GreenME General Assembly in Bologna highlights the need for investment, skills and lasting impact in nature based mental wellbeing

Bologna, 18 September 2026 — Partners from across Europe gathered at the University of Bologna from 16 to 18 September for the GreenME General Assembly Meeting, bringing together researchers, practitioners and advisors to review progress, exchange knowledge and consider how the project's work can create a lasting impact beyond its lifetime. The three day meeting was hosted by the University of Bologna's Department of Agricultural and Food Sciences.

The programme reflected the breadth of GreenME's work, with sessions covering project activities, the development of guidelines and online learning resources, gender equity, research by PhD candidates, analysis and impact planning. The final day concluded with feedback from GreenME Advisory Board representatives **Ania Balducci and Mattias Sandberg**, followed by a discussion of next steps for the project.

A central message emerging from the Advisory Board discussion was that demonstrating the benefits of nature based approaches to mental wellbeing is only part of the challenge. **Sustained funding and a larger community of trained professionals will be essential if these approaches are to become embedded in practice and reach more people.**

Balducci and Sandberg also stressed the importance of **education and changing mindsets**. Greater awareness is needed among professionals, institutions and communities about new ways of supporting mental wellbeing, including approaches that recognise the role of nature, green spaces and everyday environments.

"GreenME has always been about going beyond understanding whether nature benefits mental health of all. We want to understand how these mental health benefits can be socio-environmentally just, and how this knowledge can support real change in policy and practice. The discussions in Bologna showed how much progress has been made towards that ambition and, importantly, what

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101084198

UK Research and Innovation

we still want to achieve together during the final year" has confirmed Margarita Triguero-Mas GreenME's Scientific Co-coordinator.

Another key theme was **legacy**. As GreenME moves towards its later stages, ensuring that its knowledge, methods and partnerships continue beyond the project itself will be critical. The Advisory Board highlighted the importance of translating the project's learning into longer term structures, professional practice and policy.

From a Swedish perspective, the discussion also pointed to the opportunities for learning from GreenME at national level. While Sweden has considerable experience in areas related to nature, health and wellbeing, the project offers new approaches and lessons that could help further develop how these connections are understood and put into practice.

The General Assembly also placed a strong emphasis on experiential learning. On the second day, participants moved beyond the meeting room to experience GreenME principles in practice, including **mosaic production and walks through the** Eta Beta **spaces**, creating opportunities to reflect on creativity, nature, social connection and wellbeing. The official programme also included a study tour to **Battirame11 and Salus Space**, involving all meeting participants.

These activities illustrated a principle at the heart of GreenME: supporting mental wellbeing is not only a matter of healthcare, but can also involve the places people inhabit, opportunities for meaningful participation, contact with nature and stronger connections between people and their communities.

As the Bologna meeting came to a close, partners looked ahead to GreenME's next phase with a shared challenge: **turning research and demonstration into lasting change**. This will require investment, skilled professionals, continued education and cooperation across sectors, as well as ensuring that the knowledge generated by GreenME remains useful and accessible long after the project formally ends.

"At this stage of GreenME, it is very rewarding to see how the different pieces of the project are coming together. From understanding existing green care approaches and generating new scientific evidence, to working with stakeholders and developing guidance that can support future action, the Bologna meeting allowed us to see the bigger picture. We are now looking forward to making the most of this final year and turning this collective work into lasting impact." Helen Cole GreenME's Scientific Co-coordinator

The GreenME consortium will meet again for its final General Assembly Meeting in Dortmund on 2–4 June 2027, hosted by the ILS – Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development. Marking an important milestone as the project approaches its conclusion, the meeting will be an opportunity to reflect on GreenME's achievements and discuss its legacy. As part of the meeting, GreenME will also have a dedicated space at the IGA 2027 in Dortmund, providing a unique opportunity to showcase the project and bring its work on nature and mental health closer to a wider audience.

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101084198

UK Research and Innovation

About GreenME

GreenME is a Horizon Europe project focused on advancing green care to improve adults' mental health and wellbeing equity. The project brings together 19 partners from across Europe and 1 US partner to bridge science, policy, and society for a greener and more inclusive future.

For more information, visit: www.greenme-project.eu

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101084198

UK Research and Innovation