

Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin – UCare/ BSB00822

Project Description:

OBJECTIVE:

Strengthening urban resilience and mitigating the impact of climate change through the strategic regeneration of green spaces in urban areas of the Black Sea Basin, thereby promoting biodiversity, improving air quality, reducing the urban heat island effect, and encouraging community engagement.

ACTIVITIES:

- Inventorying and mapping of plant species in urban green areas of the Black Sea Basin region
- Regeneration of green areas in Ungheni, Moldova (French Park), Thermi, Greece and Tulcea, România
- Establishing the „Green Deal Promoters” network
- Study visits for the exchange of best practices and solutions regarding biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation
- Creation of community volunteer groups for environmental protection and combating climate change
- Youth „Green Deal” camp
- Education and awareness activities to promote green urban solutions
- Public engagement events to promote biodiversity and climate change adaptation

A promising start for mitigating the impact of climate change

October 17th 2025. In the presence of over 65 participants, the project „Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin – UCare” (BSB00822) was launched in Ungheni. The project is funded by the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme 2021–2027 and implemented by Ungheni City Hall (project leader), in partnership with the municipalities of Tulcea (Romania) and Thermi (Greece), as well as Regional Center for Sustainable Development Ungheni.

At the kick-off event, the following speakers took the floor: Vitalie Vrabie, Mayor of Ungheni city; Vladimir Bolea, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development; Ion Pinzari, Director of Regional Development Agency Centre; Ion Boncea, representative of the Municipality of Tulcea; Ioannis Pavlou, representative of the Municipality of Thermi.

All speakers emphasized the importance of cross-border cooperation in addressing climate change challenges, as well as the role of green infrastructure in sustainable urban development and in improving citizens’ quality of life.

At the same time, the main directions of action of the project were presented, and the discussion panel “A green, smart and sustainable city – the city of the future” brought together specialists from various fields, who analyzed modern concepts for designing and maintaining green spaces and integrating green solutions into local development.

The conference concluded with the establishment of the next steps for the implementation of the UCare project, aimed at reducing climate vulnerabilities and improving the quality of urban life in the Black Sea Basin region.



Project Leader: Ungheni City Hall



Ungheni City Hall

Ungheni city is located in the central-western part of the Republic of Moldova, on the eastern bank of Prut River. According to data from the latest census (2024), it is the third-largest city in the country, after Chișinău and Bălți, with a population of over 26,000 inhabitants.

The first documentary attestation of the locality dates to August 20th, 1462, in a charter issued by Stephen the Great, with the original name being Unghiul (1462–1587). The city stretches for over 10 kilometers along the border with Romania and is situated at an altitude of 62 meters above sea level. The total area is 16.4 km².

Ungheni is an important economic center, featuring a well-developed road network, one of the largest railway hubs in the Republic of Moldova, and a free economic zone. Twice— in 2011 and 2023, respectively— the locality was declared the Youth Capital of the Republic of Moldova. Thanks to the Program “EU4Moldova: Key Regions”, launched in 2020, as well as dozens of implemented projects, the municipality of Ungheni has experienced much more dynamic development in recent years. Water supply and sewage networks, roads, and green spaces have been rehabilitated, and bicycle paths have been built (currently one of the largest networks in the Republic of Moldova), among other improvements.

In Ungheni city, there are 7 early childhood education institutions, 5 high schools and one primary school, 2 colleges (Agro-Industrial and Medical), and a Vocational School.

Cultural life is supported by the Palace of Culture—one of the largest in the Republic of Moldova, the Multifunctional Cultural Center “Regina Maria”, the Music School, School of Fine Arts “Raisa Cojocaru”, the Museum of History and Ethnography, and others.

Among the municipal enterprises operating in Ungheni and ensuring the city’s functionality there are: “Servicii Comunale Ungheni” LTD and the Landscaping Sector, “Apă-Canal Ungheni” LTD, “AVE-Ungheni” LTD (waste management), and “Comgaz-Plus” (production and distribution of thermal energy).

In recent years, Ungheni city has become a model for attracting investments, with numerous projects implemented that significantly improve the quality of life of its citizens. In just the past two years, the number of projects has exceeded 40, with investments reaching hundreds of millions of lei. In addition to investments in road and pedestrian infrastructure, as well as water supply and sewage networks, the focus has been placed on revitalizing green spaces and urban mobility, creating SMART areas, and supporting education and training.

