

(26)

Guimarães 26

**Volume 2
May/ Aug '26**

European Green Capital



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European Green Capital

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May

Landscape Forum	wed 6–9
Spring Forward Festival	wed 6–9
Eco-Digithon	fri 8–10
International Conference on Sustainability in Sport	thu 14
Final Session of the Eco Parliament	fri 15
Walk for Health	sun 17
Arnaldo Sampaio Medical Residency Conference	tue 26–27

June

Green Week	thu 4–7
European Urban Resilience Forum (EURESFO)	wed 17–19
CIVITAS Summer Course 2026	mon 29–30
21 st OpenFOAM Workshop	tue 30–3

July

CIVITAS Summer Course 2026	wed 1–2
National Meeting of Casa das Ciências	tue 7–9
Extremo Festival	sat 18

**Community events
on the following pages**

Community Proposals Programme

May/ Aug '26

May		
Trail Ave Riverside CVE2026	Taipas Park	fri 1
Solidarity PR4 Walk	PR4 Guardizela	fri 1
5th Vintage Bicycle Ride	Streets of Guimarães	sun 3
Walk Around the Earth	Streets of Guimarães	wed 6
Spring Market	EB1/JI Monte	fri 8
Thermos: Literary Gatherings	Banhos Velhos	fri 8–9
Safer Green Steps	Selho Park	sat 9
Pollinators Hotel	Selho Park	sat 9
EcoPaws Festival	São Dâmaso Alameda	sat 9–10
Gardening Workshop	Landscape Laboratory	sat 9
Mindful Walks	Biodiversity Route + PR3	sun 10
Plantasia	Condessa do Juncal Square	sun 10
Do You Want to Know? <small>Science and Culture Meetings</small>	Candoso S. Martinho School	sun 10
Urgezes Solidarity Trail Erdal	Urgezes	sun 10
Roots of the Neighborhood <small>Home Composting Training</small>	Mataduchos Housing Development	wed 13
Inspire, Record, Action	Virgínia Moura School	thu 14
Roots of Guimarães	IDEGUI	sat 16
Eco-Walk	Caldas das Taipas	sun 17
Improbable Walkers	Selho S. Jorge	sun 17
Pollinating Is What's Trending	Urgezes	mon 18
Paths and Exchanges	Educational Garden	tue 19
Marilúcia the Misfit	Donães Square	thu 21
Marilúcia the Misfit	Municipal Market	fri 22
Portuguese Folk Songbook and Nature	Taipas Leisure Park	sat 23
Neighborhood Roots <small>Sustainability Training</small>	Mataduchos Housing Development	wed 27
Being Cyclical	Serzedelo and Pevidém	fri 29
Entre	Taipas Leisure Park	fri 29–31

June

Slag Collection	São Dâmaso Alameda	fri 5–7
Poetic Consultations	São Dâmaso Alameda	sat 6
Portuguese Folk Songbook and Nature	São Dâmaso Alameda	sat 6
Inspire, Record, Action	Camões Parking Lot	sat 6–7
Colouring the Environment	Selho S. Cristóvão	sat 13
Improbable Walkers	Longos	sun 14
Neighbourhood Roots <small>Healthy Eating Training</small>	Mataduchos Housing Development	wed 17
Aura Ave Fest	Lourinha Leisure Park, Ronfe	sat 20
Mindful Walks	PR4 Guardizela Trail	sun 21
Composting Session	Pevidém	sun 21
Plantasia	City Park	sun 21
Portuguese Folk Songbook and Nature	São Torcato	sun 21

July

Portuguese Folk Songbook and Nature	São Torcato	sat 4
Guimarães Plays Today	Vila Flor Culture Center	tue 7–8
Land Fair <small>Community, Culture and Sustainability</small>	São Torcato	thu 9–12
Portuguese Folk Songbook and Nature	São Torcato	thu 9
Composting Workshop	Taipas Gardens	fri 10
Plogging with The Molinhas	Caldas das Taipas	sat 11
Portuguese Folk Songbook and Nature	São Torcato	sat 11
Mindful Walks	PR2 Citânia Route	sun 12
refleCtion Walks <small>A New Look at Guimarães 26</small>	Alberto Sampaio Museum	sat 18
Being Cyclical	Brito and Ronfe	sat 25
Rock no Rio Febras 2026 <small>Sustainability</small>	São Salvador de Briteiros	sat 25–26

August

Inspire, Record, Action	ACAREG	sat 8
Enchanted Garden of Books	Venue to be confirmed	sat 8
Cigarette Butts Pickup	Streets of Guimarães	wed 12
Improbable Walkers	Caldas das Taipas	sun 16



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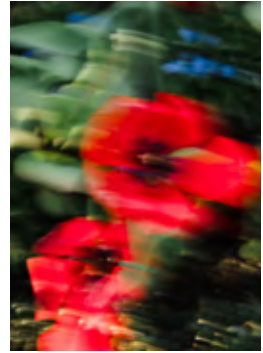
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A City that Delivers

Editorial

Guimarães stands out today in how it transforms vision into action. It is in the present that commitments are built, projects are implemented and a city with greater quality of life, greater sustainability and better preparation for the future is shaped. Guimarães 26 European Green Capital is an active part of that path.

This second edition of the magazine arrives precisely at a moment when projects are taking shape and initiatives are reaching the community. Across the city, actions involving schools, associations, companies, institutions and citizens are multiplying, showing that the ecological transition is built through everyone's participation and through collective commitment. One of the aspects that distinguishes Guimarães 26 is precisely its participatory and collective character.

Throughout these pages, we therefore bring together some of the moments, projects and people who are already shaping this journey, a journey built with the whole city. It is a path that will certainly grow throughout the year, and it will not stop here.

In the field of governance, the institutional commitments and strategic agreements that strengthen Guimarães' position within the European sustainability landscape stand out. These are moments that demonstrate the importance of cooperation between local, national and European institutions in building solutions to contemporary environmental challenges.

Science emerges as one of the fundamental pillars of this strategy, and the Scientific Commit-

tee of the Mission Unit presents itself precisely to follow that path, as a central body in knowledge production, technical coordination and scientific leadership.

The community also occupies a central place in this journey. Schools, associations, companies and citizens have been called upon to actively participate in European Green Capital initiatives, highlighting that sustainability is built collectively and through participation. This involvement takes shape in educational projects, community proposals and actions that bring the population closer to current environmental challenges.

In different parts of the municipality, initiatives are emerging that invite the community to participate actively in building environmental solutions, underlining the significant impact that small everyday actions can have in promoting sustainability.

Finally, innovation stands as a driving force for transformation. Companies, institutions and experimental projects contribute to exploring new solutions in areas such as the circular economy, energy, mobility and the sustainable management of resources, reinforcing the territory's ability to respond to the environmental challenges of the future.









Visit of the President of the Republic

As we were writing the pages of this magazine, the European Green Capital once again gained national prominence. An example for Portugal and, in the words of the President of the Republic, also a sign of the future.

As part of his inauguration *programme*, António José Seguro chose Guimarães as one of the first official destinations at the beginning of his term. The visit included a stop at the Landscape Laboratory, where the Head of State had the chance to see first-hand the work being developed under Guimarães 26 European Green Capital and the environmental strategy that has been transforming the territory.

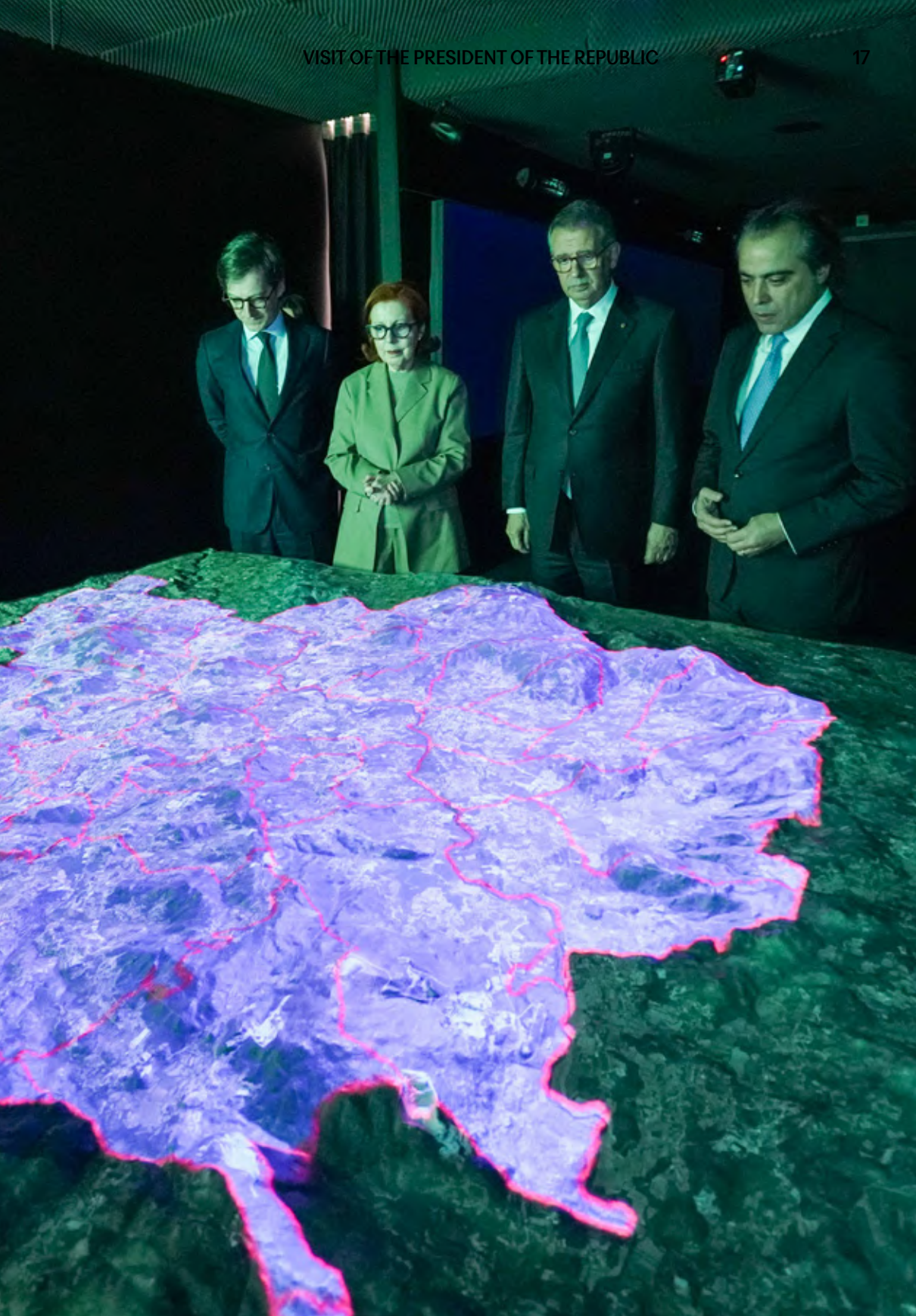
The initiative was also attended by the Mayor of Guimarães, Ricardo Araújo; the Minister for the Environment and Energy, Maria da Graça Carvalho, who chairs the Guimarães 26 Honorary Committee; and the President of the Guimarães Municipal Assembly, Rui Armindo Freitas.

