



# Ecological Development through farming for enhancing the urban ENvironment

## Newsletter no. 1

Welcome to the first edition of the EDEN Newsletter!

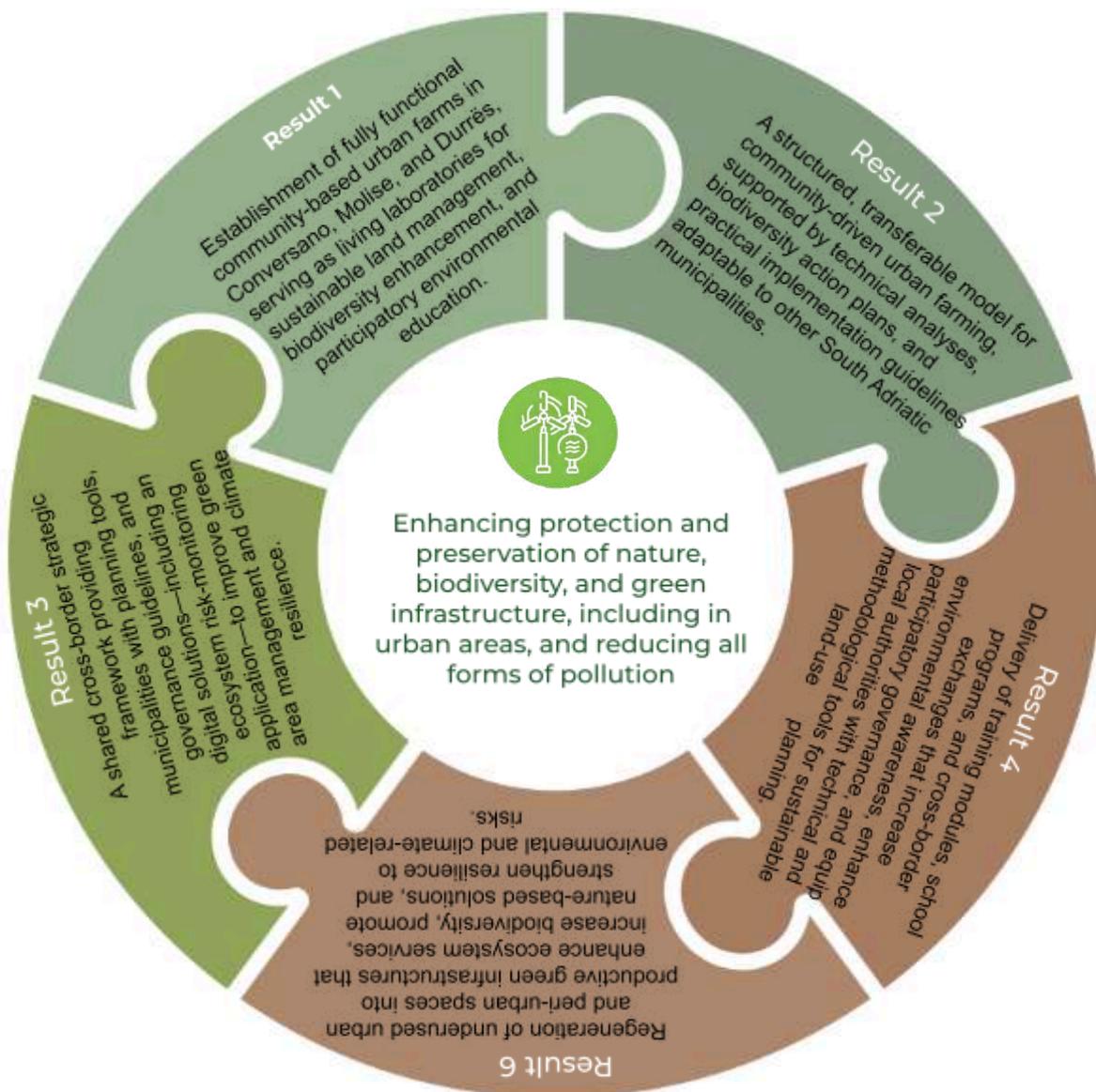
The **EDEN** project addresses key environmental challenges in the South Adriatic region, focusing on sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and nature protection. Rapid urbanization has led to habitat degradation and biodiversity loss, with green spaces declining and local flora and fauna under threat from climate change and limited ecological initiatives. A core issue is the low level of public involvement in environmental protection.

