Influencing the conception of the new ERDF instrument (2021-2027)

NCA aims to use the lessons learnt from the Blue Green City project, via the partners’ good practices relating to urban planning in relation to GBI, NBS and ES, in order to help the Sud Region to amend the policy instrument and **integrate urban planning and the use of NBS to preserve biodiversity and fight against climate change into the new 2021-2027 ERDF.**

The new 2021-2027 ERDF programme was elaborated by taking into account the exchanges of experiences of the Blue Green City project. Consequently, the new operational programme proposes, in its Strategic Objective 2 called a “greener Europe”, to focus on the specific objective 2.4: “to promote adaptation to climate change, prevention of natural catastrophes, and resilience, by taking into account solutions based on ecosystem services”.

This specific objective includes the following actions, inspired by the exchanges of experiences of Blue Green City:

- (i) The restoration of ecosystems, and their regulating and attenuating functions in the event of climatic risks:
 - a. Restoration of key ecosystems: limiting soil sealing, streamlining riverbanks and beaches, revegetation.
 - b. Creation of ecosystems: humid zones, forests, etc.
 - c. Creation of blue and green infrastructure in urban settings: revegetation of building facades, rooftops, parks, man-made habitats, flood risk zones, etc.
- (ii) The restoration of terrestrial and aquatic ecological connectivity disrupted by physical obstacles and habitat fragmentation:
 - a. Restoration of ecological corridors (green, blue, turquoise, brown, black belts) and biodiversity reservoirs.
 - b. Increased transparency of infrastructure and other obstacles to the circulation and life cycles of species.
 - c. Reduction of usage pressure and other nuisances on species and their habitats.

Regular and ongoing exchanges are organised by the Blue Green City project with the departments of the Sud Region which are in charge of elaborating the new ERDF instrument.

This coordinated approach, which has started via the stakeholder group meetings organised within the Blue Green City project, and which will be finalised with the adoption of the present action plan, has enabled the stakeholders involved to start a thorough process aimed at integrating a new “Priority Axis 2: supporting a sustainable use of regional resources and ensuring an environmental and energy transition” and a “Specific Objective 2.4: supporting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and resilience in the face of nature catastrophes”.

An information meeting will be organised at the start of 2022 with all the stakeholders, in order to introduce the new 2021-2027 ERDF programme.

Indicator: Approval by the Sud Region of the new policy instrument (March 2022).

❖ **Step 2: Implementation of the new ERDF instrument (2021-2027)**

The focus on climate change adaptation and preservation of biodiversity will also be done via the implementation of the policy instrument, and notably Calls for Applications which will prioritise proposals using NBS and ES in urban planning, to tackle both the adaptation to climate change and the preservation of biodiversity.

The elaboration of the Calls for Applications of the ERDF will be coordinated by the Sud Region and prepared in partnership with future potential beneficiaries and key players.

The ERDF calls for applications regarding “resilient urban planning focusing on nature-based solutions”, will associate various departments of the Sud Region, based on their competencies, notably:

- ERDF department,
- Biodiversity, parks and rural territories department,
- Sea and coastline department,
- Water management and natural risks department,
- Planning and housing department.

For the definition and implementation of these calls, the Sud Region will request the participation of the Blue Green City project, via Nice Côte d’Azur Metropolis and its stakeholders, to bring its added value and the lessons learned from the Blue Green City project. In this regard, specific meetings will therefore be organised with the Sud Region and the stakeholders of the Blue Green City project in order to establish, for the calls for applications:

- the kind of actions to be funded,
- the kind of urban projects which would be relevant,
- the kind of beneficiaries who can apply for funding,
- the funding rates,
- the maximum duration of funded projects,
- the implementation and monitoring indicators for funded projects, which will be linked to the monitoring-evaluation system which will be implemented by the 2021-2027 ERDF programme,

- the calendar for the publication of the calls and the deadline for submission of applications.

At least two meetings will be organized in the first semester of 2022 with the services of the Sud Region and the stakeholders, in order to finalize the first call for applications regarding “Resilient Urban Planning focusing on Nature-Based Solutions”.

In order to meet the expectations of the Sud Region, but also of the territories and their stakeholders, a specific call for applications on “nature in urban settings / green and blue infrastructure and adaptation to climate change” will be launched. This first call will target urban territories and specific types of projects to be financed. In this respect, the exchange of experiences with the other partners of the Blue Green City project will be decisive in order to target the strategic issues in the most effective way (territories concerned, beneficiaries, types of projects).

This action proposed by the Blue Green City project will contribute to improving the implementation of the 2021-2027 ERDF programme, by closely associating all the key players likely to implement such a project. This methodology will ensure that the calls for application to be launched will correspond to the expectations of the key players. This in turn will enable the key players to submit solid applications, which will be more likely to be accepted in the selection phase, and which will be easier to implement in accordance with the ERDF programme’s expectations.

Indicator: Launch of the first call for applications on “nature in urban settings / blue and green infrastructure and adaptation to climate change” (December 2022).

3. Players involved

The stakeholder group has been conceived in order to contribute to capacity building and policy learning, by supporting the networking and exchange of experience. The stakeholders have been actively involved in the process of analyzing the current state of the policy instrument and are well-positioned to play an active role in the project and influence the policy instrument.

Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region (Sud Region)	Sud Region represents the fundamental part of the stakeholder group, as it is the National Contact Point of the operational programme, as well as the authority responsible for the policy instrument in question.
Regional Environmental Agency – Regional Biodiversity Agency (ARPE-ARB)	ARPE-ARB is a regional agency created to accompany territories in their ecological transition, through the preservation and restoration of biodiversity. It works mainly with local authorities, socio-professional organisations, private companies and research institutions, but it also aims to create links with associations, educational institutions and the general public.
Centre of Studies and Expertise on Risks, Environment, Mobility	CEREMA is a national study centre with a wide experience of taking nature into consideration both in urban planning on the one hand, and

and Planning (CEREMA)	for the adaptation of territories to climate change on the other hand. The technical expertise of CEREMA will be mobilised to finalise the types of actions that could be eligible under the future ERDF instrument.
National School of Architecture of Marseille (ENSAM)	Because of its teaching and research activities, ENSAM is an essential actor in the field of local urban planning and urban design. Its expertise has enabled a better understanding and awareness of the role of nature in urban planning, notably regarding the creation of “eco-neighbourhoods” to be financed by the future ERDF instrument.
FREDON Provence Alpes Côte d’Azur	FREDON conducted an important study on the vegetation present in the city of Aix-en-Provence, as well as in other towns of the region. It will therefore provide its expertise on issues relating to the management and awareness of trees in the urban setting.
International Office of Water (OiEau)	The Office International de l'Eau is an independent not-for-profit organisation, recognised as being of public utility by the French Government. Its principal aim is to develop skills for improving water and river management. Its main activities are providing vocational training for water utilities and civil servants (more than 6000 trainees per year), water information and documentation, management and support, facilitation of water stakeholders' networks (e.g. wetlands, elected representatives from municipalities), institutional support for water management (e.g. European twinning with organizations from neighbouring countries, support to Basin Organisations worldwide), water data management (e.g. coordination of SANDRE, the French water data standardisation and interoperability structure), permanent technical secretariat of INBO (over 170 members), a network of Mediterranean water communities.
French Office for Biodiversity (OFB)	This national organism coordinates a vast integrated LIFE project (the ARTISAN project) which focuses on taking into consideration nature-based solutions for the adaptation to climate change. The Blue Green City project is therefore able to lean on the OFB for a better understanding of the importance of nature-based solutions in the future regional ERDF instrument.
Foundation for the Research on Biodiversity (FRB)	FRB financed many studies throughout France relating to the development of biodiversity in urban settings as a response to the challenges presented by the adaptation to climate change. This expertise will be mobilised to refine the drafting of the regional ERDF instrument to ensure consistency between the climate change adaptation objectives and the preservation/development of biodiversity in the urban setting.

4. Timeframe

The planning of the Metropolis Nice Côte d'Azur's action started at the beginning of the Blue Green City project, with the stakeholder group involved in the analysis of the current state of the policy instrument and in the reflection on how to improve it.

The meetings will continue to be held virtually (by Webex or Microsoft Teams) if the COVID-19 pandemic does not allow face-to-face meetings to take place. Exchanges by email will continue throughout.

Thanks to this early start, it is expected that Step 1 of the action, "conception of the ERDF instrument", will be completed by March 2022, with the adoption of the new ERDF instrument.

An information meeting will be organised at the start of 2022 with all the stakeholders, in order to introduce the new 2021-2027 ERDF programme.

Step 2 of the action, "implementation of the ERDF instrument" is expected to take place between April 2022 and August 2022. From September 2022 to December 2022, it is expected that the implementation of the ERDF instrument will be enacted with the first calls for applications open under the new instrument.

At least two meetings will be organized in the first semester of 2022 with the services of the Sud Region and the stakeholders, in order to finalize the first call for applications regarding "Resilient Urban Planning focusing on Nature-Based Solutions".

Additional bilateral and multilateral meetings will be held virtually (by Webex or Microsoft Teams) if the COVID-19 pandemic does not allow face-to-face meetings to take place. Exchanges by email will continue throughout

5. Costs and funding

Indicative costs and funding sources:

- The costs are estimated at 18 000€, corresponding to the staff costs of 2 people working 10% during 12 months.
- All the staff time and meeting costs will be met by the Nice Cote d'Azur Metropolis / Euromed Cities Network annual budget.
- All the activities listed above will be funded from the Nice Cote d'Azur Metropolis / Euromed Cities Network existing budget, by integrating the work into existing practices.

Date: 08 02 2022

Signature: 

Réseau des Villes Euromed
Projet Européen Interreg Europe
Blue Green City

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____



About Blue Green City

Blue Green City (*Blue and Green Infrastructure for Sustainable Cities*) is a 3,5-year project, running from August 2019 to January 2023, funded by Interreg Europe. The overall objective of the project is to improve the policies that promote Green and Blue Infrastructure as an integral part of local/regional natural heritage preservation strategy. To achieve this objective, the project will increase the knowledge of ecosystem services and the value of Green and Blue Infrastructure, through interregional policy learning process, collaboration in finding common challenges posed by the adaptation to climate change and sharing of experiences and good practices.

To find more about Blue Green City, visit <https://www.interregeurope.eu/bluegreencity/>

Contacts:

Bernard MASSABO, Project Director
bernard.massabo@nicecotedazur.org
(+33) 4 89 98 19 00

Alison TORTI, Project Manager
alison.torti@nicecotedazur.org
(+33) 4 97 13 52 01

Follow the project on LinkedIn: @BlueGreenCity