During his speech, the President of the Republic highlighted the symbolism of visiting Guimarães in the first days of his term, underlining the city's role as a national and European reference in sustainability. "Today Guimarães sets an example for Portugal and for Europe. And on my first day in office, I wanted to witness that and give voice to this strategic vision, to this courage that the people of Guimarães and their

local representatives have affirmed and developed over recent decades," he said.

He also recalled the strong connection between the city's historical past and its commitment to the future, saying that Guimarães can today be "more than the cradle of the nation. It can also be a cradle of the future."

For António José Seguro, the recognition of Guimarães as European Green Capital 2026 reflects its ability to reconcile tradition and innovation. "A city with centuries of history can also be a city of innovation, environmental awareness and commitment to people's quality of life," he said.









Welcome Center

**The gateway to the
European Green Capital**

“This house is yours, this year is yours” — With these words, the Mayor of Guimarães, Ricardo Araújo, inaugurated the Welcome Center of the European Green Capital 2026, a new space located in the former Municipal Market, on Paio Galvão Street.

More than an information center, the Welcome Center was created as a meeting place between the city, those who live here, those who visit and the Guimarães 26 project itself. It therefore presents itself as the gateway to understanding the municipality’s environmental journey and the vision for the future that sustains the title of European Green Capital.

The choice of space was no coincidence either. For decades, the former market was a central space in the city’s daily life, associated with proximity, exchange and social interaction. By restoring this symbolic place, Guimarães connects memory and future, tradition and innovation.

In the heart of the city, the Welcome Center brings together several dimensions that seek to make sustainability accessible and participatory. It is here that visitors can find information about the European Green Capital *programme*, official merchandising and the Guimarães Green Map. It also includes interactive and immersive experiences that make it possible to discover the territory in a different way, inviting visitors and citizens to explore Guimarães’ natural landscape and the work carried out in the field of sustainability.

Immersive Experience

The experience in The Landscape Laboratory presents the Guimarães climate journey and allows visitors to discover the city

Among various initiatives associated with Guimarães 26 European Green Capital, special attention should be given to the immersive experience dedicated to Guimarães' Climate Journey, located in the Landscape Laboratory. This space invites visitors and citizens to discover the environmental journey that the municipality has taken over the last decade towards climate neutrality.

Through an interactive and educational approach, this experience makes it possible to learn about the main projects, policies and transformations that have marked the territory's environmental strategy. The aim is to present, in an accessible and engaging way, the path

that led Guimarães to win the title of European Green Capital 2026 and the commitments made for the future.

More than an exhibition space, this experience seeks to bring science, public policy and citizen participation closer together, showing how specific decisions in areas such as energy, mobility, biodiversity and the circular economy contribute to a more sustainable territory.

By inviting the public to follow this climate journey, Guimarães reinforces the notion that the ecological transition is not just an institutional objective, but a collective process that involves the whole community.



European commitment with local roots

On the 9th of January, Guimarães officially began its year as European Green Capital 2026 with a programme that combined political commitment, strategic agreements and cultural celebration, asserting itself as a laboratory territory for the green transition.



The European Green Capital distinction, awarded by the European Commission, recognizes cities that demonstrate consistent results in areas such as air quality, water management, biodiversity, sustainable mobility, energy efficiency and environmental governance. To Guimarães, this title represents not only recognition of a journey that began more than a decade ago, but also an increased responsibility in promoting solutions that can be replicated at an European scale.

The opening morning took place at Teatro Jordão with the Political Commitment Ceremony. It brought together mayors, Government representatives and European institutions to reflect on the role of cities in leading the climate transition. The session included speeches by Ricardo Araújo, Mayor of Guimarães, Patrick Child, Director-General for Environment at the European Commission, and João Manuel Esteves, Secretary of State for the Environment. The moment also included a dialogue between European cities, reinforcing the international dimension of the title.

The Green Book was presented, the physical symbol of the handover between winning cities,

delivered to the new European Green Capital, Guimarães, by the previous city, Vilnius.

Still at Teatro Jordão, the support protocol for the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan and the BRT project – Climate Neutrality by 2030 was signed, involving the Municipality of Guimarães, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Commission. This agreement reinforces the commitment to structural solutions for decarbonizing the transport system and positions Guimarães at the forefront of sustainable urban transformation.

“Being European Green Capital means taking on a demanding commitment to the future of the municipality. The new environmental declaration and the strategic protocols for sustainable mobility and carbon neutrality reflect the ambition to make this year a point of inspiration,” said Ricardo Araújo.

At the end of the afternoon, *Multusos de Guimarães* hosted a press conference attended by the Minister for Environment and Energy, Maria da Graça Carvalho, who chairs the Guimarães 2026 Honorary Committee, reinforcing the importance of the moment at a national level.

Guimarães Declaration

To be a “One Planet City”. This is the plea Guimarães makes to the rest of the world, because cities are not just the places where we live. The concept of “One Planet City” proposes that cities adopt strategies that transcend administrative borders.



**A local commitment
for a greener Europe**

The Guimarães Declaration is a manifesto that calls on cities around the world to lead the transition towards a sustainable future within the scope of European Green Capital 2026. It establishes a collective commitment to address the climate emergency through five fundamental pillars: education, science, social justice, the green economy and culture.

Believing that cities can accelerate global transformation towards sustainability, justice and resilience, and that innovation, creativity and community are the most powerful resources, the Guimarães Declaration states that:

→ Education must be the foundation of sustainable societies. As a basis for empowering new generations and for informed decision-making, knowledge transforms the world.

→ Science must guide every action. Evidence-based governance is promoted, integrating academia and open data to monitor the costs and benefits of climate action.

→ A just transition must leave no one behind. Social justice and climate action are inseparable.

→ Innovation in business, industry and the economy in general is important for advancing the green transition, demonstrating that prosperity and sustainability go hand in hand.

→ Sport and culture must also inspire change. Celebration, creativity and movement are catalysts for transformation.

Guimarães commits itself to acting locally and inspiring globally. From Guimarães 26 European Green Capital to the world: the invitation is for cities everywhere to join this journey. In this way, it will be possible to show that sustainable futures are built from the ground up, through courage, innovation and collaboration.

Sustainability requires a vision that goes beyond electoral cycles. The Guimarães Declaration therefore emphasizes that political will must be supported by broad consensus among parties, institutions and citizens. Political consensus is needed to bring stability to policies so that projects do not stop with every new election. The involvement of social movements, communities and lifestyle changes is essential, as are partnerships between local governments, academia and the private sector.

In addition, Guimarães wants to prove, and raise awareness, that the effectiveness of transformation is not determined by geographic scale, but by the quality of policies. As a medium-sized city, it serves as a replicable model, demonstrating that active citizenship and business involvement can create solutions that can easily be replicated in larger places.

Declaration of Collaboration with Guimarães 26



**Collective commitment
of the European Green Capital**



The Declaration of Collaboration with Guimarães 26 was created as an invitation to the active participation of the municipality's economic and social fabric. Promoted within the scope of Guimarães 26 European Green Capital, it seeks to involve companies, retail, hospitality and restaurants in a shared commitment to the principles of sustainability and to the Sustainable Development Goals associated with tourism in the territory.

By joining this declaration, the participating entities commit to integrating and promoting responsible practices in their daily operations, strengthening staff awareness, the communication of good environmental practices and participation in initiatives promoted throughout this year.

Among the commitments undertaken are also the promotion of the Guimarães 26 project, the promotion of the Guimarães Green Map, support for the official *programme* and partic-

ipation in impact studies that make it possible to assess the environmental and social legacy of the European Green Capital.

More than an institutional formality, the Declaration of Collaboration represents a network of shared responsibility between the municipality, companies and the community, reinforcing the idea that the ecological transition depends on the involvement of all sectors of society.

By encouraging each entity to identify and share good practices implemented in its business, the initiative helps to make the collective commitment to sustainability visible and to disseminate concrete examples of environmental action in the territory.

In a project that seeks to establish Guimarães as a European reference in urban sustainability, this declaration translates an essential principle: the European Green Capital is built with the whole city.

