



FREE3

Empowering Europe's Cities to Build **Greener, Healthier** and Climate-Resilient Urban Forests



BACKGROUND

Where FREE3 comes from



FREE3 is the continuation of COST Action **Urban Tree Guard (UB3GUARD)**, a four-year, EU-funded, interdisciplinary research and innovation network.

GRANT PERIOD 1 Nov 2025 to 31 Oct 2026

APPROACH Through targeted surveys, focus group meetings and a training school, we assess the stakeholder needs

GOAL Delivering a practical, easy-to-use QGIS plugin

OUR MISSION

What FREE3 sets out to do

1

Strengthen collaboration between research, municipalities and practitioners

2

QGIS plugin: a tool that analyses municipalities' urban tree data to assess pest risk. It imports and harmonises inventory data, screens trees against the FREE3 pest-host database and maps potential risks on a red, yellow and green scale for major host, host and no known risk

3

Shiny App: works alongside the QGIS plugin with pest-host summaries. All visualisations and analyses can be downloaded as a single report, and it supports 10-20-30 rule diversity checks

4

Enable data sharing and co-creation across Europe

5

Build long-term capacity for applied, science-based urban forestry

THE PEOPLE

A Europe-wide community

50 interested contributors

18 countries across Europe

Research, municipalities and practice, with a balance of academic, technical and applied expertise.

Forest sciences

Urban forestry

Entomology

Social sciences

Biology

Pathology

STRUCTURE

Six work packages

WP1**Coordination and
management****WP2****Stakeholder
engagement and
needs assessment****WP3****Platform and tool
development****WP4****Pilot testing and
validation****WP5****Training and capacity
building****WP6****Communication and
dissemination**

THE METHOD

Why a focus group?

PURPOSE

To understand the "**why**" behind urban tree management, rather than just the "what".

COMPOSITION

Participants who share common ground: urban tree management, green infrastructure, parks, environment, climate adaptation and planning.

PROCESS

A guided conversation built around key questions.

OUTCOME

Actionable insights to help develop the **FREE3 open-source platform**, with modules for tree inventory analysis, risk assessment and decision support.

WP2 • KEY INTERESTS

What we explore with municipalities

01 Current practices

How are urban trees and green spaces planned, managed and maintained, and how effective are those plans in practice?

02 Data & tools

Which data, maps or tools support decisions today, how reliable are they, and what is still missing?

03 Key challenges

What technical, financial, institutional or social constraints stand in the way?

04 Future needs

Which support, resources or collaborations would help municipalities most in their daily work?

NEXT STEPS

- ✓ A summary of the discussion is shared with participants
- ✓ A written report feeds into the next work package
- ✓ The insights lay the foundation for tool development

Together for the future of our urban trees.



FREE3

 **cost**
EUROPEAN COOPERATION
IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY