

The logo is a green hexagon with a yellow border, featuring several yellow dandelion flower heads. The text "PESTICIDE FREE TOWNS" is written in bold, black, uppercase letters across the center.

**PESTICIDE  
FREE TOWNS**

A photograph of a dandelion plant with several yellow flowers and green leaves, growing from a patch of moss on a rock. The background is a soft-focus green field.

# **Pesticide Free Towns: A Diversity of European Approaches**



# Executive Summary



This report explores the various approaches taken by eight European member states to reduce or ban pesticide use in “sensitive” public areas and towns at large. The report underscores that phasing out pesticides in these areas is a matter of political will and that pesticide-free town maintenance is already successfully implemented by a multitude of actors and municipalities. Sharing their experiences, building on their knowledge and spreading alternative methods would be crucial to speed up the process to eliminate pesticides from public areas across Europe.

The pioneering towns that follow a zero-pesticide policy showcase and refute any doubts – that this kind of green urban management is possible. In the Netherlands, Belgium or Denmark pesticide use data for municipalities and/or public authorities are available, making this development traceable. The examples show that new and effective approaches and technologies have been developed. This is an important lesson: we can do without synthetic pesticides if only we rethink the problem, foster

acceptance for biodiversity in urban spaces, and stimulate the development of alternatives.

The report also shows that there remain large discrepancies between states when it comes to effective national policies on pesticide use reduction in public areas. Belgium, France, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden already adopted national legal provisions – to different degrees – to ban pesticide use in ‘sensitive public areas’, such as playgrounds and parks. Such legal provisions are still largely lacking for Italy and Germany, where only certain pesticide restrictions are in place. Unlike Italy, Germany still set up a national programme to support cities and towns that decide to phase-out pesticides and provide technical guidance.

We can see that member states chose varying approaches with different emphases. Luxemburg and Belgium made significant inroads to reduce pesticide use on a national level, placing emphasis especially on public awareness-raising and cooperation with NGOs. The Dutch authorities provide a good example

of gradually phasing out pesticides for town maintenances, signified by robust reporting of pesticide use by public agencies and a steady spreading of alternative methods. However, the Dutch example also shows very active attempts by pesticide producers to block effective regulation.

Overall, several trends can be observed across the analysed member states:

- The countries in which successful pesticide bans in public areas are implemented had long periods of precursory initiatives, pioneering towns, and gradual phase-out plans.
- These efforts were met with active resistance from the pesticide industry, and they have managed to delay effective regulation for a long time.
- Precursory initiatives allowed the spreading of alternative methods, training operators and showcasing that alternatives-to-pesticides work.
- This went together with raising awareness and citizens mobilising political will both at the local and national levels for pesticide reduction. To our knowledge, no country/region/town faced resistance from the general public on these changes, on the contrary.
- Across all countries we can find examples of towns and municipalities that go beyond provisions in national pesticide policies, adopting a role of forerunners to phase out pesticides.



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# Introduction



Citizens across Europe have long called for a reduction in pesticide use, repeatedly voicing their concerns for human health and the environment. Within the last ten years, two European Citizen's Initiatives (ECIs) successfully collected over 1 million signatures to demand the phasing out of pesticide use. The core demands of the latest ECI, "Save Bees and Farmers", are the following:

1. A reduction of 80% in the use of synthetic pesticides by 2030 and 100% by 2035 in the EU.
2. Measures to restore biodiversity on agricultural land.
3. A massive support to farmers to transition towards agroecology.

Public areas, such as parks or playgrounds, are of special concern for pesticide reduction to

safeguard both public health and biodiversity. Through the campaign "Pesticide Free Towns", PAN Europe has encouraged banning pesticides in towns and public areas, tracing national developments, sharing best practices, and encouraging regional and municipal actions. We help to provide a platform and network for towns pledging to phase out pesticides. As part of this campaign, this report aims to give an exploratory analysis of various approaches taken by EU member states to end pesticide use in public areas, including the recent development inspired by the European Green Deal.

At EU level, policy objectives to reduce pesticide use and risks are slowly making their way into EU regulations – albeit unfortunately with much less ambition. In May 2020, the European Commission published the Farm-to-Fork and

Biodiversity Strategies in the frame of the European Green Deal. Both strategies include pesticide reduction policies as integral steps to an ecological transition. The Commission's 2030 targets include a reduction of the overall use and risk of pesticides by 50% as well as a 50% reduction in the use of the more hazardous pesticides. Thus, after years of advocacy by civil society and thousands of scientific publications demonstrating the risks of pesticides, the European Commission has acknowledged that the unnecessary use of pesticides is endangering people's health and is a major driver behind the collapse of biodiversity.

To reach the EU objectives, pesticide reduction policies are not only needed for the agricultural sectors but for all areas where pesticides are applied, including on infrastructure, public green spaces, railroads and forests. In the EU "Sustainable Use of Pesticide Directive" (SUD), Article 12, entails that Member States should "ensure that the use of pesticides is minimised or prohibited in certain specific areas", these include public parks and gardens, sports and recreation grounds, school grounds and children's playgrounds as well as protected nature conservation areas. Thus, member states already have a responsibility to take action to modify municipal governance to reduce pesticides.

## **Dangers to health and environment: why we need pesticide-free towns**

Ending the use of pesticides in public areas and towns at large is a crucial step to protect public health and to counteract ongoing biodiversity collapse.

The health risks associated with pesticide exposure have been long known and well researched. Pesticide exposure has been linked to a variety of health risks: from acute poisoning during spraying to chronic poisoning, possibly leading to cancer, Parkinson's disease, neurodevelopmental disorders, infertility as well as many other health issues. These pathologies

can strike not only those who spray pesticides but also those who are exposed to them, even in small quantities. Children, pregnant women and the elderly are among the most sensitive groups.

In addition, and contrary to a common belief: pesticides do not remain at the location they are sprayed: they contaminate the air, soil and water. By doing so, they contribute heavily to the destruction of biodiversity: killing pollinators, destroying aquatic ecosystems as well as reducing the fertility of soils by

destroying their microbiota and macrobiota, including earthworm populations.

These dangers have been confirmed by a plethora of scientific research; further information and reports are frequently made available by PAN Europe and its members (available [here](#)). To highlight just one alarming example: In 2021, a study undertaken by a team of international scientists found 23 different agricultural pesticides in children's playgrounds in South Tyrol, Italy, urging public authorities

to take action to protect children's health (see [here](#)). Ending pesticide use in public areas and establishing appropriately sized buffers zones are easily implementable to minimise both health and environmental hazards associated to pesticides.

This report aims to provide an overview of approaches taken by various EU Member States concerning a phase-out of pesticides in public areas through a variety of angles and regulatory systems.



# Context:

## International Initiatives for Pesticide-Free Public Areas

### United Nations on pesticides and human rights

In 2017 the Special Rapporteur on the right to food published a report ([A/HRC/34/48](#)) elaborating on “the right to adequate food” in relation to pesticides. Indeed, adequate food must be guaranteed to achieve an acceptable standard of living and to ensure that food is available and affordable for present and future generations. Pesticide use can endanger these rights: *“pesticides are responsible for biodiversity loss and water and soil contamination and for negatively affecting the productivity of croplands, thereby threatening future food production”*. The report ends by providing, among others, the following recommendations to member states:

- Enact safety measures to ensure adequate protection for pregnant women, children and other groups who are particularly susceptible to pesticide exposure.
- Create buffer zones around plantations and farms until pesticides are phased out to reduce pesticide exposure risk.
- Take necessary measures to safeguard the public’s right to information.

- Encourage farmers to adopt agroecological practices to enhance biodiversity and naturally suppress pests and to adopt measures such as crop rotation, soil fertility management and crop selection appropriate for local conditions.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, Dr Marcos A. Orellana, visited Italy in December 2021 and in a statement, shared his preliminary observations, among others, his concern considering Italy’s pesticide policies (see [here](#)). He elaborates on the importance of “no-spray” zones, considering them “essential to protect people and vulnerable areas, including schools, playgrounds and hospitals, nature reserves and archaeological sites”. He conclusively calls upon Italy “to ensure that buffer zones are appropriately sized to protect people, waters, and sensitive areas from the serious risks and harms of pesticide spray drift.” His final report will be presented to the Human Right Council in September 2022.

# EU Regulatory Framework and Ongoing Initiatives

## The EU Directive on Sustainable Use of Pesticides

The EU Directive on Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUD) was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009, following a decade of ongoing discussions. The final wording regarding pesticide use in specific or sensitive areas is as follows:

### Recital (16)

*Use of pesticides can be particularly dangerous in very sensitive areas, such as Natura 2000 sites protected in accordance with Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC. In other places such as public parks and gardens, sports and recreation grounds, school grounds and children's playgrounds, and in the close vicinity of healthcare facilities, the risks from exposure to pesticides are high. In these areas, the use of pesticides should be minimised or prohibited. When pesticides are used, appropriate risk management measures should be established and low-risk pesticides as well as biological control measures should be considered in the first place.*

### Article 12

*Member States shall, having due regard for the necessary hygiene and public health requirements and biodiversity, or the results of relevant risk assessments, ensure that the use of pesticides is minimised or prohibited in certain specific areas. Appropriate risk management measures shall be taken, and the use of low-risk plant protection products as defined in Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 and biological control measures shall be considered in the first place.*

The specific areas in question are:

- (a) areas used by the general public or by vulnerable groups as defined in Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, such as public parks and gardens, sports and recreation grounds, school grounds and children's playgrounds and in the close vicinity of healthcare facilities;
- (b) protected areas as defined in Directive 2000/60/EC or other areas identified for the purposes of establishing the necessary conservation measures in accordance with the provisions of Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;
- (c) recently treated areas used by or accessible to agricultural workers.