Scientific Committee

**Knowledge to transform
the territory**

The strategy of Guimarães 26 European Green Capital is based on a clear belief: the sustainable transformation of cities requires scientific knowledge, institutional cooperation and the capacity for innovation. It is in this context that the Scientific Committee of the Mission Unit emerges, as a central body in knowledge production, technical coordination and scientific leadership.

Made up of around four dozen researchers and specialists from national and international academic institutions, including the universities of Minho, Porto, Coimbra, Aveiro, Nova de Lisboa, and Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, as well as international institutions such as UNU-EGOV, the University of Valencia and ParisTech, the Scientific Committee plays a fundamental role in consolidating Guimarães as a reference territory in sustainability, urban innovation and climate action.

Co-chaired by Carlos Ribeiro, president of the Landscape Laboratory, and Isabel Loureiro, coordinator of the Guimarães 2030 Mission Structure, this committee brings together specialists from different fields of knowledge, promoting a multidisciplinary approach to environmental and urban challenges.

Believing that science has a fundamental role in transforming cities, it is essential that the knowledge produced does not remain only within academia, but is, instead, shared and placed in service of the community. This commitment to science translates into the dissemination of studies and research projects that seek to better understand the territory and support the definition of sustainable public policies.

Clear Paths

One of the projects under development, coordinated by Andrea Ribeiro, Giorgio Pace and Dalila Durães, with the collaboration of Miguel Nóbrega, seeks to explore a dimension of the relationship between people and nature that is often undervalued: the impact of simply going for a walk.

The study proposes the creation of a tool applied to the fields of health and education, enabling a better understanding of the physical and psychological benefits associated with contact with green spaces. The initiative is based on increasingly recognized evidence in scientific literature showing that regular contact with nature contributes significantly to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of populations.

More than a physical activity, walking is seen here as an experience of learning and discovery of the territory. The proposal is to transform these moments into opportunities for environmental education, encouraging participants to observe the landscape, get to know local biodiversity and reflect on the importance of ecosystem conservation.

By integrating science, health and education, the project seeks to demonstrate how small everyday practices can contribute to healthier lifestyles and to a more conscious relationship with nature.



Pacts2B-Ready

Led by Joana Vicente and João Cabral, this project focuses on the analysis and promotion of ecological connectivity in the municipality of Guimarães.

Ecological connectivity refers to the way in which different habitats and natural areas are linked, allowing species to move and ecosystems to function in a balanced way. In the current context, marked by increasing pressure on the territory, understanding and strengthening these connections is becoming ever more important.

The project seeks to identify and analyze these pressures, assessing how they may compromise the integrity of local ecosystems. One focus of the study is precisely the impact of invasive species, which represent one of the main threats to biodiversity and ecological stability in many territories.

The research aims not only to deepen scientific knowledge about the territory, but also to translate the concept of ecological connectivity into objective metrics capable of supporting decision-making by authorities and territory managers.



Eco Parliament



Youngsters Thinking the Future

The Eco Parliament is an initiative that seeks to bring young people closer to major environmental issues and stimulate active participation in building solutions to the challenges of our time. More than an educational exercise, the project functions as a space for learning, debate and reflection, where students are invited to take an active role in discussing topics related to sustainability and environmental protection.

Inspired by the workings of a parliamentary assembly, the Eco Parliament promotes a participatory model in which students investigate environmental problems, develop proposals and present ideas that can contribute to a more sustainable future. This process encourages critical thinking, teamwork and the development of citizenship skills, allowing young people to better understand the complexity of the decisions that shape the territory and the planet.

Throughout the various editions held in Guimarães, the project has involved schools from different levels of education, mobilizing students and teachers around topics such as climate change, biodiversity, natural resource management and the circular economy. Each participating school develops a research and reflection project that culminates in parliamentary sessions in which students present and defend their proposals.

These sessions function as sharing and debate moments where different ideas and per-

spectives meet, promoting collective learning about contemporary environmental challenges. At the same time, the Eco Parliament allows young people to understand that their voices can have an impact and that civic participation is a fundamental element in building more sustainable societies.

In the context of Guimarães 26 European Green Capital, the Eco Parliament takes on even greater significance. By involving younger generations in reflecting on the future of the territory, the initiative reinforces the idea that the ecological transition is not only an institutional responsibility, but a collective commitment that must be shared by the whole of society.

By giving young people space to think, question and propose solutions, the Eco Parliament helps to shape citizens who are more aware, informed and prepared to face the environmental challenges of the coming decades. Because the future of cities and of the planet also depends on the ability of new generations to imagine and build more sustainable paths.





CAN
RUN

**The European
Green Capital 2026
mascot**



AQUI
NASCEU
PORTUGAL



To represent Guimarães during the year in which the city holds the title of European Green Capital 2026, a competition was launched for the school community to create the *programme's* official mascot. The challenge was to find a symbol capable of reflecting the city's identity, while at the same time valuing local heritage, young creativity and the values of sustainability.

The winning proposal was presented by Isabel Sousa, a 17-year-old student in the Vocational Course in Industrial Design at Francisco de Holanda Secondary School. The young student chose the *Cantarinha*, a traditional piece of pottery from Guimarães, as her inspiration, deeply linked to the history and traditions of the territory.

According to the student, the choice came from the desire to present something different: "instead of doing something obvious, I decided to do something more unusual." Although she recognises that the process required greater attention, Isabel explains that the experience was positive. "It wasn't very difficult, but I had some challenges with certain details," she recalls.

For the student, taking part in the competition was also an opportunity to try something new. "It was a fun and different process," she says, adding that initiatives of this kind can have a positive impact on students' paths. "I wish there were more things like this, because they are different experiences that can help classmates and students follow new paths," she explained.

Throughout 2026, Cantarinha will accompany various moments in the European Green Capital *programme*, appearing in initiatives and events taking place throughout the city. More than a mascot, this figure symbolizes the meeting point between tradition, creativity and youth participation, reflecting the community spirit that characterizes the Guimarães 26 project.

Green Shop Windows

Sustainability in plain sight

As part of the Guimarães 26 European Green Capital *programme*, the Green Shop Window Creation Competition was launched, an initiative that challenged the city's commercial establishments to bring the values of sustainability into public space.

The aim was to encourage shopkeepers to reinterpret their window displays in the light of the Guimarães 26 theme, while simultaneously promoting creativity, environmental awareness and connection to the territory. The competition was open to establishments from different sectors of activity, reinforcing the idea that sustainability is a cross-cutting commitment for the whole community.

The evaluation criteria included the connection to the European Green Capital theme, the creativity of the proposals and the use of reused, recyclable or low environmental impact materi-

als. Throughout the competition, several shop windows across the city were transformed into small visual manifestos dedicated to nature, the circular economy and environmental awareness.

After the jury's evaluation process, the winning display was announced. First place was awarded to Loja Miao, a clothing and accessories shop located in Guimarães' historic center. The display stood out for its originality and the care taken in its composition, presenting, among other elements, a dress created from green-toned materials, evoking the identity of the European Green Capital.

For Vanessa Ribeiro, the person in charge of the shop, initiatives of this kind have a positive impact on the dynamics of local commerce. "This type of initiative, regardless of whether there is a monetary value or not, should be dynamized more often," she said.



International Delegations



Guimarães on the global sustainability map

Over the last few months, Guimarães has established its role as a true international meeting point for reflection and the sharing of experiences around sustainability. The city has received several national and international delegations that want to know more about the journey, policies and projects that have been transforming the territory into a living laboratory of environmental innovation.

Universities, schools, international organisations, municipalities and European mobility *programmes* have sought out Guimarães to understand up close the path that led the city to achieve the title of European Green Capital 2026. These visits are moments of sharing knowledge and good practices, reinforcing the international dimension required by the moment and Guimarães' position as a European reference in the ecological transition.

The city has already welcomed more than six hundred participants from different academic, institutional and community contexts. Among the visitors are students, teachers, researchers, municipal technicians and representatives of civil society organisations, who find in Guimarães a concrete example of how public policies, science and citizen participation can work together in building a more sustainable territory.