Among the most recent achievements are: the reconstruction of the Brotherhood Square, the rehabilitation of the Central Stadium, the development of Delia Lake area and the island on the lake, and the renewal of the urban public transport fleet through the purchase of 18 new vehicles.

At present, around 20 projects are being implemented, focusing on the rehabilitation of road and pedestrian infrastructure, improving children’s education conditions, preserving cultural heritage, increasing energy efficiency, and rehabilitating the housing sector, among others.

Within *the UCare project*, Ungheni City Hall is the project leader, with the mission of strengthening partnerships between cities in the Black Sea Basin and partner institutions to ensure urban resilience and mitigate the impact of climate change.

At the same time, it has taken on the responsibility of continuing to educate the population in order to prepare people for climate change, while encouraging community involvement in various activities aimed at environmental protection.

The regeneration of the urban green area of the French Park in Ungheni is one of the municipality’s main objectives, this green space being one of the largest in the city. Thanks to the UCare project, in synergy with other important environmental projects, this area will become attractive both to locals and tourists. It is also located near important tourist attractions, including the “Gustave Eiffel” railway bridge over Prut River, the Museum of History and Ethnography, and the Palace of Culture.



Brotherhood Square

Cities united for a greener future

Meet the project partners

Thermi, Greece

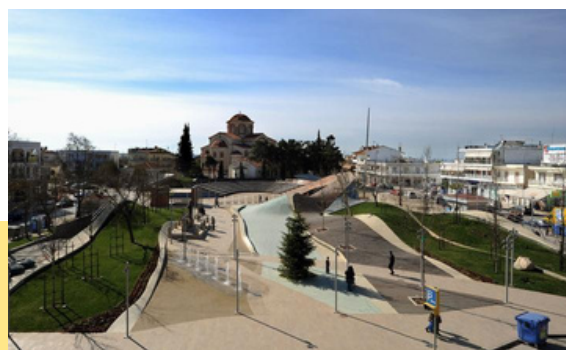
The Municipality of Thermi is a region with diverse fields and development opportunities. Located in the Eastern part of the Thessaloniki Regional Unit (Central Macedonia), at a distance of 15 kilometers from the metropolitan center of Thessaloniki, Thermi consists of 14 local communities, with a population of 55,358 inhabitants, according to the 2021 census.

Thermi is an area with dynamic and economically viable development, evolving both as a residential extension of the Thessaloniki metropolitan area and as a hub for the establishment of industrial units, tertiary sector activities, and highly specialized services, while maintaining the characteristics of a developed agricultural economy.

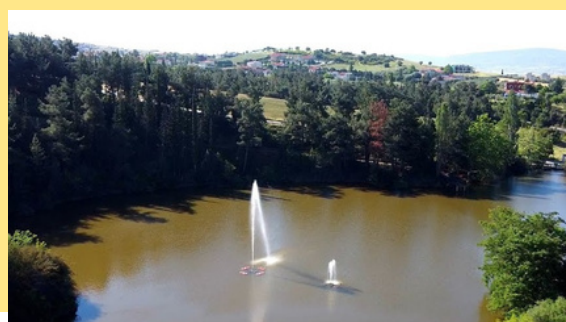
Among the notable institutions are:

- National Centre for Research and Technological Development (CERTH)
- Hellenic Food Authority (EFET)
- NOESIS Science Center and Technology Museum
- American Farm School
- National Agricultural Research Foundation (NAGREF)
- Facilities of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Experimental Farm, School of Physical Education and Sport Science, School of Fine Arts)
- International Hellenic University
- European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

In addition, there is significant commercial activity, with some of the largest shopping centers in Thessaloniki located in Thermi. Of major importance is also the “Macedonia” International Airport in Thermi, along with numerous entertainment venues, casinos, and major hotel complexes.