In some Member States, such as France or Belgium, the implementation of these provisions in the SUD led to a ban of synthetic pesticide use in public areas years ago. However, in many other Member States, the directive has

remained insufficiently implemented for over a decade now. Pesticide use in the listed “specific areas” remains common practice, including in residential areas, close to playgrounds and in parks.



## European Green Deal

In 2019, the European Commission adopted the European Green Deal (see [here](#)). This was followed by a number of more specific strategies published in May 2020, including the Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F, see [here](#)), the Biodiversity Strategy (BDS, see [here](#)), the Zero Pollution Actionplan (see [here](#)) and the Chemical Strategy (see [here](#)).

The F2F strategy has the following overall objectives in relation to pesticides:

- 50% reduction in pesticides use and risk by 2030.
- 50% reduction of the most hazardous pesticides by 2030, measured using data on the sales of pesticides under Regulation 1185/2009.

The Biodiversity Strategy further adds a key commitment concerning pesticides to be reached by 2030 in its EU Nature Restoration Plan:

- No chemical pesticides are used in sensitive areas such as EU urban green areas.

These strategies have recently obtained agreement from the European Parliament and Council. The European Commission is now working to integrate these strategies into EU policies up for revision, for example, through a revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticide Directive. However, industry actors attempt to undermine the European Green Deal, which risks resulting in delays in its implementation.



# Methodology

This report's objective is to compare developments at the national levels to promote municipal implementation to ban pesticides in public areas and eventually become pesticide-free towns. PAN Europe consulted with its member organisations and together listed a number of examples, identifying actions that were taken at national and regional levels, including campaigns and programmes geared to promote pesticide-free public areas and municipal management. The report aims to encourage an exchange of best practices, sharing insights into ways in which pesticide-free towns can be implemented, publicly supported and communicated to the public. For this purpose, we investigated the following questions:

## Questions examined by this report:

- In which 'public areas' are pesticides banned?
- Which Ministry is responsible for the implementation?
- Is financial support offered to towns?
- Is technical support offered to towns?
- Does the public administration cooperate with NGOs, botanical gardens, universities etc., allowing them to provide technical support and awareness-raising?
- Is a communication campaign organised towards citizens?
- Are municipalities reporting on their pesticide use?
- Are monitoring and control systems in place?
- Are derogations allowed?

Cases were selected based on the familiarity with national campaigns by PAN Europe and its members. PAN Europe has particularly been following the ongoing developments in Belgium. Belgium had various regionally organised campaigns to facilitate pesticide phase-out at municipal levels. It provides great opportunities for comparison while highlighting the potential to share best practices.

Other chosen examples further promised valuable insights due to the countries' policy engagement to reduce pesticides. A study by Kristoffersen and colleagues (2008, see [here](#)) provides a review of pesticide policies and regulations for urban amenity areas in seven European countries. They revealed major differences in political interest, regulations and availability of statistics on pesticide use, with Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany showcasing strong public and political

interest for reducing the use of herbicides to control weeds in urban amenity areas and to have strict regulations. In addition to these countries, we chose to analyse France, Italy, and Luxembourg in our sample.

The report will only briefly touch upon practical recommendations for implementation, methods and techniques or awareness-raising, as these issues have already been dealt with in previous publications available at: [www.pesticide-free-towns.info](http://www.pesticide-free-towns.info).

Due to the report's focus on pesticide policies concerning public areas, not all areas covered under "sensitive areas" in article 12 of the EU Directive on Sustainable Use of Pesticides (SUD) were taken into account. It is further important to add that the SUD was also intended to additionally cover biocide use; however, details have never been included, and biocides will therefore not be considered in this report.



# What is Happening around Europe Regarding Pesticide Free Towns?



## Belgium

In Belgium, permits for and conditions linked to the sale of pesticide products are the jurisdiction of the federal authorities. In addition, each region has its own legislation governing product usage. All three regions have adopted legislation to reduce or ban pesticide use in public areas, but scope and implementation vary.

### Flemish Region

The Flemish government decided in 2002 to gradually introduce a phasing out of pesticide use in public areas. For all public areas, and in publicly accessible private areas over a certain size, a pesticide ban took effect from January 2015 onwards (see [here](#)). The ban includes car parks, sports fields, recreational areas, amusement parks, playgrounds etc. Exemptions to this ban are permitted in specific circumstances. An overview of pesticide usage data for 2020 by municipalities is available

online, indicating pesticide use both with and without 'generic deviations' (see [here](#)).

As a pioneer in the field, the Flemish region set a good example showing that pesticide phase-out in publicly accessed areas is possible. The case established a good illustration of the concept of transitioning through setting overall targets and clear timelines, but also accompanying the process with technical support and communication tools (information material, conferences, etc). The box below shows excerpts from the Flemish public-awareness campaign.