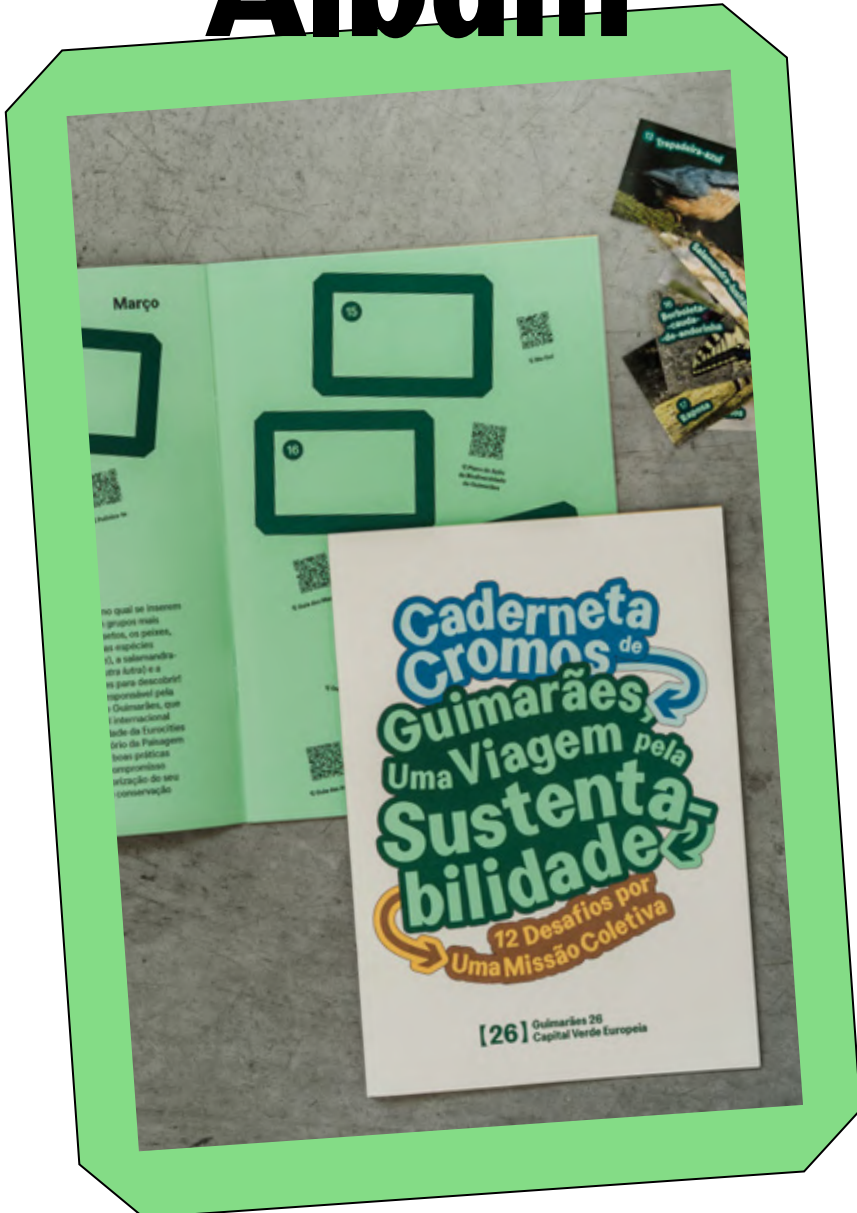
The delegations received show the geographical diversity of communities interested in Guimarães. Throughout the different European Green Capital presentation sessions, Guimarães has received visitors from several European

countries, including France, Belgium, Spain and Italy, as well as participants from international mobility *programmes* bringing together young people and professionals of diverse nationalities.

In many cases, these visits are part of European academic exchange and mobility *programmes*, such as Erasmus+, bringing students and teachers to the city that are interested in learning about projects connected to urban sustainability, environmental education, circular economy or natural resource management. There are also delegations that arrive through international cooperation initiatives, civil society organizations or educational projects seeking inspiration in material experiences of territorial transformation.

This constant flow of visitors confirms that the European Green Capital 2026 is a clear opportunity to project Guimarães beyond its borders. By welcoming delegations from different countries and contexts, the city asserts itself not only as a host for European sustainability, but as a territory that inspires and learns, consolidating its role in the global dialogue on the future of cities.

Sticker Album



A journey through sustainability

The Guimarães 26 European Green Capital Sticker Album is a free initiative that invites the whole community to participate, in a fun and active way, in Guimarães' climate journey throughout 2026. Available at the Welcome Center and the Landscape Laboratory, this album was created to involve children, young people, families, schools and institutions in a path of discovery, learning and action around sustainability.

Throughout the year, 11 challenges will be launched, one per month, calling for the completion of concrete environmental actions. Whenever each participant completes a challenge, they receive six stickers to collect and place in their album. More than a collection, this is a way to encourage more responsible behaviors, promoting engagement with environmental themes and strengthening the community's connection to Guimarães 26.

Designed as a journey through environmental preservation towards a more sustainable city, the album turns each challenge into an opportunity to learn, participate and be part of this collective story. Because Guimarães 26 is built by everyone: take part, discover, collect.







Guimarães 26 Opening

**The intense weekend that stayed
in the memory of the people of Guimarães**

The strong demand for tickets for the ceremony showed the community's enthusiasm from the very beginning. The available seats at *Multusos* sold out quickly, leading to the creation of alternatives so that more people could follow the moment, through online broadcasting and the installation of a giant screen in the city. The goal was precisely to bring the European Green Capital to the community in a spectacle that symbolized the start of a new cycle. Roots of the Future combined collective memory, cultural identity and ecological regeneration, involving more than 170 participants, including dancers, musicians and local collectives.

Presented by Catarina Furtado and Vasco Palmeirim, the stage welcomed renowned artists such as Gisela João and Sofia Escobar. But the strength of the show was, above all, in community participation. The city presented itself to the world through the people who effectively build it every day.

Sofia Escobar returned home to take part in the performance and confirmed that "returning to one's roots is always very special." In these

circumstances and in this context, she said, it is "even more so, because it is a project that involved a great many people, including the community."

The artist from Guimarães also reinforced the importance of everyone's participation in a year as important as the European Green Capital, because "this is work that has to be done by each and every one of us individually."

It was a true meeting point between culture, identity and community. The narrative of Roots of the Future was, in fact, based precisely on that idea of looking to the past to project the future. Guimarães' environmental and social history was evoked through images and moments that crossed different dimensions of local identity.

For many of the participants, stepping onto the stage at the European Green Capital opening ceremony represented a unique moment. More than a show, it was the opportunity to feel that they were part of a bigger project involving the whole city. That was the case for Álvaro Oliveira, a member of the En'Canto choir, who said that he felt "part of this community."







Joana Rodrigues, also from the En'Canto Choir, stated that “environmental issues and cultural issues are a predominant factor in society.” While she viewed the rehearsals with 170 people as “intense and long,” she does not deny that they were “filled with energy, motivation and a great desire to show that we are very proud of our city and of what we are capable of doing.”

A City in Motion

The community was not present just in the Roots of the Future spectacle. The celebration continued throughout Saturday, 10 January, with a *programme* that brought 26 free activities to various places in the city. Performances in public space, music, poetry, soft mobility workshops and show-cookings brought a new dimension to the lived experience of the European Green Capital.

Community Proposals



When the city's ideas take shape

One of the pillars of Guimarães 26 European Green Capital is, as has been repeatedly stated, the direct involvement of the community in building solutions for the territory. More than an institutional *programme*, the project seeks to establish itself as a participatory process in which citizens, associations and local organizations have the chance to contribute with ideas and initiatives that promote sustainability.

It was with this objective that the Community Proposals were created, a participation mechanism that invited the population to submit projects and activities aligned with the values of the European Green Capital. The initiative seeks to turn ideas into material actions, promoting greater proximity between citizens and the environmental challenges faced by the territory.



+ than 150 actions proposed

+150 actions



+ than €250,000 invested

+ 250,000€



The proposals take different forms, ranging from environmental awareness activities, volunteering actions and educational initiatives, to cultural, community or public-space intervention projects. The common element is always the commitment to sustainability and to improving quality of life in the municipality.

By opening this process to public participation, Guimarães reinforces the idea that the ecological transition is achieved not only through policies or infrastructure, but also through the active involvement of the people who live and work in the territory.

Some of these ideas have already started to take shape on the territory. Clean-up actions

in natural spaces, biodiversity promotion activities, educational workshops and community projects are examples of initiatives born from the willingness of citizens and associations to contribute to a more sustainable city.

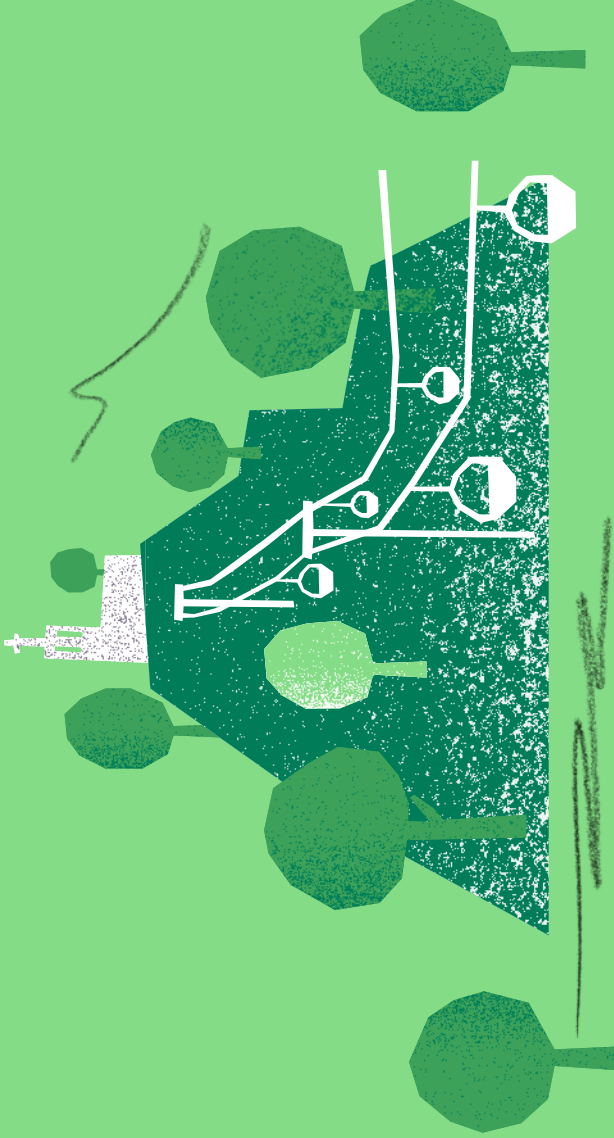
These Community Proposals reflect an essential principle of the Guimarães 26 project: sustainability is built collectively, with everyone's participation. By giving room to the population's ideas, Guimarães demonstrates that the title of European Green Capital belongs not only to institutions, but to the entire city. A city where every citizen can be part of the change and help imagine and build a greener and more sustainable future.



Green Map

Guimarães is widely recognised as a city rich in historical and cultural heritage, but it is also a green city, full of parks, trails and natural corners to discover. Dozens of km² of the territory are covered by forest, home to an outstanding wealth of biodiversity. Discover this green heritage.