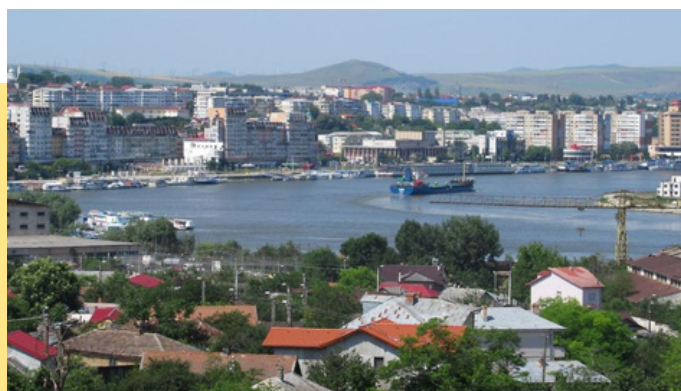
Thermi Municipality between stone and nature



Within the UCare project, the mission of the Municipality of Thermi is to integrate Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) into the urban structure in order to protect the area against climate change.

Emphasis is also placed on implementing green infrastructure and fostering environmental awareness within the local community.

Tulcea, Romania



Tulcea Municipality, at the gateway to the Danube Delta

The Municipality of Tulcea, with a population of 65,624 inhabitants (according to the 2021 census), is located in southeastern Romania, at the gateway to the Danube Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It is the county seat of the county with the same name in Dobrogea, Romania. It is situated on seven hills of the Tulcea Hills, on a site continuously inhabited since the Gumelnița culture period (2900–2200 BC). The city was first documented in 1506.

Tulcea is an important industrial center. Shipbuilding and ship repair activities are carried out here. It is also home to the country’s only producer of calcined alumina. Part of the local economy has developed around tourism, as evidenced by investments made in building new hotels. One of the main attractions is the aquarium, which is the largest in Eastern Europe.

The municipality plays a key role in regional development, combining urban growth with environmental protection and sustainable resource management. Its mission is to improve citizens’ quality of life through sustainable urban development, modernization of public infrastructure, and the promotion of environmentally responsible policies. Its main activities include urban planning, public service management, development of green spaces, environmental protection, and project implementation.

Within the UCare project, the Municipality of Tulcea contributes as an active partner, promoting nature-based solutions, supporting climate resilience, and encouraging stakeholder collaboration. A key initiative for the future is the Reservoir Park regeneration project, which will be transformed into a climate-resilient green space and will serve as a model for sustainable urban development in the city.

Regional Center for Sustainable Development – partner in the UCare project

The Regional Center for Sustainable Development (RCSD) is a non-governmental and non-profit organization based in Ungheni city, founded in 2001, which promotes the sustainable development of communities at local, regional, and cross-border levels. The mission of RCSD is to promote European values and to contribute to strengthening the capacities of local public authorities, civil society, and the business sector, facilitating citizen involvement in community development processes and in the formulation of public policies aimed at improving quality of life.

Throughout its activity, RCSD has implemented numerous projects and programs in areas such as sustainable development, civic participation, good local governance, economic development, and cross-border cooperation.

The organization carries out various activities of information, training, and consultancy for community stakeholders, including local public authorities, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, civic initiative groups, and economic agents.

Its main activities include organizing seminars, training sessions, public debates, awareness campaigns, and facilitating local and international partnerships.

Within the UCare project, RCSD contributes to the implementation of educational and awareness-raising activities regarding climate change adaptation and the importance of urban green spaces.

The organization is involved in developing and implementing educational programs for youth and the community, organizing information campaigns, and facilitating dialogue with citizens, so that the local community is actively engaged in protecting and enhancing green spaces and in promoting sustainable solutions for cities more resilient to climate change.

Additionally, through its activities, RCSD contributes to the exchange of best practices among partners from the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Greece, increasing public awareness of the role of green infrastructure in improving environmental quality and quality of life in urban communities.

The French Park in Ungheni – under experts' scrutiny

The mapping of the French Park has begun. A team led by Ion Roșca, PhD in Biology and director of the National Botanical Garden (Institute) “Alexandru Ciubotaru” from Chișinău, will scan the entire 13.9 hectare area using a state-of-the-art drone.



The modern equipment used for scanning allows for the inventory of the park's current condition, as well as the phytosanitary status of each tree.

At the same time, it will enable the precise identification of tree species and all vegetation. It will also determine exactly which trees should be preserved and which need to be removed.

Only trees affected by diseases or pests will be cut down, to prevent future issues during or after the landscaping works.

Ion Roșca stated that every effort will be made to preserve as much of the existing flora as possible.



At the end of the process, a study will be developed in accordance with all standards, along with a final report on the current condition of the French Park, including a full dendrological assessment of the entire area.