## **Example: Flemish Campaign: “Healthier Without” (pesticides)** **“Zonder is Gezonder”**

The campaign “Zonder is Gezonder” by the Flemish government, explains how public areas and gardens can be maintained without pesticides. Through this campaign, the Flemish Government encourages its citizens to switch to pesticide-free gardens, terraces and sidewalks. On the campaign’s website, various articles can be found giving advice on how to take care of natural areas while respecting the environment and avoiding the use of pesticides (see [here](#) or [here](#)). Some of these pieces of advice can be seen below:

### *Unwanted weeds on the terrace, on the footpath joints or in your garden?*

The mainstream solution is usually pesticides; however, this comes along with high costs on human and environmental health, in the short and long term. Said pesticides will also filtrate through the soil or be washed away by rainwater ending up in our drinking water.

### *Wild plants don’t have to be a bad thing!*

By letting nature take its course in your garden, you support bees and other beneficial insects. Growing weeds will also attract natural enemies to aphids or snails. It is also possible to use a good layout in your garden (planting the right plant in sunny or shady places, or by sweeping and brushing regularly to avoid build-ups of organic matter and water).

### *Do you have a paved path that you rarely walk on? Maybe it is time to re-think it!*

Choose a smaller path or replace the paved part with a grass path. If you brush your path regularly, no unwanted plant will grow. Most plants have no chance of growing if they are stepped over regularly.

### *Managing your garden pesticide-free!*

You can prevent soil diseases in your vegetable garden through crop rotation, combining different crops or the use of disease-resistant varieties. Decorate your garden in an animal-friendly manner by hanging nesting boxes, for example. Do not mow the grass too short and mulch it regularly, this prevents the growth of weeds and moss. Use a weed picker if you want to remove unwanted plants.

## **Implementing the ban supported by awareness-raising and technical guidance**

In Flanders, the Ministry of Environment is responsible for the implementation of the pesticide ban from public areas. A clear strength of the Flemish implementation approach is the provided support in terms of technical guidance, communication campaigning and awareness-raising. The Flemish Ministry of Environment coordinated the campaign and has created both communication material and technical assistance to towns (see [here](#) and [here](#)). The campaign includes a logo, that is used in all towns across Flanders, making it very recognisable when an area is pesticide-free. Several towns set up web pages dedicated to pesticides use, informing citizens about pesticide danger and actions taken by the municipality. Flemish authorities also cooperate with – and provide funding to – NGOs, such as VELT, allowing them to develop a campaign to promote a pesticide-free transition, for example, informing and educating citizens

on pesticide-free garden maintenance (see [here](#)). Lastly, Flanders implemented reporting structures: Pesticide use data are reported by municipalities, and published online, albeit with delay. A relatively user-friendly map (see [here](#)) allows citizens to follow the developments easily.

While the Ministry of environment provides valuable communication and technical resources, municipalities are not supported financially to implement the campaigns, as the legislation was introduced without any foreseen budget. Thus, it is left to the city administration to devote its money to fan out campaigns and purchase new machinery. While the phase-out of pesticide use in public places by municipal administration was rather successful, the campaign has been much slower in extending the concept of pesticide-free areas to private gardens or agricultural areas around the towns. Further, no monitoring system is in place, and no sanctions are foreseen for non-compliance. Additionally, derogations are allowed, many were granted already.



Summary	Flanders
<b>Areas covered:</b>	Parks, sidewalks, sport fields, cemeteries, roads, railways, parking, playgrounds, amusement parks, recreation areas.
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Ministry of Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	No
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes, in cooperation with NGOs
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	Yes
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	Yes, large communication campaign organised
<b>Reporting of pesticide use:</b>	Yes
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	No
<b>Derogations:</b>	Derogations allowed



## Walloon Region

Already back in the 80s the Walloon Region took action to ban the use of pesticides in public parks, roads, and watercourses, ponds or lakes in the public domain, and a few towns like Eupen decided to go pesticide-free (see [here](#)).

Following decades of local initiatives, in 2014, the Walloon regional government decided on a 5-year phasing out period of pesticide use in public areas. Thus, from June 2019 onwards, this ban took effect (see [here](#)). The ban applies to the use of pesticides in public green areas, as well as on playgrounds, and other spaces frequented by vulnerable groups, such as schools, kindergartens, childcare facilities, hospitals, nursing homes, functional rehabilitation centres, or homes for people with disabilities. Sidewalks and connected driveways can also no longer be treated chemically since 2014, but methods such as mechanical or thermal treatments are to be used (see more information [here](#)).

### ***Buffer strips to protect local residents***

The Walloon region further began delineating buffer strips, especially around spaces frequented by vulnerable groups. This entails pesticides cannot be applied in a radius of 50-meters around schools, nurseries and childcare facilities during the hours in which these places are frequented. There is not yet

a defined buffer zone for residential areas in general, but discussions are underway with the Federal government and the other Regions on this issue (see [here](#)).