1 Penha



Penha Mountain is Guimarães main continuous green area and the highest point in the municipality, bringing together natural, landscape and recreational value. The site includes an extensive forested area, walking trails, viewpoints, a campsite and several visitor areas, serving as a place for leisure and contact with nature. Due to its scale and diversity, it is a relevant example of green-space management and the promotion of wellbeing. Penha Mountain is also an important educational resource, allowing the observation of habitats, species and conservation practices in a real setting.

② Biodiversity Route



The Biodiversity Route is a walking trail linking Penha Mountain to the City Park, allowing the observation of different habitats and species along around four kilometres. The route is supported by interpretive panels that help us understand the importance of this place for local fauna and flora. The trail serves as a space for leisure and environmental education, promoting awareness of nature conservation. The route has been the target of tree reinforcement and monitoring actions, contributing to the ecological enhancement of the territory.

③ City Park



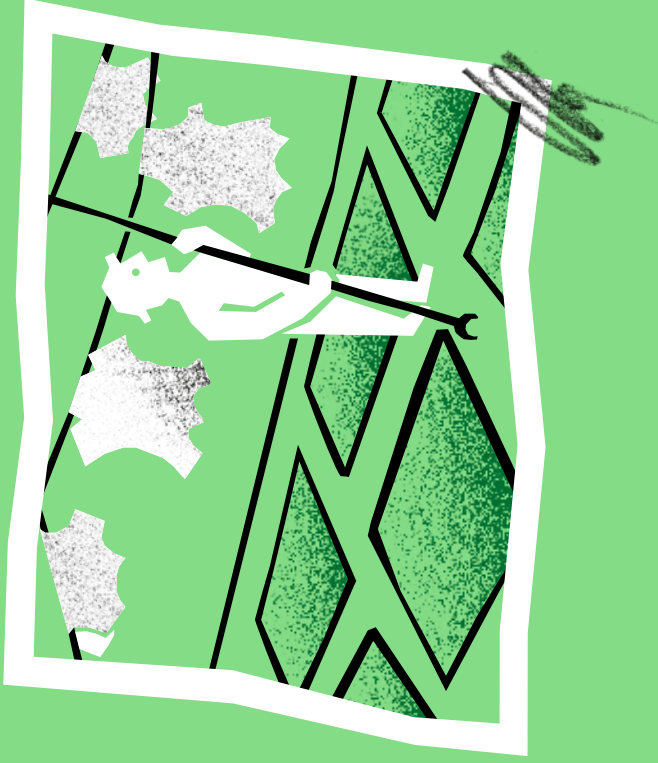
City Park is one of Guimarães main green areas, with around twenty hectares dedicated to leisure, contact with nature and the promotion of quality of life. This area includes lawns, a lake, shaded areas and different habitats that host fauna and flora species typical of the territory. The presence of water and diverse vegetation contributes to environmental comfort and local climate regulation. The park is used by visitors of all ages for walks, sports activities and moments of rest, functioning as an essential element in the urban green structure.

4 Municipal Market



The Municipal Market of Guimarães stands out for its offer of fresh produce and for encouraging local consumption, strengthening the relationship between producers, traders and the community. Within this dynamic, the Plastic-Free Market project promotes replacing single-use plastics with more responsible alternatives, such as reusable bags made from repurposed textiles and compostable options for fruit and vegetables. The aim is to encourage conscious purchasing habits, value the local economy and raise awareness of choices that reduce environmental impact.

5 Bairro C



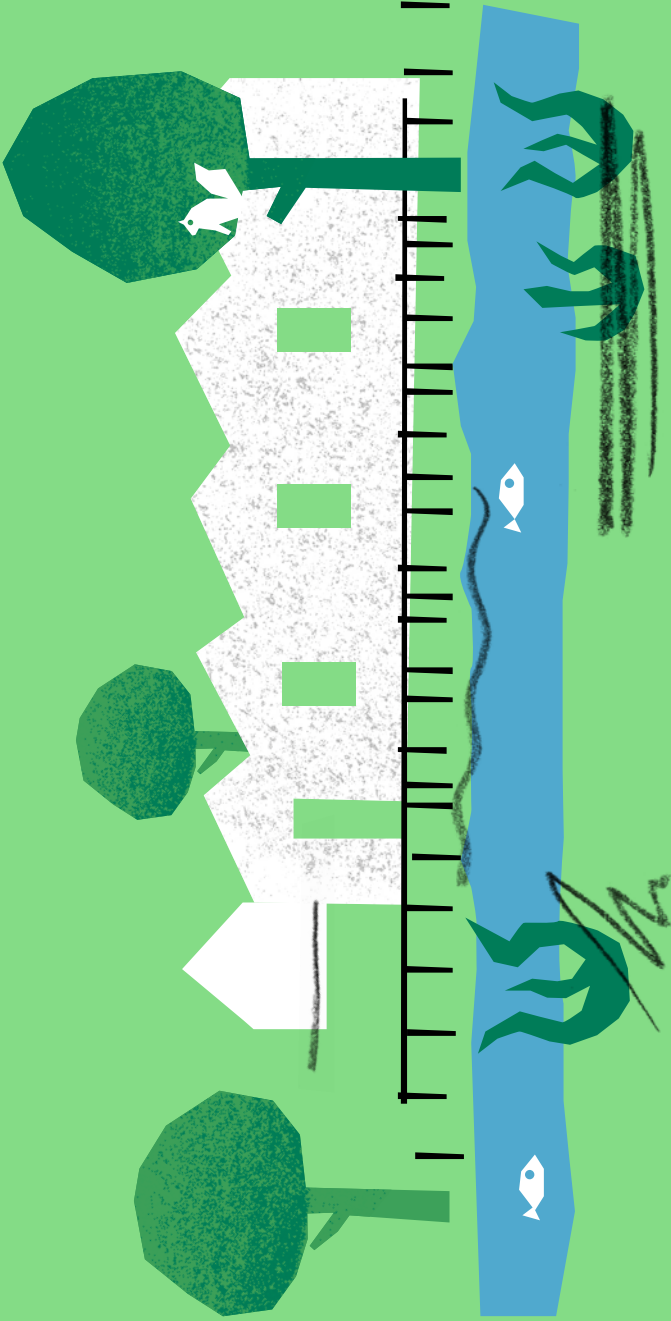
District C is an area of urban innovation that integrates cultural, creative and scientific spaces, linked to the rehabilitation of Coura's industrial heritage. It functions as a living lab where solutions for mobility, energy, waste and land use are tested, bringing the city closer to the climate transition. The cluster brings together educational facilities, research spaces, areas for artistic experimentation and meeting places, enabling different audiences to actively use the territory. District C shows how urban regeneration can support sustainability, combining heritage preservation with new functions and participation models. The project is recognised at European level for its contribution to environmental, cultural and social innovation.

⑥ Community Garden



The Community Garden is a public area dedicated to urban agriculture, enabling residents to grow produce for their own consumption in individual plots. The project promotes direct contact with nature, encourages more sustainable eating habits and values the fertile soils of the Veiga de Creixomil. The space also serves as an educational resource, offering activities that strengthen environmental literacy and understanding of natural cycles. The garden contributes to community wellbeing, creating opportunities for hands-on learning, social interaction and active participation in the management of green spaces.

7 Landscape Laboratory



Laboratório da Paisagem is a structure dedicated to research, education and technical support in environmental sustainability.

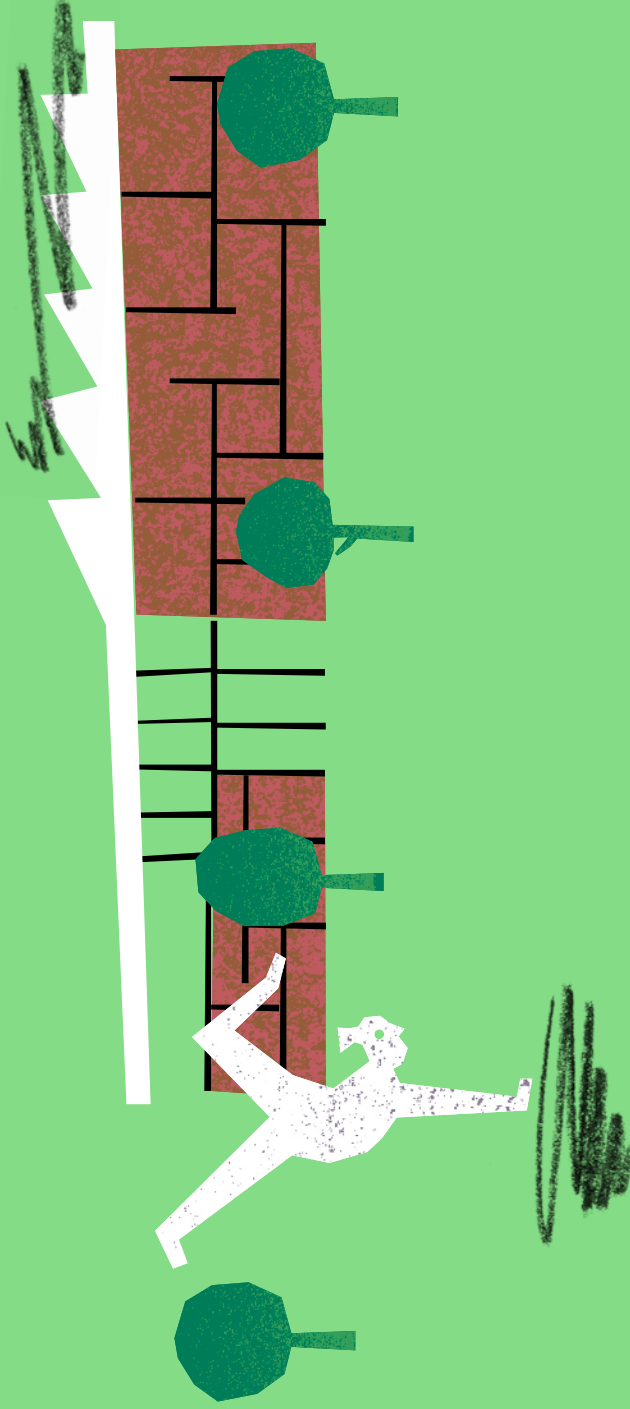
Housed in a rehabilitated former industrial unit, it develops projects in areas as diverse as biodiversity, water resources, climate, health and wellbeing, and circular economy. This Centre hosts researchers, promotes awareness-raising initiatives and coordinates educational *programmes*. It acts as a link between science, the community and public policies, producing applied knowledge and supporting the implementation of solutions that contribute to climate resilience, sustainable resource management and the municipality's environmental value.