To counter these challenges, EDEN implements pilot actions that promote green spaces and support native ecosystems. The project fosters community participation, environmental education, and the development of environmentally responsible local cultures. It targets various stakeholders, including citizens, interest groups, schools, research centers, and local authorities. EDEN's transnational approach recognizes that environmental issues such as pollution and biodiversity loss transcend borders, requiring collective solutions. The project introduces innovative methods by integrating citizen engagement and structured educational activities, moving beyond basic awareness campaigns to empower communities for sustainable practices.

the sole responsibility of the Municipality of Conversano and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme Authorities.

## What to expect from EDEN?

Discover the key results that will guide our work, providing concrete benefits....



## INFORMATION



**Duration :**  
July 1st, 2025 -  
January 1st, 2028



**Total budget**  
€895,023.47



**EU funding**  
€733,290.44

## Our progress so far

(July 2025 – January 2026)

Over the past six months, the EDEN project has made significant strides toward strengthening sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation across the South Adriatic region.

### **Activation of Pilot Sites**

All three pilot municipalities — Conversano, Molise, and Durrës — have initiated preparatory activities for establishing community-based urban farms. Site assessments, environmental analyses, and stakeholder consultations have been completed, laying the groundwork for implementation in 2026.

### **Technical Planning & Biodiversity Design**

Detailed technical analyses and biodiversity enhancement plans have been developed for each pilot area. These plans incorporate nature-based solutions that aim to improve ecosystem services, increase green coverage, and enhance climate resilience.

### **Community Engagement & Co-Design**

Local workshops and stakeholder meetings were organized to involve citizens, students, NGOs, and municipal representatives in the co-design of the urban farms. This participatory approach ensures that the pilot sites reflect local needs and foster long-term community stewardship.

### **Capacity Building & Education**

Training modules for municipal staff and educational activities for schools have been designed and piloted. These initiatives promote environmental awareness and provide practical tools for sustainable land-use management.

### **Cross-Border Collaboration**

Partners from Italy and Albania strengthened cooperation through exchange meetings and joint planning sessions, ensuring alignment on the EDEN Urban Farms Strategy and preparing the foundation for shared digital tools, including the ecosystem risk-monitoring application.



## Kick-off meeting – Monterudini, Italy

**EDEN's partners gathered in Monteroduni, Italy, on 6–7 November 2025 for the project's Kick-off Meeting.**

The meeting marked the official launch of the **EDEN Project** (*Ecological Development through Farming for Enhancing the Urban Environment*) under the **Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme 2021–2027**.

Hosted by **GAL Molise Rurale**, the event brought together all project partners to align on objectives, work packages, and implementation strategies.

The Municipality of Conversano, as Lead Partner (LP), introduced the meeting by emphasizing teamwork, effective coordination, and compliance with administrative and financial procedures. The LP also presented the overall structure of the project, its strategic goals, and expected outcomes. EDEN aims to promote urban biodiversity and sustainable farming by establishing three pilot urban farms—in Conversano, Molise, and Durrës—supported by education, community involvement, and green innovation.



Each project partner presented their role and contributions:

- Municipality of Conversano leads the project and is in charge of WP2, focusing on pilot implementation and overall coordination.
- Fondazione Orto Botanico del Salento (PP2) brings expertise in biodiversity planning and will coordinate WP3 activities, including the Transnational Urban Farming School.
- Local Community Stara Varoš – Municipality of Nikšić (PP4) leads WP1, developing a unified Urban Space Analysis framework, with all partners expected to complete local analyses by February 2026.
- Association Udhetim i Lire – Free to Travel (PP3), also representing Municipality of Durrës (PP5), highlighted communication strengths and Durrës' involvement in pilot activities and awareness campaigns.
- GAL Molise Rurale (PP6), the host of the meeting, will lead the urban farm implementation in Molise and organize key transnational events.

A comprehensive session on financial management clarified Interreg eligibility rules, budget categories, reporting via the JEMS system, and audit trail requirements. The LP remains the main contact point with the Joint Secretariat (JS) and Managing Authority (MA) and must be included in all official communication.

Regarding communication, Free to Travel and the Municipality of Durrës presented the strategy for EDEN's visual identity and outreach, stressing the importance of social media, local visibility, and partner alignment with Interreg communication standards. Partners were reminded to appoint Communication Managers.