### ***Implementation in cooperation with civil society***

Similar, to the Flemish region, the Walloon region cooperates with an NGO, ADALIA, for awareness-raising and supporting the implementation of the ban. The NGO was involved in the development of campaigns and programmes to promote the phase-out of pesticides in the concerned public areas (see [here](#)). Technical support, training, and public events to inform citizens are organised by the NGOs. They prepared information material, educating about alternatives that can be used on various public areas, and providing concise factsheets, especially on appropriate vegetation, for example, for cemeteries. Thus, while the public administration did not support municipalities financially, they cooperated and supported NGO involvement to develop a communication campaign and technical guidance.

Unlike in the Flemish region, Walloon municipalities do not need to collect and report pesticide use data. ADALIA prepared a map showing the various measures that each Walloon town has introduced (see [here](#)). Derogations are still allowed.

Summary	Wallonia
<b>Areas covered:</b>	Parks, sidewalks, sport fields, cemeteries, roads, railways
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Ministries for Agriculture and Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	No
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes, in cooperation with NGO
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	Yes
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	Yes, communication campaign in cooperation with NGO
<b>Reporting of pesticide use:</b>	No
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	No
<b>Derogations:</b>	Derogations allowed



## Brussels Capital Region

In the Brussels Capital region, a ban of pesticides in public areas by municipal officials has been gradually implemented since 2013 (see [here](#)). In principle, the use of pesticides by public services was prohibited since June 2013, but transitional measures were allowed for 5 years. Thus, pesticides could still be used, under the condition that the municipality had adopted a plan to implement a phase-out. The complete ban has taken effect from January 2019 onwards (see [here](#)). Moreover, since March 2014, pesticide use on the premises of organisations or institutions that host vulnerable groups (i.e., schools, elderly homes, hospitals etc.) has also been prohibited. However, there are exemptions are possible for reasons of public health and safety. Brussels capital has the same rules as Wallonia regarding buffer zones (see [here](#)).



## *Implementation and integrated environmental policies*

A strength of the Brussels approach is that the pesticide-free concept is well integrated into the wider reflection on sustainability in Brussels. Brussels has accompanied the pesticide ban in public spaces, by also banning glyphosate and neonicotinoids for all uses, including in agricultural areas (see [here](#)).

Success implementation of the ban varies depending on the engagement of the municipalities, as monitoring or reporting mechanism are lacking. Some municipalities have taken a more proactive approach and together with the Brussels department of Environment, cooperation was organised with the NGOs. Apis Bruoc Sella, for example, was involved with organising workshops on good practices (see [here](#)). Natagora organised awareness-raising campaigns and events, such as 'Learn to love your weed' in collaboration with towns to communicate the transition towards the concept of re-wilding public green spaces to Brussels citizens (see [here](#)). Financial resources were made available to various NGOs, allowing them to organise these communication efforts. Nevertheless, Brussels public administration does not provide financial support to municipalities, nor are any reporting or monitoring mechanisms in place.

Summary	Brussels
<b>Areas covered:</b>	Parks, sidewalks, sport fields, cemeteries, roads, railways
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Department for Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	No
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes, in cooperation with NGO
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	Yes
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	Yes, communication campaign in cooperation with NGO
<b>Reporting of pesticide use:</b>	No
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	No
<b>Derogations:</b>	Derogations allowed

### **Summary Belgium Overall**

A clear strength in all three Belgian regions is the emphasis placed on the concepts of re-wilding and redesigning of urban green spaces: transitioning from the idea of needing to control nature, to working along with it, and creating spaces for wild herbs and plants to exist.

Additionally, for all three regions' pesticide use policies have improved significantly over time. Since 2019, they also included a ban for non-professional uses in herbicides.

The significant weaknesses, however, remain, as derogations are allowed and regularly granted. Penalties and controls are missing and financial means to speed up the transition are lacking.

## Denmark

In 1992, a pesticide ban on churchyards fuelled public debates in Denmark questioning the use of pesticides, especially in urban green areas (Kristoffersen et al., 2008, see [here](#)). This ongoing debate led to a voluntary agreement between regions and municipalities in 1998, to introduce a progressive ban of pesticide use in public areas, which should be implemented by 2006. Again, several towns played a proactive role to phase out pesticides in municipalities. For instance, Copenhagen banned herbicide use on cemeteries in 1993. Throughout the following decades, city governments asserted their powers to introduce pesticide restrictions or bans on the local levels – mainly justified based on a need to protect (drinking) water. The Danish administrative court eventually upheld that cities' councils hold these competencies. Similar to development in other European countries, the initiatives by pioneering towns to ban pesticides in their municipalities were crucial stepping stones towards the adoption of national policies.

While pesticide use by public authorities was significantly reduced in the period between 1995-2002, (see [here](#)), full implementation of the 1998 agreement was never followed through. In 2007 the voluntary agreement was updated, again asserting the objective to phase out pesticide use in public areas but without setting any legally binding deadlines. The use of pesticides is still permitted on giant

hogweed if a plan is in place for phasing out the use of pesticides. By 2013, the application of pesticides in public areas was reduced by more than 90% since 1995 (see [here](#)).