⑧ Retention Basins

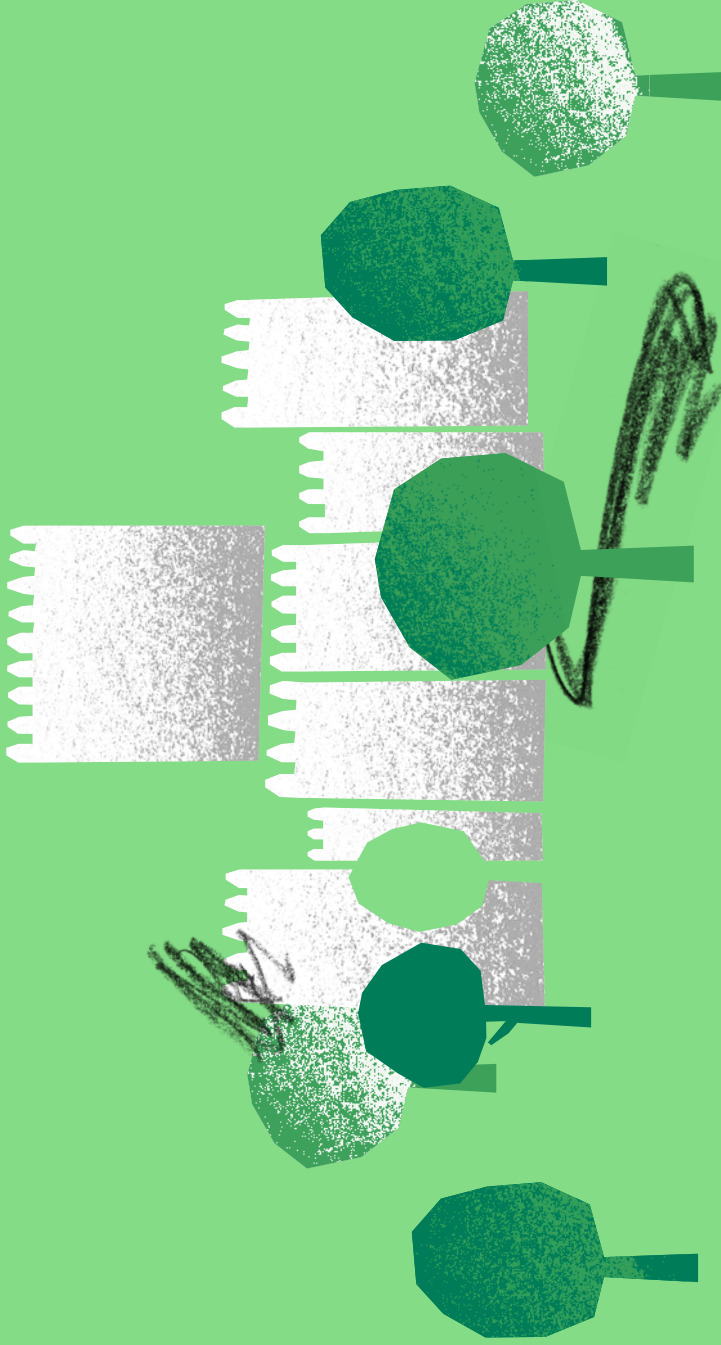


The Retention Basins of the Costa/Couros Stream are climate adaptation infrastructures built to reduce flood risk in the lower part of the city. Located at strategic points, they temporarily store large volumes of water, regulating the streamflow and reducing pressure on the water system during periods of heavier rainfall. The intervention integrated ecological enhancement solutions, such as restoring the riparian gallery, stabilising the banks and creating a green-blue corridor that strengthens natural connectivity. These basins contribute to urban resilience, improving safety, ecosystem functioning and the relationship between the population and the riverside environment.

Self-Sustainable Building



The Gymnastics Academy of Guimarães is a facility dedicated to training and competition, designed with energy-efficiency and environmental-integration criteria. The building — striking for its cork cladding — uses sustainable solutions such as rainwater capture and reuse systems, photovoltaic panels for energy production, and geothermal energy for climate control. These elements reduce consumption, improve thermal performance and lower the facility's ecological footprint. The space was planned to ensure appropriate conditions for sports practice, promoting comfort, safety and indoor air quality. The Gymnastics Academy shows how public facilities can incorporate sustainable construction principles, serving as a local reference for adopting practices aligned with the climate transition.



Latito Hill Gardens are a green area integrated into Guimarães historic zone, surrounding the Guimarães Castle and the Ducal Palace, where protected trees and botanical elements typical of the territory reinforce the site's environmental value. The space includes an interpretive route that supports species identification and understanding of the ecosystems present, as well as a garden of aromatic and medicinal plants that expands its educational interest. These gardens combine biodiversity, views over the city and a calm atmosphere, highlighting the importance of preserving urban green cores.

11 12 Ave and Selho Greenways



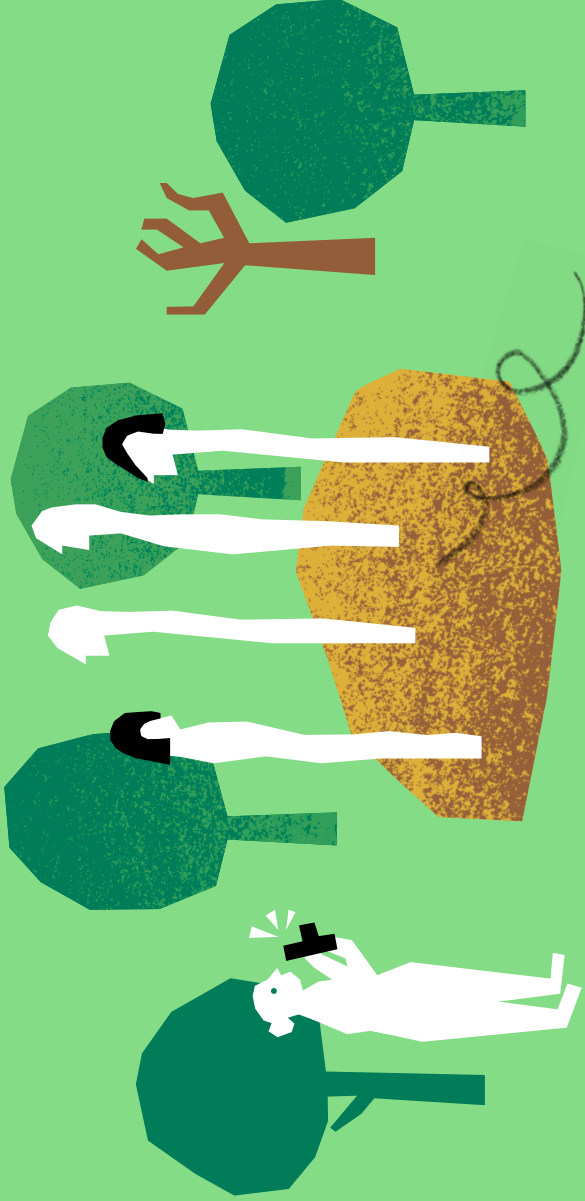
The Ave and Selho Greenways are green corridors along the banks of the municipality's main rivers, creating continuous routes for active mobility and enjoyment of nature. These trails, intended for pedestrians and cyclists, connect different urban and rural areas through restored riverside spaces. Interventions include removing invasive species, re-naturalising the banks, applying natural engineering techniques and planting native species, strengthening ecosystem stability. The greenways function as infrastructures for leisure, environmental education and sustainable travel, enhancing the landscape and contributing to the population's connection with water resources and the territory's natural heritage.