Further scans and analyses will follow. This is a complex but essential activity for the next stages of the project. It should be noted that new trees will be planted in the park, and their species will be selected in coordination with specialists from the Botanical Garden.

Previously, on March 3rd 2025, the Environmental Agency of the Republic of Moldova issued the environmental approval, which allows landscaping works to be carried out in the French Park. This is the first time in Ungheni that such a comprehensive and standards-compliant mapping is being conducted by well-known experts in the field.



The program that turns environmental care into concrete actions

In Ungheni, the Volunteer Program „My Community for Environment and Climate” was officially launched, aiming to transform concern for the environment and climate into concrete actions by promoting ecological volunteering and civic engagement.

The event, held on March 6th 2026, brought together 51 participants. All expressed their interest in developing a greener and more environmentally responsible city and showed readiness to get involved at any time.

Three volunteer groups were also created:

- **The Green City Group** – will focus on activities related to the development and maintenance of demonstration urban gardens, promotion of urban agriculture, planting flowers, trees and shrubs, and the development of green spaces;
- **The Biodiversity and Habitats Group** – will focus on protecting local species, restoring ecosystems, and improving urban habitats;
- **The Clean and Responsible City Group** – will be involved in urban clean-up activities, waste reduction, and promoting environmental education.

The main slogan of the program is: „**When the community gets involved, nature wins.**”

The aim is to engage at least 45 volunteers, along with as many supporters as possible, who will contribute to raising awareness about environmental and climate issues, improving green spaces, and strengthening civic spirit and community cohesion.

The Volunteer Program “My Community for Environment and Climate”, initiated within the project “Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin – UCare”, represents an important step in mobilizing the community towards a greener, cleaner, and more environmentally responsible city.



Joint meeting of the Green Deal Promoters Network

A first exchange of opinions, best practices, and experiences took place in Ungheni during the meeting of the Green Deal Promoters Network.

Representatives of all partners (the municipalities of Tulcea and Thermi, as well as the Regional Center for Sustainable Development) participated in the meeting.

„We face the same problems and can identify the same solutions, adapt them, and replicate them. For this reason, we aimed to collaborate with partners from the Black Sea Basin—to mitigate the effects of climate change, which have intensified in recent years. Let us create resilient and sustainable cities together,” stated from the outset Victoria Darie, project manager.

The Mayor of Ungheni, Vitalie Vrabie, expressed his satisfaction with the partnership between the three municipalities. Referring to the project itself, he emphasized that “it is one of the most important and interesting, because cities are not made up only of roads and buildings, but also of green spaces in which each of us finds ourselves.”

Participants exchanged views on green infrastructure and alignment with European environmental legislation. Guests from Tulcea and Thermi learned about the best practices of the Municipality of Ungheni regarding the regeneration of green spaces and water basins, as well as future projects.



The Green Deal Promoters Network: activities and objectives

- Supporting the development and implementation of policies aligned with the European Green Deal and national environmental strategies
- Facilitating cooperation among network members for the development and promotion of environmental initiatives
- Exchanging of experiences, information, and lessons learned from best practices in the region
- Assisting members in accessing funding opportunities for environmental and climate initiatives
- Supporting awareness campaigns, training activities, and education on climate action and environmental protection
- Encouraging civic participation and youth involvement in environmental initiatives
- Promoting innovation in green technologies, smart resource management, and sustainable economic development
- Initiating community and transnational actions contributing to environmental education

Members of the Green Pact Promoters Network:

- **Aim to ensure transparency, integrity, and high ethical standards in all joint activities that promote sustainable development and environmental responsibility**
- **Will act with honesty, fairness, and openness in all actions and decisions**
- **Will promote environmental sustainability, climate resilience, the principles of the circular economy, and the values of the European Green Deal**

Ungheni – Tulcea: strengthening an increasingly close relationship

Thanks to the project “Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin / UCare”, collaboration and partnership between Ungheni and Tulcea are becoming stronger.

At the end of 2025, Tulcea hosted a delegation from the Municipality of Ungheni, led by Mayor Vitalie Vrabie, on a familiarization visit that marked a new chapter in the relationship between the two administrations. The willingness of both sides to share best practices turned the visit into a valuable moment for strengthening institutional relations.

