



**Involvement of business companies in activities in favour of biodiversity.**

**2021-23**



The Life UrbanGreeningPlans project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union.





# Purpose.

This simple guide has been created with the purpose of facilitate the relationship between protected areas and the local companies in order to support and enhance the business companies' actions in favour of the biodiversity, with the focus on the

increasing of natural capital. In particular, this "protocol" is designed to engage the companies which have financial resources available in their business budget for Corporate Social Responsibility actions.

# Corporate Social Responsibility.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. By practicing corporate social responsibility, companies can be conscious of the kind of impact they are having on all aspects of society, including economic, social, and environmental.

To engage in CSR means that, in the ordinary course of business, a company plans initiatives and actions which enhance society and the environment.



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Keep in mind!

A relevant part of the CSR activities is the communication in order to disseminate to clients, consumers and more in general, stakeholders, the virtuous actions of the company.

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Be carefull!

The risks behind the communication of CSR activities are "green washing", otherwise give a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company's behaviour or products are environmentally sound.



# Communication.

The communication by the protected areas represents a fundamental aspect to engage business companies. First of all, because if the Park has a strong communication outside it is recognizable, reliable, and it is positioned as a good partner to enforce the dissemination about the CSR activities of the company. Secondly, if the Park is well known at local level, the companies which operate on the territory can listening to the Park's activities and chose it for their CSR initiatives.



Following **some actions helpful to implement communication campaigns** aimed to involve business companies in CSR activities in peri-urban parks in favour of biodiversity:

- 1 Integrated communication plan** to organize topics to disseminate with constant and regular frequency through different digital channels.
- 2 Social Network strategy** - Design targeted campaigns diversified to each social network.
- 3 Fundraising campaigns** to promote the park projects and involve people (citizens and companies as well) to be part of their realization. It's also useful to measure:
  - Reliable and appeal of
  - ,ark actions;
  - The visitor's affection;
  - The quality of initiatives.
- 4 Networking, partnership and sponsorship** - Enforce the Park's network involving in the communication's activities partners and proximity stakeholders like: NGOs, Universities, theatres, cultural operators and companies.
- 5 Communication exchange** - Development of communication exchanges (or exchanges of goods) with other fitting networks, local press and local companies.
- 6 Communication materials** to promote initiatives dedicated to companies like brochure, flyers, web page dedicated, gadgets.



# Fundamentals of public actions.

All the initiatives realized by a protected area together companies must answer to the fundamentals that guide a public body like:

- transparency
- equal opportunities
- social inclusion
- global vision
- foresight (perspective)



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In order to satisfied the above requirements, a preliminary agreement (memorandum of understanding) between the protected area and the company is recommended.

The mile stones of the MoU should be the mutual commitments between the parties which define the ways to implement concrete actions that satisfied simultaneously:

- Fundamentals of public actions
- Environmental and social return
- Desiderata of companies
- Needs of protected area
- Avoid "green washing".

Here following some examples of **actions that protected areas can purpose to the companies:**

- collective plantation for company's employees with technical and operational staff;
- maintenance activities of green spaces of the protected area as irrigation, weeding, fountain/lake cleaning, removal of shelter from new plantation;
- horticulture activities;
- cleaning day with company's employees (abandoned waste);
- training in classroom to complete the plantation activities with courses on forest theory;
- education courses and workshops to contextualize the CSR activities in the actual frame of climate crisis.



**+ Communication and involvement of business companies in activities in peri-urban parks in favour of biodiversity**

# Benefits.

**Involve business companies in CSR activities in favour of biodiversity adopting a strategy and following goals and mile stones, it can lead to benefits for every player.**

## Park benefits

- Attracting private financial resources through new fundraising channels;
- Enforce the reputation of protected area;
- Get help to carry on the park's activities of reforestation and maintenance;
- Share the environmental vision to business actors.

## Company benefits

- Companies finds in the public body a reliable interlocutor that guarantees the success of forestation activities and the future maintenance of the plants.
- Companies can rely on technical experts in the environmental sector for all the CSR activities.
- Have the opportunity to realize team building sessions to foster the employees relationship.

## Natural ecosystems benefits

- The ecosystems inside the protected area increase in natural capital and its maintenance.
- The involvement of people in activities like plantation and cleaning of a natural public space help to get more respect of environment and nature.
- Purpose payment services aimed to care and respect the environment and nature represent the first step towards the culture and the people/companies predisposition to pay for ecosystem services.



# Constraints.

Companies need to make profits and the "green activities" are often use to do "Green washing".

To avoid green washing make sure of:

- The company's commitment on environmental and sustainable topics;
- The activity it isn't an isolated action but it should be a part of a wider sustainable path;
- Continuity over time of actions in favor of the environment.

The policy, timing, rhythm and bureaucracy of companies are often very far from the public entity world. The respective "core" are very different so it is important have a dedicated person who has capable to translate each needs and create a "win-win" bridge between of the two parties.