In 2017, the government adopted a new Pesticide Strategy 2017-2021 (see [here](#)). The agreement again included the objective to phase out pesticide application in public areas, but also emphasised a need for derogative measures. All the country's municipalities are in principle covered by the agreement on phasing out pesticides in public areas, as the Organisation of Danish Communes (KL) is a co-signatory to the agreement. However, it is up to the individual municipalities to decide whether and how to implement the agreement (see [here](#)). This includes whether they choose to use weed burners or other alternative techniques to control weeds.

Today, it is still not fully forbidden for public authorities and private citizens to control weeds with chemical pesticides on roads, gravel, paths, sidewalks, driveways, parking areas, terraces, etc. In recent years, the use of pesticides in public areas has fortunately fallen sharply, and several municipalities have become spray-free. However, this does not apply to all municipalities. Furthermore, glyphosate-containing pesticides are still sold to private individuals. To protect drinking water and urban nature, the government wants a definitive stop to this use of pesticides on public

and private land. The government proposes: »A ban is introduced on spraying with, among other things. glyphosate on public and private areas, eg tiled sidewalks, cobblestones, roads and gravel roads (see [here](#)).

In February 2022, a government agreement was published introducing their pesticide strategy for 2022-2026 (see [here](#)). This strategy sets the goal to achieve a record low load of pesticides. The aim is to use as few pesticides as possible and to ensure that the pesticides that are used should be the least harmful. Concretely, further measures should be put in place to protect groundwater. The strategy covers all users of pesticides, including farmers, golf courses, public authorities and private gardeners, as well as consumers, food companies and retailers of pesticides. The agreement includes stated intentions to strengthen and substantiate pesticide use restrictions to protect groundwater, which would also affect pesticide application in public areas.

### **Reporting and Implementation**

Since 2010 onwards, Danish cities are required to report their pesticide use to the Ministry of Environment every three years. However, statistics are only publicly available with large delays and without sufficient detail that would allow to better understand and counteract the pesticide use. By 2016, no significant further reduction in the use of pesticides by

municipalities was achieved, compared to 2013 and the 1995 baseline (still indicated at 91%, see [here](#)). It was criticised, that the reported data of stagnating, or in certain cases increasing, pesticide use data was not sufficiently problematised by public authorities, and thus municipalities are not held accountable to implement the pesticide reduction policies. Moreover, collaboration with scientists and municipalities were considered too narrowly shaped by a focus on data collection, rather than successfully ending the use of synthetic pesticides and spreading the use of alternative methods.

The new pesticide strategy emphasises the need to enter negotiations, collaborations and an encouragement to share best practices with and between municipalities (see [here](#)). Further, the agreement sets out to improve the control mechanisms, including a 40% increase in the funds for the control of the actual use of pesticides.



Summary	Denmark
<b>Areas covered:</b>	All public areas
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Ministry of Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	No
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	Cooperation with scientist concerning alternative methods
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	No information found
<b>Reporting of pesticide use:</b>	Yes, statistics of pesticide use are recorded and published
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	Yes, and agreement to strengthen these mechanisms
<b>Derogations:</b>	Yes



## France

In 2014, France was the first EU Member State to introduce a general framework gradually implementing a ban on all public authorities to use pesticides - effectively on public areas - and for non-professional users. From January 2017, the state, local authorities and public bodies could no longer use pesticides for the maintenance of public spaces, forests, roadsides, walkways accessible or open to the public (see [here](#)). Derogations exist for cemeteries and sports grounds, and for 'emergency cases' to control pests. Since 2019, pesticide use is further prohibited for non-professional users in private gardens (see [here](#)). From July 2022, the pesticide ban on public authorities will also be extended to places of living and other private areas where the public has access, including parks, leisure areas, cemeteries and sports fields (see [here](#)). However, the ban has been postponed until January 2025 for some playing fields, lawn tennis courts, racecourses and golf

courses (see [here](#)). After this date, the use of synthetic pesticides will still be possible for the uses listed by the Ministries of Sport and the Environment for which no alternative technical solution makes it possible to obtain the quality required for official competitions.

One of the main drivers behind this law was Senator Joel Labbé, giving rise to calling the pesticide regulation the "Labbé Law" (see [here](#)). A strong push of support and awareness-raising was also organised by NGOs. For example, French NGO Générations Futures developed an interactive map showing which towns were already going pesticide-free before the ban, showcasing that pesticide-free town management was possible (see [here](#)). A number of filmmakers also mobilised and educated citizens, for example with the documentaries 'Nous Enfant Nous Accuseront' (see [here](#)) or 'Zero Phyto 100% bio' (see [here](#)).

