

(Embargoed until 10 am CET 22 May 2018)

Trees, bats and birds for cooler cities: the Bern Convention launches #NotAlone, a campaign to raise awareness on how biodiversity can help us against climate change

- To celebrate the 25th International Day for Biological Diversity on May 22, the Bern Convention launches the campaign “Not alone”.
- The campaign focuses on cities which, due to climate change, are becoming heat islands. It shows the role that different species of animals and plants can play to cool them down.

Strasbourg, 22 May 2018.- We often see animals and plants as victims of climate change, as they are rapidly decreasing due to the devastating effects that it has on different ecosystems. Interestingly, research shows that some species can help us fight back and soothe many of the effects of global warming. They can help us prevent our cities from becoming **urban heat islands**, the zones of higher temperatures that cities have become due to materials used in construction and other consequences of our modern lifestyle. This has more effects than just high, unbearable temperatures. The decrease in air quality, the change in precipitation periods or the proliferation of invasive species are some of the side-effects of urban heat islands. To give visibility to this problem, and with the occasion of the **International Day for Biological Diversity**, the Bern Convention presents “Not alone”, a creative campaign to raise awareness among the public about how biodiversity can help us diminish the effects of urban heat islands.

Although the rising effects of climate change are pushing biodiversity away from our urban centres, leaving a sensation of abandonment, this doesn't have to be the case. #NotAlone reminds us of that **we are not alone in this fight**. That we can bring back biodiversity to our cities, helping us lower their temperature, clean our air and making our homes more welcoming.

Through a two-minute animation video, a website, and using the hashtag #NotAlone in social media, this digital campaign presents different species that can help cool down our cities, making them cleaner and healthier. Growing plants in **roof gardens** can help us better isolate our homes, reducing both the heat emitted by air conditioners and the carbon footprint that hides behind our electricity bills. **Urban forests** and trees on streets not only help us clean pollution, they provide shade and, with it, a decrease in temperature. **Bats and hedgehogs** can help regulate the population of mosquitoes in hot summer nights, providing us relief, and keeping us safe from the diseases they might carry. Some of the campaign's species, like the European hedgehog, the Barn swallow or the Soprano pipistrelle bat, are protected under the [Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats](#). The full list of the campaign's selected species and examples of cities that have re-incorporated biodiversity can be found at www.not-alone.eu.

Contact

The Bern Convention:

Iva Obretenova iva.obretenova@coe.int

Scienseed (agency developing the campaign)

press@scienseed.com

Additional information to editors

Graphic material of the campaign

Motion graphics: <https://youtu.be/DMdK9RdTLgo>

GIFs: https://giphy.com/channel/not_alone

Facebook banner:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1iAyTe8JFEFdbaxjJx30ACzb5MjDzD_Yd

Website: <https://www.not-alone.eu>

More information on heat-islands

Urban Heat Islands are caused by modification of urban surfaces, which affects the amount of heat retained by cities. They rise the temperatures (nights are warmer in cities than in rural areas) and decrease the air quality by increasing the production of pollutants such as ozone.

This process also affects the water quality as warmer waters flow into area streams and put stress on their ecosystems, and increases the length of growing seasons, affecting the sprouting of local flora. They reduce the number of species and thus, diversity. They are also home to numerous flora and fauna introduced from warmer parts of the world; these invasive species, such as mosquitoes, may influence disease transmission.

Recent examples of biodiversity used against heat-islands

Bosco Verticale, Milan (Italy)

A pair of residential towers in the Porta Nuova district of Milan. They have a height of 111 metres and 76 metres. They contain more than 900 trees distributed on 8,900 square metres of terraces.

<https://www.stefanoberarchiteti.net/project/bosco-verticale/>

'Princess Gardens', Berlin (Germany)

Nomadic Green launched Princess gardens as a pilot project in the summer of 2009 at Moritzplatz in Berlin Kreuzberg, it is a site which had been a wasteland for over half a century. Along with friends, activists and neighbours, the group cleared away rubbish, built transportable organic vegetable plots and reaped the first fruits of their labour.

<http://prinzessinnengarten.net/about/>

Green roofs, Hamburg (Germany)

The soon-to-be-constructed gardens on the St. Pauli Bunker are only the latest effort in a long list of ambitious green roof projects in Hamburg.

<https://www.hamburg.com/green/green-roofs/>

Bat nests to control mosquito populations, Barcelona (Spain)

Barcelona City Council installed nesting towers for bats around cultivation patches and green areas in the city. This pioneering measure is aimed at controlling groups of flying insects in the city's green spaces. The nesting towers should facilitate the presence of bats at different cultivation areas and the creation of bat colonies.

https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/en/combating-mosquitoes-with-bats_293440.html



The Bern Convention

The Bern Convention is the European treaty for the conservation of wild species and habitats on the continent. For more than 30 years the Convention has contributed to the sustainable development of life on our planet. It was signed under the auspices of the Council of Europe in 1979, and has since been ratified by 50 countries and the European Union itself. One of the main lines of action of the Convention is to promote education and raise awareness concerning the need to conserve species of wild flora and fauna and their habitats. To carry out this campaign they have relied on [Scienseed](#), a science communication agency based in Madrid (Spain).

Video of the Bern convention: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVpN2_u7gms