



Planning for Nature in Cities: the NBFC Guidelines for Urban Nature Plans in Italy

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Recent mapping and analysis of urban greening plans adopted by provincial capital cities in Italy indicates that this relatively new planning instrument is still in the process of being defined and consolidated. As of January 2026, the survey had identified 17 approved plans, which means that just over 14% of the 119 provincial capitals in Italy, have adopted urban green plans, a relatively low but steadily increasing figure compared to the previous national survey conducted in December 2023. Notably, almost all mapped plans were approved within the last five years. This suggests that the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Italian Law 10/2013, and the Guidelines for urban green management developed in 2017 have played a key role in promoting the diffusion of this planning tool in the Italian context.

The analysis reveals significant heterogeneity in both form and content of the urban greening plans. Most of them operate as strategic instruments, while two (Cagliari and Bologna) are integrated into municipal urban plans and one (Avellino) combines a strategic framework with regulatory provisions. This diversity confirms that the value of urban greening plans lies in their flexibility and adaptability to local contexts, enabling each city to determine the most suitable approach for guiding urban greening policies and biodiversity-sensitive planning.

Within this evolving framework and in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the transition from urban green plans to urban nature plans is emerging as a key strategic shift. Based on a mapping exercise and engagement with local administrations, as well as expert interviews and fieldwork, the research has produced a guidelines document for Urban Nature Plans. The guidelines are intended to support local authorities and planning professionals in designing instruments that integrate, enhance, conserve and restore nature in urban areas. The guidelines are structured around three main phases — preparation, elaboration and implementation and monitoring — and also incorporate communication and public participation as cross-cutting components that are essential for effective governance and public engagement.