The Mayor of Ungheni, **Vitalie Vrabie**, stated: „I welcome the openness to continuous dialogue and the sharing of experiences, which represent the key to developing sustainable communities capable of facing common challenges. Our partnership with Tulcea shows that together we can build more resilient, greener, and better-prepared cities for the future.”

The Mayor of Tulcea, **Ştefan Ilie**, added: „The growing closeness between Tulcea and Ungheni opens new perspectives for creating lasting partnerships. Only by cooperating we can transform local challenges into real opportunities for innovation and build modern, future-oriented cities together.”

At the beginning of March 2026, representatives of the Municipality of Tulcea—Deputy Mayor Andaluzia Luca and the Executive Director of the National Agency for Environment and Protected Areas – Tulcea County Environmental Directorate, Mirela Aurelia Raicu— participated at an official visit to Ungheni. The guests met with Mayor Vitalie Vrabie, reiterating their willingness and desire to implement joint projects and maintain a long-term partnership.



Visiting Tulcea



The mayors of the two municipalities expressed their firm intention to formalize relations between Ungheni and Tulcea by signing a cooperation and twinning agreement, which would strengthen the existing partnership and open new opportunities for mutual development.



Visiting Ungheni

Ungheni and Thermi – partnership for green and innovative cities

On February 6th the Mayor of Ungheni, Vitalie Vrabie, held an official meeting with the Mayor of Thermi, Greece, Theodoros Papadopoulos.

The discussions confirmed the willingness of both parties to develop joint initiatives and exchange experiences in various fields, including green urban development, sustainable mobility, digitalization of public services, and community engagement.

Vitalie Vrabie stated: “The partnership with Thermi represents an opportunity to jointly find modern solutions for greener and more resilient cities.”

Theodoros Papadopoulos added: “Urban challenges can be overcome more effectively only through collaboration and the exchange of experience.”

The visit took place within the project “Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin – UCare.”



The meeting between Theodoros Papadopoulos and Vitalie Vrabie

The French Park from Ungheni will be regenerated and modernized

In two years, the French Park in Ungheni will be unrecognizable. This will be made possible through the implementation of two important projects:

➤ The project „Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin - UCare”, funded by the European Union through the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

This project focuses on the inventory and mapping of plant species in the park, a tree-planting program called „Partners’ Alley”, and the organization of interactive community activities aimed at raising awareness about the need to regenerate green spaces and, implicitly, protect the environment.

➤ The project „Regeneration of the French Park in the Municipality of Ungheni through the integration of green and smart solutions”, implemented by the Government of the Republic of Moldova through the Regional Development Agency Centre, with financial support from the National Fund for Regional and Local Development and contribution of the Municipality.

This project includes the modernization of an area of approximately 4 hectares, which involves: planting trees and shrubs; redesigning and extending pathways using ecological and permeable materials; creating separate routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and runners; installing pedestrian walkways and access ramps for people with disabilities; developing a water supply system with underground pipelines and external hydrants; installing new urban furniture; and building a public lighting system using energy-efficient LED lamps.

NOTE:

The French Park in Ungheni, located on the banks of the Prut River, is the largest urban green area, covering a total surface of 13.9 hectares. In March 2025, the Environmental Agency issued the necessary environmental approval for the implementation of landscaping works in the park..

Exchange of best practices in green space regeneration

Representatives of the municipalities of Tulcea and Thermi became acquainted with the best practices of the Municipality of Ungheni regarding the regeneration of green spaces and water basins.

They visited “Micul Cluj” Park, covering an area of approximately 11 hectares, currently one of the most well-developed green spaces in the municipality. At the same time, they visited two other locations that are set to be developed: the French Park and the Urban Garden.

At the end of the visit, they stated that they were impressed both by the achievements so far and by the future projects, which they described as very ambitious.

Taking the opportunity, they also visited the National Botanical Garden “Alexandru Ciubotaru” in Chișinău, an institution founded in 1950, with extensive experience in vegetation research and urban greening across the Republic of Moldova.

The exchange of experience and best practices will continue, as the common goal is to increase resilience to climate change and mitigate its effects.



Interactive lessons for environmental education

Through this educational program, the UCare project aims to contribute to shaping a generation of informed, engaged young people prepared to act for a greener and more sustainable future.