### Pushing for a European Regulation: Inspired by the "Labbé law"

While the SUD failed to have swift, widespread effects to reduce or phase out pesticide use in public areas in the EU, the French legislation, the so-called "Labbé law", became a focal point pushing for European regulation.

In 2017, the French Senate proceeded to vote for a European resolution to promote the Labbé law in the EU (see [here](#)). Two European Parliament reports embraced this European resolution, one report on the implementation of the SUD ([2017/2284 \(INI\)](#)) and one report on the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides ([2018/2153\(INI\)](#)). Both call for a ban of pesticide use in public areas and private areas frequented by the general public and/or vulnerable groups. In 2019, several MEPs and mayors gathered for an event in the European Parliament organised by PAN Europe to present the Labbé law, which took the shape of a joint declaration (see [here](#)). These developments show that there is large support at the EU level, as well from the local initiatives to phase out pesticides in public areas.

A group of French Mayors, the 'Collectif des maires anti-pesticides', has further taken action to ban pesticides and, in particular, glyphosate on their territory completely (see [here](#) and [here](#)). So far, however, administrative courts have contested these municipal by-laws,

arguing that pesticide use does not fall within the responsibility of local administration but is the competency of the agricultural Ministry. The battle is still ongoing, as mayors counteract building on their competence to deal with pesticide waste (see [here](#)).



Credits : Frédérique Soulard – [Belles de Bitumes](#)

### **A continued struggle for buffer zones to protect residents**

Since 2016, a circular from the French Directorate-General for Food had recommended a minimum distance for spraying pesticides near residential areas (5 meters for cereals and vegetables, 20 meters for viticulture and 50 meters for arboriculture). However, in 2017 a decree significantly reduced these safety distances without serious scientific justification. Following legal action by a group of NGOs, including Générations Futures, in 2019, the administrative court partly rejected the decree on the grounds that it ensured insufficient protection of both

water resources and residents. The government then revised the law, only updating it slightly. The French NGO group again appealed the decision, asking for the abolishment of the law due to lack of efficiency, and won (see [here](#)).

NGOs, including Générations Futures, further created a petition for French citizens to extend buffer zones. The petition 'Nous Voulons des Coquelicots' ('We want Poppies'), advocates for 100- or 150-meter buffer zones (i.e. applicable to fields close to residential areas where farmers would be prohibited to spray pesticides) (see [here](#)). More than a million French citizens have signed the petition.

The demands are:

- Immediately adopting truly protective buffer zones, on the basis of scientific recommendations, and guaranteeing better information for local residents in proximity to pesticide application areas;
- Immediate suspension of the current consultation that the Ministry of Agriculture has launched to reduce buffer zone distances.

### **Supporting municipalities to implement “zero pesticides” strategies**

Following the pesticide ban in certain public areas introduced in 2017, a 30% reduction in the amount of pesticides sold for non-agricultural use was reported within one year (see [here](#)). The Ministry of Environment had set up a working group with the participation of NGOs to allow regular follow-ups on the progress made in this area. Nevertheless, pesticide use by public bodies and municipalities is not yet reported.

To support the municipalities in the implementation of the ban, the Ministry of Environment was involved in the development of communication material and guiding documents for towns to accompany the phase-out of pesticide use (Guidance document “Le guide des solutions”, see [here](#)). Public authorities, such as the French agency for biodiversity have cooperated with a number of actors, including the natural science museums to promote implementation and awareness-raising of the

pesticide ban in town management. The official involvement or funding to NGOs did play a minor role in the French awareness-raising approach (e.g. in comparison to the Belgian approach). Some NGOs, such as Générations Futures nevertheless campaigned on their own initiative. For example, they prepared a guide for local activists, explaining how to mobilise local politicians to implement a phase-out of pesticides (see [here](#)).

Under the initiative “Terres Saines”, launched by the Ministry of the Environment, municipalities can sign up to additionally commit to local charters with a “zero pesticide” objective (see [here](#)). “Terre Saine” amplifies the actions already carried out throughout the country but goes a step further: municipalities use no pesticides at all, including those available through derogations or biopesticides. The programme includes a national network of communities committed to reducing the use of pesticides, a labelling initiative to award to the most exemplary municipalities and cooperation and support through the ‘Gardening differently’ campaign. Today, more than 5,000 municipalities signed up to this commitment, and 523 municipalities already successfully eliminated the use of pesticides from their areas. These municipalities obtained the national label “Terre saine, communes sans pesticides”. 26 regional charters have joined the label. These charters allow local authorities to benefit from personalised support to reduce the use of phytosanitary products. A map of participating communities is available online (see [here](#)).