13 Three Mills Park, Castelões



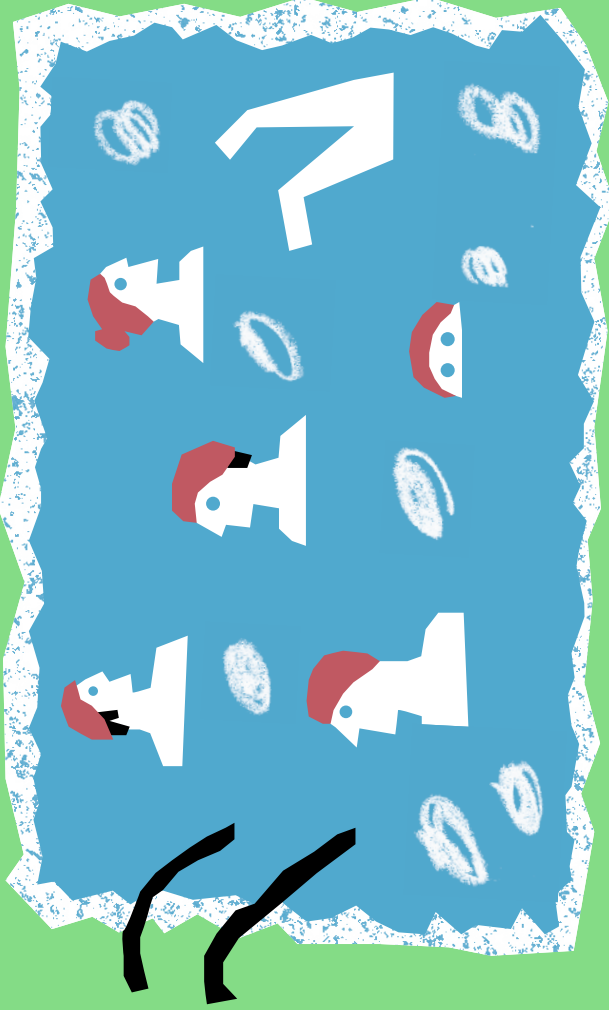
Three Mills Park is a green area in the north of the municipality, next to the Ave River, resulting from the recovery of a natural space marked by former mills and sulphurous waters. The park includes a 1.6-kilometre walking trail and a forested area featuring oak groves and pinewoods, offering a calm setting for walks and outdoor activities. The renewal included informational elements about local biodiversity and improved visitor conditions, enabling a better understanding of the relationship between natural heritage, former land uses and the surrounding riverside landscape

14 São Torcato Route



The São Torcato route follows rural paths connecting the Sanctuary, the Old Church, old mills and traditional agricultural areas, allowing observation of this valley's characteristic landscape. The route, of low difficulty, combines riparian vegetation areas, “vinhas de enforcado” (traditional over-head-trained vines) and cultivated fields, illustrating practices that shaped local life. Part of the trail will coincide with the Selho Greenway, facilitating connection to other natural points in the municipality. The route values historical and environmental heritage, offering direct contact with cultural elements and the biodiversity associated with agricultural and riverside systems.

15 Taipas Thermal Baths



Taipas Thermal is a wellbeing complex integrating thermalism, health and spa spaces, drawing on the properties of its mineral waters. The facility combines treatment areas, a thermal circuit and relaxation spaces, offering suitable conditions for prevention and recovery activities. Banhos Velhos, a historic building associated with thermal use since the Roman period, was rehabilitated as a cultural and leisure space, reinforcing the link between heritage and contemporary life. This ensemble values the village's natural resources and is a key point of interest in the territory.







Guimarães Mais Floresta Plantings

Guimarães once again got its hands in the soil and planted the future within the scope of the Guimarães Mais Floresta project. For the third consecutive year, Win Win Textiles, together with the Municipality of Guimarães and the Landscape Laboratory, promoted a major tree-planting event, this year integrated into the agenda of Guimarães 26 European Green Capital.

The initiative brought together representatives from more than 25 partner companies, students from the Vale de São Torcato School Grouping, the Parish Council of São Torcato and included players from Vitória Sport Clube's handball and youth football teams.

In total, 2,122 trees were donated and mobilized for planting. Part of them were planted in the Pedra Fina area, in the parish of São Torcato, while the rest were sent to other locations in the municipality in need of reforestation, contributing to ecological recovery and to increasing tree cover in Guimarães.

The councilor for the Environment at Guimarães City Council, Alberto Martins, underlined the concrete impact of the action on the ground and the relevance of the initiative in

the context of Guimarães 26 European Green Capital. "These are fundamental initiatives. In a Green Capital year, the importance that Guimarães gives to sustainability and awareness brings us closer to people and materializes practical achievements on the ground. It is the reforestation of an area affected by fires, which is simultaneously the place where granite was extracted for the construction of the Basilica of São Torcato."

Lars Skou Gøtterup, from Win Win Textiles, also highlighted the need for more frequent and participatory actions. "We need to accelerate the green transition and more events like this show that it is with our hands in the soil that things change. And the business sector also has this social responsibility," he said.

This was another moment of community mobilization that reinforced the connection between education, the business sector and climate action, showing how sustainability is built through participation and collective commitment. With every tree planted, Guimarães takes another step towards a more resilient, healthier and more sustainable municipality.



25 partner companies



**2.122 trees donated
and mobilized for planting**



Guimarães 26 Partners

**Grupo Versa and Grupo M. & Costas
formalize support for Guimarães 26**

Guimarães 26 European Capital of Culture and Grupo Versa formalize support

Guimarães 26 formalized a strategic partnership with Grupo Versa, that took on the role of main sponsor. The agreement was made official at a ceremony held at the Landscape Laboratory, attended by the Mayor of Guimarães, Ricardo Araújo, the president of Grupo Versa, Daniel Carvalho, and the rest of the Guimarães 26 board.

This collaboration reinforces Guimarães' ambition to consolidate a path of European leadership in urban sustainability, promoting solutions that accelerate environmental transition, territorial innovation and responsible economic development, with a real impact on the quality of life of the people of Guimarães.

The mayor, Ricardo Araújo, underlined the relevance of having a main sponsor from Guimarães, highlighting that “this is a clear sign that the project belongs to the territory – to the people, the institutions and the companies – and that it is built through involvement and shared responsibility.”

The partnership with Grupo Versa, active in areas such as health and well-being, industry and new technologies, real estate and rehabilitation, represents an important contribution to mobilising local capacities and enhancing projects that leave a mark beyond 2026.

For the president of Grupo Versa, Daniel Carvalho, this participation is “a choice aligned with new development models and with the idea that sustainability is today a decisive factor of resilience, innovation and competitiveness, reinforcing the commitment to building solutions with real impact.”

Guimarães 26's priority is to ensure that the title of European Green Capital translates into measurable and lasting results, strengthening the community, the business fabric and Guimarães' European positioning.

M. & Costas delivers vehicles to Guimarães 26 European Green Capital

Grupo M. & Costas formalised its status as Official Mobility Partner of Guimarães 26 European Green Capital, with the official handover of the vehicles that will support all activities throughout the year. The protocol moment was attended by the directors of Grupo M. & Costas, José Meireles Costa, Pedro Meireles and Paulo Meireles, as well as members of the board of European Green Capital 2026, Carlos Ribeiro, Isabel Loureiro and Dalila Sepúlveda, who marked the moment as an important step in preparing the set of initiatives planned for the year in which Guimarães takes on the European title.

As part of this collaboration, Grupo M. & Costas made available four 100% electric vehicles, three passenger vehicles and one commercial vehicle, which will play a special role as the European Green Capital 2026 Mobile Ambassador, travelling through the municipality's parishes with the aim of promoting public involvement.

For José Meireles Costa, chairman of Grupo M. & Costas' Board of Directors, this handover symbolises the Group's historic connection to the territory and its continuous investment in more responsible mobility solutions. "We are very interested in being present in this kind of event and initiative. It is a way of showing that Grupo M. & Costas, as well as all the brands we represent, are committed to this transition to electric mobility," he said.

Carlos Ribeiro, member of the Guimarães 26 European Green Capital board, highlighted the importance of partnership with the local business fabric for the success of the programme. "The way M. & Costas wanted to join this project sends an important signal of the transition we have to make, but above all we understand that it is imbued with this spirit that we will be able to fulfil 'Guimarães 26' throughout the whole year, with the various events we will have and with community involvement," he added.





Hospitality and Restaurants

**At the forefront of the transition
towards a more sustainable territory**

The transition towards a more sustainable territory is also built with the restaurant and hospitality sector. Within the scope of Guimarães 26 European Green Capital, establishments adhering to the Declaration of Collaboration have been implementing more responsible practices, actively contributing to reducing environmental impact, enhancing local products and promoting more sustainable habits.

From small gestures to structural changes, these initiatives reflect a growing commitment by the sector to sustainability, showing that it is possible to reconcile quality, identity and environmental responsibility.

We challenged the signatories to introduce themselves in this magazine. We publish here the testimonies that reached us within the deadline set for this edition. We leave here the commitment that we will continue to collect the testimonies of the different signatories throughout the remaining editions of the Magazine.



Mestre de Avis Hotel

At Hotel Mestre de Avis, sustainability has been a commitment since 2008. From the first day, one clear priority was established: to reduce environmental impact and adopt a responsible stance towards the planet and future generations. Nine years ago, they accepted the challenge of joining the Green Key certification and renew this commitment every year, reflecting a process of continuous improvement and the team's daily dedication. As a micro-enterprise, each step represents a significant collective effort, guided by a long-term vision that values the planet, the community and future generations. It is a commitment that also implies permanent reflection and analysis. The hotel also recognizes the fundamental role of guests on this path, promoting awareness of more conscious practices and reinforcing the idea that sustainability is built together.

Ibis Guimarães

At Ibis Guimarães, sustainability is a responsibility shared between the team and all our guests. The hotel implements measures such as energy efficiency, plastic reduction, responsible waste management and the fight against food waste, promoting a more conscious management. It also reminds all guests that every gesture counts, encouraging small actions that make a difference in everyday life. At the same time, the hotel also supports the local community and allows guests to contribute through an Ecological Contribution, reinforcing commitment to the European Green Capital and to more responsible and sustainable tourism.



ibis HOTEL

ibis
HOTEL

Desde
15€
quarto
1 ou 2 pessoas

ibis
HOTEL

Culmarles

H

WELCOME INTO
MY WORLD



Grupo Migas

Grupo Migas has been strengthening its commitment to sustainability by implementing a set of measures in its three restaurants — Formigas, Migas Grill and Vila Flor — with the aim of reducing the environmental impact of its operation. Among the main actions are the elimination of plastic bottles, replaced by glass and purified water, proper waste separation and a 40% reduction in water consumption through the installation of sensors and pedals on taps. In addition, the transition to LED lighting has also enabled greater energy efficiency. These practices reflect a more conscious and responsible approach, aligned with the challenges of sustainability in the restaurant sector.

