

National Final Report

Hungary

WP5 Activity 6: Reporting



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Introduction

GreenFormation collaborated with several local stakeholders to implement actions that enhance biodiversity in Wekerletelep (Wekerle estate). The aim was to encourage residents to take at least one nature-friendly, practical step -whether in private gardens, on balconies, or in communal green spaces- and to foster small-scale greening throughout the neighbourhood. To support these efforts, the partnership offered practical ideas, tools, expert guidance, and community events.

Wekerletelep, part of the XIX. district in Budapest is a unique suburb, with many green areas and a unique structure. Responding to Budapest's crowded tenements -and the discomfort of newcomers from villages who missed greenery and fresh air- architect József Fleischl, inspired by Howard's Garden City movement, proposed planned estates that the Wekerle government backed with a tender, prompting architects to design low-rise homes with spacious gardens and tree-lined avenues. From the very beginning, Wekerletelep was deliberately planned to support community life: the central square and its radiating streets were designed with the explicit aim of shaping social relations through the built and green environment. The small garden plots and shared green spaces were meant to encourage everyday gardening, time spent outdoors and encounters between neighbours, making gardens and community life inseparable elements of the estate's original concept.

While the area is full of spacious, green areas, huge old trees, and numerous private gardens, residents have started to notice the growing number of artificial grass, concrete, and paving stones in private gardens. In addition, a local project partner mentioned a mosquito problem. The area's assets, in addition to its existing green spaces, included a strong community identity and local networks that could support co-creation. Existing local organisations are interested in ecological and environmental topics and community development, providing a great opportunity to combine co-creation and biodiversity improvement. Therefore, our local case in the framework of the Co-Bio project focused on awareness-raising and educational activities, small-scale on-the-ground activities, and providing residents with materials (including bat houses) to support local wildlife.

Co-Creation process

a) Stakeholders

The collaboration started between GreenFormation (GF) and the **Transition Wekerle** Community Cooperative. Transition Wekerle is a member of the Hungarian Transition initiatives (a network called Small Communities in Transition) and the international Transition Towns movement. It aims to promote urban gardening, active citizenship, new ways of cooperation and solidarity, and to organise events to raise awareness of these topics. Their projects include improving the energy efficiency of old homes through insulation and collecting fruit and vegetable donations at the local market for poverty-

stricken families. Partners of these organisations previously collaborated on preparing the district's Climate Strategy. Therefore, when searching for a partner to co-create a local case (before the Co-Bio project started), we approached the founder of the Transition Wekerle organisation, Tracey Wheatley, who accepted our request to work on a biodiversity project in Wekerle. She was then a key person in the facilitation process and also helped localise and invite other stakeholders to our project.

One of them was the **Kiserdő Egyesület** (Smallforest Protection Association), which aims to protect a small urban forest neighbouring Wekerle and, furthermore, raise awareness about urban nature and its importance. Civils from this association greatly contributed to the co-creation process, and along with the founder of Transition Wekerle and GF, constituted the core team of the local initiative, participating in the co-design and co-implementation as well. This team discussed the ideas, organised the activities, contacted residents, and coordinated the implementations.

In addition to the core group of stakeholders, we reached out to other potential collaborators of the project. One of our planned activities was a series of presentations on different topics related to urban biodiversity. We were looking for a place to hold these presentations, and we reached out to the local **community centre** in Wekerle (Wekerlei Kultúrház és Könyvtár). They organise numerous presentations, workshops, activities, and exhibitions, primarily for children but also for all residents in Wekerle. One of their focuses is sustainability and environmental protection; therefore, they gladly provided the space for our presentations, and we also discussed potential planting activities in their garden.

Another main planned activity in our local case was on-the-ground implementation with tangible results. We were looking for partners -either private garden owners or public institutions with a garden- who were willing to transform their gardens and, in exchange, showcase the results to interested residents of Wekerle. One way of searching for participants was through a short survey on biodiversity in Wekerle (asking respondents about the current status of biodiversity in Wekerle, the main threatening factors to biodiversity, and actions that can mitigate these factors). For respondents who marked at the end of the survey that they were interested in this project, we sent an email describing the opportunity to transform their garden and asking why they would like to participate and to send a few pictures of the garden. Another way was to post a short description of this opportunity (similar to the email) in local Facebook groups. Unfortunately, we received only four applications. Two private garden owners, one primary school and one kindergarten applied, and the core team of the local case chose the two **private garden owners**. At a later stage of the project, when we had remaining budget, we could also offer support to the **primary school**.

Experts also contributed to the quality of the local initiative by presenting on their field of expertise (birds, bees, bats, nature-friendly gardening, etc.), and participating in the design of the transformation of the private gardens (permaculture expert). We contacted these experts either through existing private contacts or by approaching well-known, recognised experts or organisations in their field.