In terms of project governance, the Project Management Unit (PMU) and Steering Committee were formally established, with unanimous approval from all partners. These bodies will oversee coordination, monitoring, and strategic decisions throughout the project lifecycle.

The second day featured a study visit to the Parco dell'Olivo di Venafro, a Mediterranean protected area rich in olive biodiversity. The visit served as an inspirational model for EDEN's goals—showcasing how sustainable farming, biodiversity, and cultural heritage can drive local development and community connection.

Overall, the kick-off meeting successfully set the foundation for cooperation, clarified roles and expectations, and reinforced a shared commitment to the green transition and sustainable urban farming in the South Adriatic region.

## EDEN Partnership

The consortium brings together 6 partners from Italy, Albania, Montenegro joining forces to advance .....

### Lead Partner: Municipality of Conversano (Italy)



Municipality of Conversano  
The Municipality of Conversano (MoC), with around 26,144 residents, is located in the Puglia Region on the southern Murge hills. It manages the Regional Natural Reserve

“Lakes of Conversano and Gravina Monsignore,” a 348-hectare area with Mediterranean wetlands, oak forests, and gorges. Deeply committed to environmental protection, MoC runs initiatives like the PAR.E.TE. project to preserve its natural heritage. Its Area 9 team collaborates with local groups and NGOs on sustainability. MoC also has experience managing EU and national projects, showcasing its ability to build partnerships and lead environmental development efforts.

### Partner 2: Botanical Garden of Salento (Italy)



ORTO BOTANICO DEL SALENTO  
FONDAZIONE PER LA GESTIONE DELL'ORTO BOTANICO UNIVERSITARIO

The Botanical Garden of Salento Foundation (OBS) is a public

foundation promoting cultural, educational,

research, and environmental activities, focusing on plant biodiversity conservation. Located in Lecce, it spans 13 hectares and includes areas for horticultural experiments. It supports eco-compatible initiatives and offers space for new projects.

### Partner 3: Udhetim i Lire – Liberi di viaggiare (Albania)



Uil-LdV brings strong experience to the project, especially through our work in the Erasmus+ project "Supporting Young People's Eco-Work Journey." This

highlighted the need for knowledge in the new field of Urban Farming for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development in Albania.

We have delivered training and capacity-building programs for local farmers, and we are committed to preserving traditional culinary heritage and food knowledge.

Our team will provide education and support for local communities to implement urban farming and biodiversity practices. We will also carry out ongoing research to adapt best practices to the Albanian context.

With experienced project management and a commitment to sustainability, Uil-LdV is well-equipped to contribute to the success and long-term impact of the project.

**Partner 4: Local community Stara Varos, Municipality of Niksic (MNE)**



The Municipality of MZ SV focuses on projects that benefit the local population and environment, including infrastructure improvements,

energy-efficient lighting, and green initiatives. It also supports cultural and sports events and cooperates with national and international partners.

In the EDEN project, MZ SV will involve both technical and administrative staff, including residents of urban complexes with expertise in agronomy, horticulture, architecture, and energy. Their knowledge and experience with EU projects will contribute to sustainable community development.

**Partner 5: Municipality of Durres (Albania)**



**Municipality of Durres** is Albania's second largest municipality, with over 113,000 residents. The Municipality is actively engaged in

environmental protection, green energy, and sustainable development. It has experience as a partner in various EU-funded projects in areas such as sustainable tourism, mobility, energy efficiency, and social inclusion. With dedicated staff and internal expertise, Durrës Municipality has the full capacity to manage EU-funded initiatives, including project management, administration, and communication activities.

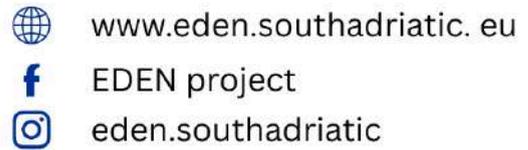
**Partner 6: GAL MOLISE RURALE scarl (Italy)**



G.A.L. Molise Rurale scarl is a local development agency in the province of Isernia, made up of 78 public and private members. Its strategy focuses on innovation and development in local supply chains. Current projects support digitalization in rural businesses, networking among local actors, and environmental biomonitoring using bees. These initiatives aim to boost innovation, training, and sustainable growth for SMEs. The team includes experts in finance, project management, communication, and administration.



## What's next? *Stay connected with EDEN!*



*The project is co-funded by the European Union through the IPA South Adriatic Programme.*