EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE

EUI CAPACITY BUILDING EVENT

Integrating horizontal principles into urban development projects

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SPEAKER INFORMATION

THERESA FINK

Achieved degree of education:	**Master of Architecture**
Institution and official title within the organization:	AIT Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH Business Manager for Digital Resilient Cities & Regions
Short biography:	Theresa Fink, MSc is a Business Manager in the field of digital resilient cities and regions at the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology within the Centre for Energy. She works at the interface of research and industry, collaborating with cities and real-estate developers to advance decarbonization, promote climate change adaptation, and foster the development of resilient and sustainable urban districts. Her core expertise lies in the field of sustainable urban analysis and planning methods and extends to the interactive co-creation and visualization of urban models.
Challenge explanation:	In the workshop, Katarina Pogačnik and Nataša Beltran will introduce the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle as a key element of sustainable urban project planning. Theresa Fink will contribute with case-studies that show, how simulations can support the fact-based decision making and align with the DNSH principle. Microclimate simulations are an important tool for screening project impacts and supporting evidence-based decisions. I will present the FFG-funded project GreenDeal4Real, in which AIT and its partners - project developers, landscape architects, the City of Vienna, and greening companies - simulated the effects of different green structures in a real urban setting. The project developed practical, scientifically grounded guidance to consider microclimatic effects early in planning and mitigate negative impacts of additional sealed surfaces through targeted greening. The goal is to ensure that urban projects strengthen climate resilience without causing unintended harm.

https://www.ait.ac.at/en/research-topics/climate-resilient-urban-pathways/projects/greendeal4real

The project **Tune Our Block**, funded through the JPI Urban Europe Urban Accessibility and Connectivity Programme with support from FFG, was led by TU Wien. In the project, AIT examined the impact of transformations of street spaces - specifically in Vienna's 9th district - together with citizens using interactive urban models. The insights gained through simulations allow effects to be assessed in early planning phases and support sustainable implementation.
https://www.ait.ac.at/en/research-topics/drc/projects/tune-our-block

GORANKA GRGIĆ

Achieved degree of education:	**Master degree in Economics**
Institution and official title within the organization:	City of Varaždin, Department for Economic Affairs Head of Section for ITI Mechanism (IB)
Short biography:	Professional knowledge with over 10 years of experience related to coordination and participation in drafting strategic documents for the City of Varaždin. Extensive experience in area of economic policy, development and preparation and implementation of projects – co-financed by EU and other funds. Proactive participation as the Project Coordinator for diverse projects in area of environment, entrepreneurship, energy efficiency, urban policies and participation (Interreg Europe, Interreg Central Europe, URBACT, ERDF, EFC). Excellent organizational, problem solving and communicational skills, highly adaptable, problem-solver and cross-functional leader.
Challenge explanation:	On the 18th of August 2024, the Nature Restoration Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 (in Croatia) entered into force. The aim of Nature Restoration Regulation is significantly restoring ecosystems in the European Union. The Nature Restoration Regulation sets out specific requirements for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in different types of ecosystems, including agricultural, forest and urban ecosystems. In line with the objectives set by the Regulation, we can proudly say that activities are currently underway in the area of the City of Varaždin within the framework of several projects, which include, among others, ecosystem restoration activities in the Drava River area. These activities are carried out through implementation of project "DRAVA LIFE – Integrated River Management" (restoration of freshwater ecosystems), LIFERESTORE FOR MDD (removal of invasive plant species) and InterACT Green (restoration of forest ecosystems), which will be briefly presented. The City of Varaždin is the Lead Partner for the InterACT Green project, which was approved by the European Urban

Initiative. This project facilitates the site's complex management with a digital platform to connect citizens, city decision-makers and experts.

There are several challenges addressed as part of the InterACT Green project. Despite its enormous natural and recreational potential, today the Drava Forest Park is a neglected, underused space with limited infrastructure utilization, in need of forest regeneration processes and infrastructure revitalisation. To address these issues, InterACT Green's objectives include the development of a digital management platform to enhance interdisciplinary collaboration, the regeneration of physical infrastructure aligned with New European Bauhaus values, and targeted forest revitalization activities to restore the ecosystem sustainably. By integrating digital innovation, physical infrastructure upgrades, and community engagement, InterACT Green aims to transform the Drava Forest Park into a vibrant, sustainable urban green space of high quality, inclusive, and safe public spaces.

The area along the Drava River, which is located within the administrative borders of the City of Varaždin, is a multiple protected natural area (in the national categories of park-forest protection and regional park). It is also part of the European ecological network Natura 2000 (and as such is significant for the conservation of numerous species and habitats), and finally part of the wider internationally protected area of the UNESCO Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve. Further, it can serve as a model example of an area in which, through sustainable forms of management and the implementation of activities within the framework of the previously mentioned projects, efforts are made to achieve (among other things) the goals set out in the Nature Restoration Regulation.

ARIANNA GUERRINI

Achieved degree of education:	**Building Engineering-Architecture and a Master in Historical BIM for Cultural Heritage Preservation**
Institution and official title within the organization:	Municipality of Bologna Technical-specialist consultant
Short biography:	Arianna Guerrini is a building engineer and architect with an integrated background in architecture, specializing in urban regeneration, environmental sustainability, and the design of public spaces. She holds a degree in Building Engineering-Architecture from the University of Bologna, a Master's in Historical BIM for Cultural Heritage Preservation from the University of Padua, and an advanced training certificate in Environmental Accessibility from Roma Tre University. Over the years, she has collaborated with public authorities and design studios across Emilia-Romagna, gaining extensive experience in integrated design, technical coordination, and the management of complex urban-scale projects. Her professional activity bridges the public and private sectors, focusing on urban redevelopment, infrastructure, public spaces, and green interventions. Since 2025, she has served as a technical-specialist consultant for the Municipality of Bologna within the *TALEA – Green Cells Leading the Green Transition* project, funded by the European Urban Initiative. Her role includes technical support for urban space planning and design, data and partnership management, and the communication and drafting of project reports at the European level. Arianna's professional vision is guided by principles of architectural quality, inclusion, and universal accessibility, promoting an interdisciplinary approach that integrates technological innovation (BIM, GIS) and environmental sustainability. She is a member of CERPA Italia Onlus, a European research centre on accessibility, and regularly takes part in training and European initiatives on urban regeneration and inclusive design.

Challenge explanation:	The TALEA – Green Cells Leading the Green Transition project, launched in Bologna, addresses the urgent challenges of rising temperatures and the increasing frequency of urban heat islands and heatwaves. In a city where climate stress particularly affects vulnerable populations, TALEA redefines urban resilience through an integrated approach that combines nature, technology, and citizen participation. At the core of the project are the TALEA Green Cells (TGCs) — modular, replicable "green cells" designed to improve the urban microclimate, mitigate heat island effects, and foster social interaction. Each TGC integrates nature-based solutions (such as shaded areas, permeable surfaces, widespread greenery, and natural cooling systems) with technological innovations, including environmental monitoring sensors, climate data collection, and citizen-accessible digital platforms. Through these tools, citizens become active co-creators of a more resilient and inclusive city, contributing their observations and data to help build healthier, more liveable urban environments.