The recruitment of the participating stakeholders, therefore, included open calls, targeted invitations, and the utilisation of existing networks and relationships.

b) Implementation

Establishing the core co-creation team and developing the ideas

The co-creation process was designed to bring together local knowledge, professional expertise, and residents' everyday experiences to shape biodiversity-friendly actions in Wekerle jointly. Before implementation began, we hoped to secure a small plot of land next to a sports centre, but, unfortunately, due to lengthy bureaucratic processes in the municipality, we could not obtain it by the time the project started. This significantly shaped the ideas we developed, because we knew we could not transform a single larger space; instead, we needed to focus on several small-scale implementations. This provided an opportunity to develop more diverse ideas, but also generated additional administrative and management efforts.

The core team of the local case implementation was formed in September 2024. At a kick-off meeting, GreenFormation presented the aims of the Co-Bio project and the local case, the co-creation method, and the available budget. We then brainstormed preliminary ideas, which we fine-tuned later.

The team communicated regularly. We organised meetings (in person and online) when we needed to discuss several things, and we used a Messenger group chat to discuss and decide on more minor things. The team also discussed the responsible persons for each task. GF handled all administrative tasks, while the local partners communicated with residents and other stakeholders, leveraging existing relationships. We created a name for our project to be more attractive than using only the 'urban biodiversity' phrase. We named the project "Wekerle, naturally!" (Wekerle, természetesen!) and created an image to use when promoting our activities.

Involvement of other stakeholders

As mentioned before, the core team collaborated with several other stakeholders as well. We invited experts to provide deeper knowledge in specific topics and collaborated with stakeholders at the locations where the actual implementations occurred.

Presentations and guided tours

We provided presentations and guided tours to the interested residents of Wekerletelep. We organised four presentations on the following topics: 1) Wildlife in the city: Small garden, big opportunities, 2) Bird-Friendly Gardens – How Can We Help Our Feathered Friends? 3) Pollinators Are Our Friends, 4) Bats and other nocturnal animals and organised one closing event of the series, where we discussed what we have done so far and invited residents to share what they have learned, and what they are doing in their own gardens. We combined the presentation on bats with an evening walk to spot bats, but unfortunately, without success. However, one of the project's stakeholders organised another tour during the fall of 2025, demonstrating the project's sustainability.

We also organised a “Tree walk,” where we walked around Wekerletelep, and an expert shared his knowledge about the trees. Wekerletelep is characterised by streets planted with a single tree species along their entire length. For example, some streets are lined only with lindens, others with chestnuts, and others with plane trees, giving each street its own characteristic atmosphere. We also launched the “1 m² for Nature” initiative, providing residents with free seed packets containing pollinator-friendly flower mixes. The goal was to encourage the creation of mini wildflower meadows and build a visible network of small-scale urban habitats across Wekerletelep. We also provided bird and bat houses and bird food for the residents.

Involving children

We organised a drawing competition titled “Do Animals Live at Your Place?”, inviting children and young people from kindergarten to high school to reflect on animals in our urban environment creatively. We received many imaginative entries from 5 to 18-year-olds, offering unique perspectives on city wildlife and making the jury’s work quite challenging. At the Wekerle Community Centre, we held an award ceremony followed by a community fern planting in the garden, with most children attending together with parents and grandparents, showing how the initiative reached whole families.

Children also enthusiastically participated in the action to establish the three raised beds in their schoolyard. They actively prepared the soil and helped in the planting, asking questions about the plants, making the learning process both enjoyable and hands-on.

Discussions, planning sessions and workshops

Two schools reached out to us, wanting to transform their gardens into more nature- and climate-friendly spaces. In one of the schools, we held a planning workshop with a group of teenagers, and they planned and drew their ideal garden. We also created a box to encourage other students to submit their ideas. Unfortunately, as we reached the end of the school year, the teacher who had organised the session for us could not take the idea forward; therefore, we did not implement anything at this school.

In the other school, there was a bare schoolyard, with only sand and soil, and one teacher wanted to create a small green corner there. We discussed potential solutions and agreed on building raised beds with different plants. One of the core group members, who is also a professional garden planner, planned which plants would be suitable there, based on the microclimate and their potential appeal to pollinators and birds.