A Cozinha Restaurant

A Cozinha by António Loureiro develops its gastronomic concept from a strong connection between tradition, innovation and sustainability, assuming a consistent commitment to responsible practices in the restaurant sector. Recognized since 2019 with a Michelin star and, since 2017, with the Green Key award, this establishment is pioneer in obtaining Zero Waste certification in Europe and has been implementing measures focused on the efficient management of resources, the valorization of local, seasonal and organic products, and the promotion of a more sustainable food system. This trajectory has been distinguished by several entities, reflecting an approach that combines gastronomic excellence with a conscious and committed vision for the future. In 2019, the restaurant won the National Tourism Award in the Sustainability category and, in 2021, A Cozinha was recognised by the United Nations for its contribution to promoting a more sustainable food system focused on sustainable, seasonal, organic and natural local production. In 2020, Chef António Loureiro launched the blog “Cooking Is Also Telling Stories”, in which he explains his vision of sustainability and analyses the problem of climate change in the food system and the importance of zero-kilometre cuisine and seasonality.



Guimarães as the banner of an increasingly green and resilient country



Maria da Graça Carvalho
Minister for Environment and Energy

It was with pride and satisfaction that I witnessed the confirmation of Guimarães as European Green Capital 2026.

This was a candidacy that I supported from the very first moment, back in 2024, and in which I always had great confidence. That confidence was returned with the invitation, which greatly honored me, to chair the Honorary Committee of this Green Capital.

I supported this project from the beginning because Guimarães is a city with a record of excellence in various indicators, not only in the field of Environment and the fight against Climate Change, but also in Culture, Sport, Entrepreneurship, the excellence of its Academy and its capacity for Innovation. A record that had already allowed it to be European Capital of Culture in 2012; European City of Sport in 2013; and, since 2023, to hold the 100 Climate-Neutral Cities Mission Label.

This Guimarães — European Green Capital 2026 — is the result of consistent work in environmental policies dating back at least to 2013, and whose results are visible in various indicators, namely in the Circular Economy, Climate, Biodiversity and Landscape. In that sense, the year 2026 is not a turning point but rather the consecration and consolidation of a very successful trajectory, the consecration of a vision that combines climate and environmental objectives with economic and social development.

It is only fair to recognize the path that brought Guimarães to this day. And it is also fair to recognize that, while it stands out for its excellence, it is not an isolated case in our country in terms of good practices in environmental and climate sustainability.

It is worth recalling that, in addition to this great achievement reached by Guimarães, Águeda was also one of the two winners of the European Green Leaf 2026 award, which distinguishes smaller cities.

Portugal as a whole has also often been cited as an example of good practice at this level. We have been praised by the European Commission for the efforts made to reduce energy poverty through a set of *programmes* that enabled us to reduce its incidence from 20% to 15%. We have frequently been cited by national and international environmental NGOs for the work we have been doing on fronts such as coastal protection, the denaturalization of rivers and streams, and the protection of emblematic species such as the Iberian Lynx and the Iberian Wolf. And, of course, we are presented as a case study for the success of the national commitment to renewable energy.

But we are not lulled by praise. Like Guimarães, the Government to which I belong sees the climate transition as a unique opportunity to reconcile the goals of sustainability with economic and social development.

Like Guimarães, the Government to which I belong sees success in this field not as a final result, but as an incentive to go further.

We created a National Water Strategy, “Water that Unites”, a cross-cutting approach that combines the principles of saving, fighting waste and reuse with the valorization of this resource in all sectors. And, in its first year, we set in motion projects valued at more than one billion euros.

We radically expanded our Network of Protected Marine Areas with the creation of a large network in the Azores. And we began 2026 by laying the foundations for what will still this year become the future D. Carlos Reserve, covering the entire Madeira-Tore and Gorringe complex, which will bring Portugal very close to reaching the target of 30% of the maritime area under national sovereignty being covered by protective measures.

Even in the areas where we are most behind, and where little has changed over decades, we are taking determined steps. This is the case, from the outset, in the field of waste, where we have implemented — and will launch from April onwards — a very concrete measure strongly promoting the circular economy: the start-up of the Deposit and Refund System (SDR) for plastic bottles and beverage cans with a capacity of less than three litres.

Much of the work we have done and will continue to do requires close cooperation with local authorities, as is the case with sustainable green mobility, the prevention of floods and other disasters, efficiency and the fight against losses in the urban water cycle, or waste policies.

And this is a closeness that we will have to reinforce because, as the events of this winter made evident, with a strong carousel of storms and levels of rainfall not seen for many years, the challenges will not become simpler in the future.



Guimarães leads the way in green urban development



Patrick Child
Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General
for Environment of the European Commission

European context

Within the EU Commission, we have worked diligently to shape legislation under the European Green Deal, a strategic framework combating the interlinked crises of climate change, biodiversity decline, and pollution. In the current mandate of the Commission, our mission is to ensure these measures yield concrete benefits for all citizens. The implementation of the Zero Pollution Action Plan, for instance, will bring the reduction of air, water and soil pollution.

In the Directorate-General for the Environment of the European Commission, we have translated these commitments into various initiatives, including those dedicated for cities. The European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards celebrate municipalities that lead on sustainability, combining innovative urban development with real improvements to people's lives. We assess participating cities across seven key indicators: air quality, water management, biodiversity, waste & circular economy, noise, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation. Each year, the European Commission grants one Green Capital Award and a prize of 600 000 EUR to a city of over 100,000, and two Green Leaf Awards, together with a prize of 200 000 EUR for smaller cities of 20 000 – 100 000 inhabitants.

Another key initiative I would like to highlight is the Green City Accord, which brings together European Mayors dedicated to creating greener and healthier urban spaces. By combining a structured framework and support from the EU level with voluntary commitments by local authorities, the Accord accelerates the implementation of the European Green Deal and EU environmental legislation. I am happy that Portugal stands here as a frontrunner, with the highest number of signatory cities to the Accord.

I—Portugal as a front runner

Proudly securing the European Green Capital Award 2026, Guimarães leads the way in green urban development. I am in particular impressed by the Guimarães Mais Floresta, an example of a great initiative showing how a community can unite to restore local ecosystems and boost urban tree cover. Back in January, schools, parishes, and partner businesses worked together to plant over 2,000 new trees and shrubs. These efforts are a living part of the EU's Nature Restoration Regulation, focusing on revitalising Europe's ecosystems, promoting biodiversity and emphasizing nature-based solutions.

A nearby city, Águeda, has won the 2026 European Green Leaf title, marking this year as a true Portuguese milestone in environmental

leadership. Águeda stands out for its forward-thinking approach to engaging with the public. The Águeda Sm@rt City project, for example, relies on citizen participation and the use of new technologies to reshape consumption habits. This initiative is fully in line with the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan, boosting environmental efficiency in buildings, public spaces, urban services, and transport.

For the European Commission, award winners are the first reference point when it comes to choosing cities for their good examples in a number of urban initiatives, such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, but also participation in various international events. This recognition really strengthens a city's international profile and provides inspiration for other cities to follow.

II—Impacts within the city

Winners and finalists have reported that the Green Capital Award provided critical political leverage, enabling them to advance sustainable projects and secure funding – both at the local, national and EU level. Winning cities tend to meet the European Green Deal targets sooner by investing in sustainable infrastructure for their residents. Additionally, they prioritise public engagement and education, with many launching school-based initiatives to raise awareness among their youth.

For example, Treviso (Italy), European Green Leaf City 2025, successfully engaged young people by relying on the popularity of Minecraft. The city invited children of all ages and educational backgrounds to reimagine Treviso as a sustainable urban space through video games. Initiatives like this not only boost local pride but also inspire lasting behavioural change.

In addition, winning the award generates long-term momentum, notably through public and private investment. When Lahti (Finland) won the European Green Capital 2021, it prompted Fazer to pledge €400 million for a new chocolate production facility, combining both a forward-looking vision and alignment with the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

III—International and long-lasting cooperation

As the saying goes "*once a green capital, always as green capital*". The impact of the European Green Capital title lasts well beyond the city's year in the spotlight. The Award serves as a platform for spreading successful environmental strategies and encouraging city leaders to invest in sustainable futures. By joining the growing Network of Green Cities, finalists and winners access a collaborative ecosystem supporting their efforts. Many cities discover new partnerships, united by a shared commitment to sustainability.

This initiative drives deeper European cooperation, democratising discussions that were once limited to high-level mayoral exchanges and opening them to city administrators and practitioners. Additionally, winning cities often experience a surge in tourism and enhanced media visibility, including at international stage.

The core message is clear: greener cities thrive. They stimulate economic growth, create green and tech-driven jobs, and offer liveable spaces where people can flourish across generations.

Once again, my warmest congratulations to Guimarães on winning the European Green Capital Award 2026. I look forward to seeing the numerous events and initiatives the city has planned as it leads the way this year, driving action and inspiration across Europe.





Guimarães 26
Volume 2 May/ Aug

Published by

Municipality of Guimarães,
Laboratório da Paisagem
and Mission Unit
Guimarães 26
European Green Capital

Coordination

Guimarães 26
European Green Capital

Texts

Municipality of Guimarães
Laboratório da Paisagem
Mission Unit
Guimarães 26
European Green Capital
Central de Informação

Photographs

Lais Pereira
Laboratório da Paisagem

Editorial design

Design by OOF

Printing

Lidergraf

Print run

1000 copies

April 2026

Printed publication
on paper produced with
a mixture of materials
from certified forests,
recycled materials and/or
controlled wood.



[26] Guimarães 26 European Green Capital



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