

FUTURE-PROOFING ADULT LEARNING IN CITIES



CUENCA, Spain

The Urban Forest Innovation Lab

Key facts



The city of Cuenca, Spain, has set up the Urban Forest Innovation Lab (UFIL) to foster the city's local development, by promoting an innovative and sustainable exploitation of Cuenca's forest resources.

Timeframe and funding

The programme started in 2018 and is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

City population

54,898

Governing body

Cuenca City Council

Link

[UFIL - Urban Forest Innovation Lab | UIA - Urban Innovative Actions \(uia-initiative.eu\)](#)

Main objectives



Cuenca is the EU city with the vastest forest area (53.000 hectares). However, prior to the innovation lab project, the city was underexploiting its forest resources. There were no concrete initiatives to harness the economic capacity of the forests sustainably and no educational programmes to train people on forest or bio economy. This hampered the city's ability to attract and retain talented people, exacerbating Cuenca's existing problem of an ageing and declining population. To take advantage of the economic, social and environmental benefits of sustainable forest exploitation, tackle the city's labour market issues and diversify the local economy, Cuenca has developed an innovative forest business industry in the city through the activities of the Urban Forest Innovation Lab.

Content and mode of delivery



The Urban Forest Innovation Lab has a myriad of initiatives to promote innovative forest exploitation. The first is an innovative training model to facilitate the creation of businesses in the field of forest bio economy. The training has three main pillars: business and environmental innovation in forestry, 21st century skills and forest bio economy. As a complement to the training, participants work practically on challenges presented by the lab's sponsors. Throughout the training, multidisciplinary groups of participants from different backgrounds (industrial, agroforest, business administration and IT) work together, in order to identify possible solutions to the presented challenges.

The second initiative is an opportunity for participants to incubate and accelerate their business projects for testing and prototyping during the trainings. Cuenca's forest is the test ground for ideas and solutions, with regular monitoring from experienced professionals. Thirdly, the innovation lab conducts extensive research on forest opportunities, as well as main areas for business development and innovation in Cuenca. Finally, UFIL develops action plans for Cuenca's forestry sector in collaboration with the national government and various regional governments.

Stakeholders



The City of Cuenca is collaborating with universities, the Confederation of Employers and Industries of Spain (CEOE), the International Forest Stewardship Council and other local stakeholders in the implementation of the UFIL project. Because of project delays in 2019, the lab launched its training activities in March 2020 with about 36 participants.

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