On March 10th 2026, the implementation of the educational program “The Effects of Climate Change and Green Solutions” was launched in Ungheni, as part of the project “Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin – UCare.”

The first lessons took place at “Mihai Eminescu” High School, with the participation of 101 fifth-grade students. Through games, practical activities, and guided discussions, they discovered:

- the difference between weather and climate;
- the causes of climate change – both natural and human-induced;
- how climate change affects us and what concrete solutions can be applied in the municipality of Ungheni.

These lessons aimed to familiarize students with fundamental concepts related to weather phenomena, as well as the causes and effects of climate change.

Guided discussions allowed them to identify human activities that influence the local climate and to become aware of both personal and collective responsibility.

It should be noted that, during these interactive lessons, participating students strengthened their observation, analysis, and collaboration skills, identified real problems in the urban environment, and proposed concrete solutions for environmental protection.

In total, 20 interactive lessons will be held, with an estimated participation of over 600 secondary school students.

Educational program for schools

The Effects of Climate Change and Urban Green Solutions

Target group: students in grades V–IX

Structure: 3 thematic modules:

- Climate change and its impact
- The importance of biodiversity
- Green solutions for the future

Number of lessons: 20

Teaching and learning methods:

- Interactive and participatory learning
- Experiments and practical activities
- Role-playing and simulations
- Use of digital and multimedia resources
- Project-based learning

At the end of the program, students will be able to:

- understand how and why the climate is changing and its impact on people and the environment
- appreciate the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems in nature protection
- learn and apply green solutions for schools, cities, and communities
- think critically, collaborate in teams, and engage civically in environmental actions

Expected results

The program aims to achieve clear, measurable, and relevant outcomes for developing students’ ecological, civic, and scientific competencies.



IMPRESSIONS

Daria MUNTEANU, 5th grade, „Mihai Eminescu” High School:

Participating in the lesson on the impact of climate change changed my perspective on resources I used to take for granted, such as water and air.

I understood that our daily actions, from recycling to planting trees, are essential in combating negative effects such as increased pollution or soil degradation. It is our duty to protect nature to ensure a healthy future.

Nicoleta BULBAȘ, 8th grade, „Gheorghe Asachi” High School:

Thanks to the lesson about climate and weather changes, I learned many interesting and useful things about planting trees, preventing high temperatures, and protecting the environment. I also discovered some rules that must be followed during heatwaves.

This activity was a valuable source of information that will help us apply new knowledge in various school projects, especially in biology, but also in other activities.

Both I and my classmates are grateful to the organizers. We will pass on the knowledge we have gained.

A greener and more attractive city

Planting for our future

Both in autumn and in spring, hundreds of Ungheni residents—from young to old—along with representatives of the business sector and civil society, local elected officials and public servants, students and teachers, took part in planting activities to make Ungheni greener, better arranged, and more attractive.

November 25th 2025. Over 30 ornamental plants, trees, and decorative saplings—including magnolias, red Canadian maples, rhododendrons, golden euonymus, and others—were planted in the “Grigore Vieru” Square.

Volunteers, teachers and students from the nearby “Vasile Alecsandri” High School, municipal councilors, public officials, and representatives of municipal enterprises participated in the planting activities. It is worth noting that the decorative plants were purchased through the project „Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin – UCare.”

Significantly, the “Grigore Vieru” Square was enhanced with new plants on its anniversary—November 25th — marking exactly 15 years since its inauguration



March 14th 2026. Over 300 red oak saplings were planted in “Micul Cluj” Park. Dozens of employees from the City Hall, public institutions, and municipal enterprises, along with volunteers and municipal councilors, participated in the greening action—it was a truly large-scale effort.

From now on, “Micul Cluj” Park will be even more beautiful and greener, offering residents a place to breathe clean air and enjoy their free time in a healthy and pleasant way.



The tree planting activities took place both within the ecological campaign (“Bi-monthly Environmental Campaign”) organized by Ungheni Municipality and as part of the project “Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin – UCare” (BSB00822), funded by the European Union through the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

Further planting of saplings, trees, decorative plants, and greenery is planned in other areas of the municipality of Ungheni.

Interreg VI-B NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme is cofinanced by the European Union

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Project „Urban Climate Adaptation and Recovery Efforts through Green Infrastructure in Black Sea Basin - UCare”, BSB00822

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