One of the main highlights of the local case implementation was the permaculture planning sessions for the two private garden-owning families. We invited an expert to coordinate and facilitate the planning sessions, along with a few interested residents who had experience with permaculture, so they could practice what they had learned. We had two sessions in each garden, and this was an opportunity to learn and experience -for some of us- a new way of gardening.

c) Developed solutions

As mentioned before, the main focus areas in our local case were raising awareness and implementing on-the-ground, small-scale, biodiversity-friendly actions. We used the winter and early springtime to organise the presentations and develop the idea of the drawing competition, and also to choose the spaces (two private gardens and a schoolyard), in addition to the community centre's garden, where we will mainly implement plantings. We used the available budget mainly for plants, soil and tools, bird and bat houses, prizes for drawing competition winners and expert fees. We developed the following solutions to support urban biodiversity in Wekerletelep.

- **Events:** We organised thematic presentations and guided tours to raise awareness
- **Supporting two private gardens:** We organised planning sessions at each garden led by a permaculture expert and supported them with plants and other tools (water tank or soil). Even a small pond was created in one of the gardens
- **Collaboration with a school:** We built three raised beds in one schoolyard and filled them with different types of plants
- **Collaboration with the community centre:** holding the events and planting a few plants in their garden.
- **Drawing competition for children:** We organised a drawing competition to raise awareness among children and their families
- **Small gifts:** We provided bird and bat houses and seeds to residents

Key outcomes and lessons learned

The local case combined awareness-raising, education and hands-on implementation, resulting in visible small-scale improvements and stronger engagement with urban biodiversity in Wekerletelep.

Environmental impact

The “1 m² for Nature” initiative, bird and bat houses, and seed packs offered simple, practical entry points for action at home. A particular biodiversity highlight was the creation of a small pond in one of the private gardens, which serves as an excellent nature-based solution by attracting wildlife and contributing to a cooler microclimate. The planning and planting activities in the two private gardens, the schoolyard and the community centre created concrete examples of nature-friendly solutions that other residents can visit, observe and learn from.

Social impact

The thematic presentations and guided walks helped residents look at familiar places through a new, nature-focused lens. The drawing competition and award event successfully reached children and their families, widening the project’s impact beyond those who would normally attend biodiversity-themed talks or workshops. By involving

children, parents and grandparents together, the initiative not only raised awareness of urban wildlife but also showed that biodiversity can be a shared family topic, strengthening intergenerational dialogue around nature in the city. The competition raised awareness of urban biodiversity from a young age and supported the wider Co-Bio programme's goal of promoting nature-friendly practices and community engagement in urban settings.

Challenges

At the same time, several challenges emerged, many of them linked to institutional and organisational frameworks. Securing permissions for a larger, public plot next to the sports centre proved difficult due to lengthy municipal procedures, while at one of the schools, the end of the school year and workload pressures meant that a jointly developed garden plan could not proceed to implementation. Working across several different locations (two private gardens, a schoolyard and the community centre) also required more coordination, time and management effort than focusing on a single site. These examples highlight that institutional constraints and administrative burdens can limit what can be achieved within a given timeframe, even when motivation and good ideas are present.

Strengths and lessons learned

These experiences led to important lessons. Interactive and experience-based activities, such as the guided walks, the bat evening and especially the “Open Garden” event, attracted more people than traditional presentations alone and created strong learning moments by showing real-life examples. The first “Open Garden” session, where we showcased one of the private gardens with the newly created pond, generated high interest; -however, the small garden could host only 18 people-, underlining how much residents value seeing concrete, local solutions in practice. Working with an existing, trusted local core team (Transition Wekerle and Kiserdő Egyesület) proved to be a major strength: local stakeholders contributed immensely with their knowledge of the area, established networks and ongoing engagement. New relationships and partnerships also developed during the project. One private garden owner continues to collaborate closely with core members, and Transition Wekerle has established a new partnership to transform the area around the local market into a greener, more nature-friendly space.

Suggestions

Looking ahead, several stakeholders – especially one of the private garden owners – highlighted that it would have been very helpful at the beginning of the project to visit similar gardens and see nature-friendly solutions already in place. This suggests that future initiatives should, where possible, start with exploring comparable cases and best practices, giving participants a clearer idea of what is achievable in their own context. The emerging “Open Garden” initiative, now continued by members of the Kiserdő Association, directly responds to this need: by regularly showcasing biodiversity-friendly gardens in Wekerletelep, it creates a living library of examples that future projects and residents can learn from. Overall, the Hungarian local case suggests that small,

concrete, co-created actions -such as transforming a few gardens, adding raised beds to a bare schoolyard, creating a pond or opening private gardens to visitors- can meaningfully complement more strategic municipal efforts and build local capacity and confidence to continue similar initiatives beyond the lifetime of the Co-Bio project.

Conclusion

The Hungarian local case in Wekerletelep demonstrated how co-created, small-scale actions can bring urban biodiversity into residents' everyday lives in a concrete way. Through talks, walks, the drawing competition, on-the-ground plantings and the creation of a small pond, biodiversity became more visible and relatable. These interventions contributed to more diverse habitats, additional food and shelter for urban wildlife, and small improvements in the local microclimate.

A key strength of the case was the co-creation process itself: GreenFormation, Transition Wekerle, and Kiserdő Association jointly shaped ideas, set priorities, and implemented concrete actions together with residents and children. This collaboration was built on existing trust, local knowledge and neighbourhood networks, ensuring that activities were rooted in real needs and had local ownership from the start. It also laid the groundwork for continuation beyond the project, such as the Open Garden initiative and new partnerships to green the area around the local market.

At the same time, institutional and administrative constraints limited what could be implemented in some locations, underlining the need for flexibility, realistic planning and a willingness to adjust ambitions when circumstances change. Working across several sites also showed that more locations mean richer examples, but also higher coordination and management efforts. Taken together, these experiences suggest that future initiatives should invest early in strong local partnerships, allow time for administrative processes and prioritise experiential, co-created activities that residents can see, visit and learn from in their own neighbourhood.

Additional materials (optional)



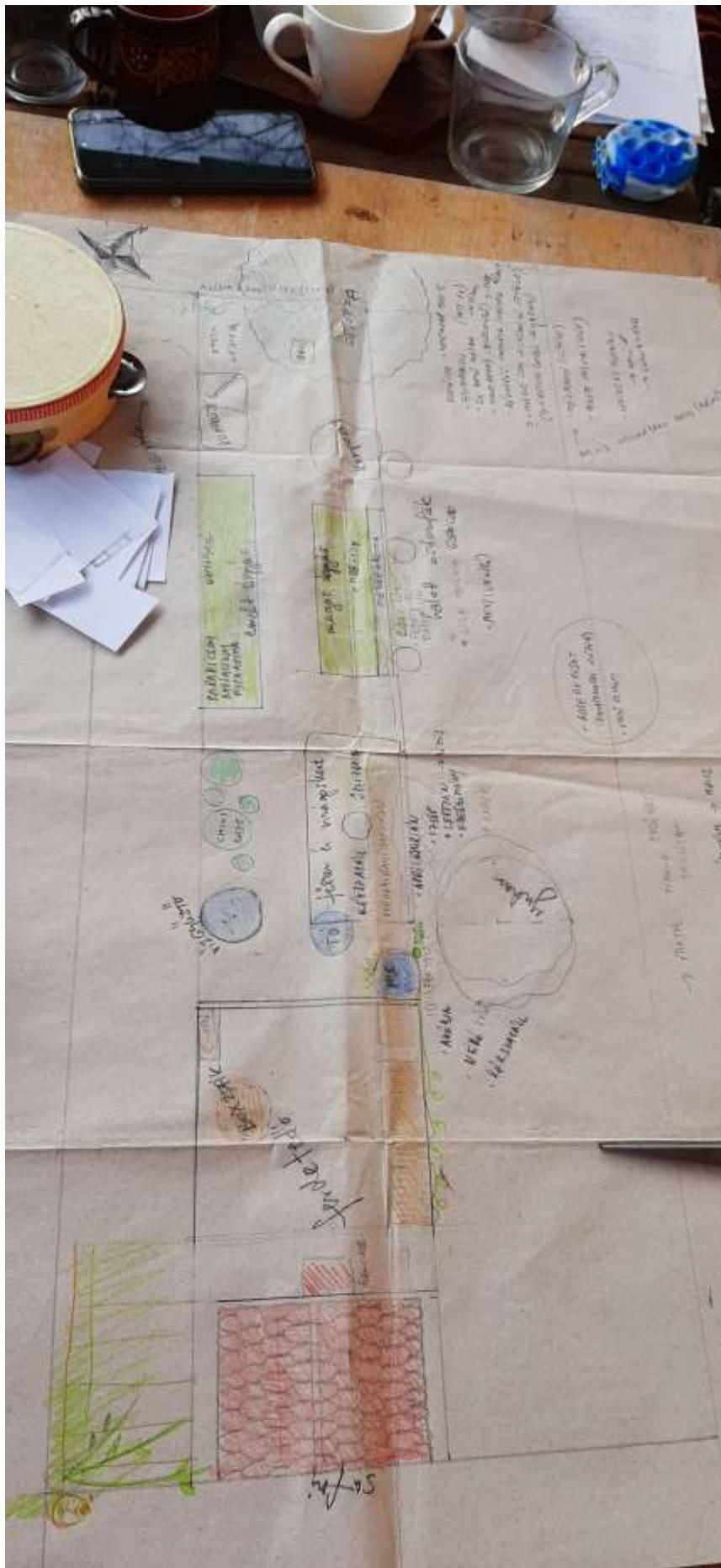




















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