Credit: Cathy Biass – Morin Versailles

Summary	France
<b>Areas covered:</b>	Public green spaces, forests and roadsides, most sports fields, camping and other publicly accessible private areas, private gardens, cemeteries (fully from 2025)
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Ministry of Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	Not direct, indirect via the water agency
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	No, but cooperation with several actors to develop information material
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	Yes
<b>Reporting of pesticide use by municipalities:</b>	No
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	Violation of the Labbe Law criminal offence and may be punishable by 6 months imprisonment and a fine of €150,000.
<b>Derogations:</b>	Some derogations allowed

## Germany

The German Plant Protection law distinguishes between 'areas intended for the general public' and 'open land' i.e., paved or unpaved areas that are not used for agriculture, horticulture or forestry (see [here](#)). The latter 'open land' areas include railway embankments, field paths, roads and roadside greens, airport greens and similar areas (see [here](#)). In these 'open land' areas, pesticide use is generally prohibited, both for public as well as private actors. However, derogations can be requested. Agencies of the Bundesländer (regional agencies) are responsible for authorizing exemptions. They can be requested where 'the purpose of the pesticide use is considered urgent, a resolution cannot be achieved with any other means, and it would not conflict with overriding public interests, such as public health, or ecosystem damages.' While significant documentation must be provided, NGOs have criticised that too many derogations are granted; maintaining pesticide use, for example on railway embankments, the norm rather than exceptional practice. There is no centralised reporting system or publication of the number and/or kind of these derogations.

Different rules apply to 'areas intended for the general public', which encompasses parks, playgrounds, sports fields or cemeteries. In these areas, the use of pesticides is allowed with certain restrictions: generally only 'low-risk' pesticides according to EU classification can be applied. Moreover, additional permits for

pesticide use in these areas can be requested. The list of permitted pesticides amounts to more than one thousand products (available for download [here](#)).

Additionally, the German pesticide regulation was amended last year to better protect bees and other insects (see [here](#) and [here](#)). The new regulation limits the use of pesticides in nature protected areas and close to water bodies, installing 5 to 10-meter buffer strips. Additionally, the use of glyphosate becomes subject to further limitations, in line with preparing a glyphosate phase-out by 2023. The use of glyphosate in private gardens, public green areas and other public areas, such as playgrounds becomes prohibited.

### ***Voluntary initiatives to implement pesticide-free towns***

In light of the absence of legal provisions to fully ban pesticides from towns or publicly accessible areas, pioneering towns are taking part in the voluntary joint initiative 'Pestizidfreie Kommune' ('pesticide-free municipality') organised by the Ministry of Environment and the NGO BUND since 2015 (see [here](#)). These municipalities and cities politically decide to promote the reduction or banning of pesticide use within their decision-making framework. The towns that join this network adopt policies to ban the use of pesticides, or at least the use of glyphosate, on their public areas in town. A

map indicating pesticide-free towns or towns with partial pesticide bans in Germany can be found online (see [here](#)).

Under this joint program, cities and towns

are supported, for example through yearly organised conferences, sharing information materials and guidance documents on managing various green areas pesticide-free (see [here](#)).

Summary	Germany
<b>Areas covered:</b>	No general ban; voluntary Initiatives by some town: Green areas in municipalities; either banned pesticide use, or only the use of glyphosate
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Ministry of the Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	No
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes, conferences and support for implementation available
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	Yes
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	Communication material is available, but limited campaigning
<b>Reporting of pesticide use by municipalities:</b>	No
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	No legal provisions apply
<b>Derogations:</b>	No legal provisions apply

## Italy

National action to ban pesticides from public areas is lacking in Italy. A number of Italian Mayors, however, decided to transition their towns to become pesticide-free, including in agricultural land. These initiatives were immediately contested by farmers' and industries' trade union representatives. So far, the Administrative Court of Rome has upheld local laws prohibiting pesticides and confirmed that the regulation of pesticide use falls under the competencies of local administrations (see [here](#)). In practice, these bans have been converted into non-spray areas of 50 meters distance from residential areas.

The initiatives by Italian Mayors were one of the main drivers for PAN Europe to establish the Pesticide-Free-Towns-campaign, including the set-up of a "pesticide-free" pledge that towns could sign to join in the movement and networks of committed towns to phase-out pesticides in their municipalities. Around 50 Italian Mayors signed up for this pledge (see [here](#)).

On the national level, in 2016, the Ministry of Health decreed to ban the use of glyphosate in areas frequented by the public and vulnerable groups (see [here](#)). This glyphosate-ban includes parks, gardens, sports fields and recreational areas, courtyards and green areas within school complexes, playgrounds, and in areas adjacent to health facilities.

However, a larger pesticide reduction policy - especially concerning public areas - is still lacking. At the same time, concerns for high

levels of pesticide exposure are rampant. This is reflected by the end-of-visit statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights, Dr Marcos A. Orellana from December 2021 (see [here](#)). Relating to pesticides in towns, he says:

- I am also concerned about the situation in the South Tyrol area. According to the information received, hazardous pesticides have been found in children's playgrounds near agricultural areas. One such hazardous pesticide is Chlorpyrifos, a neurotoxic pesticide associated with a negative impact on the neurodevelopment of children. This hazardous pesticide is banned in the European Union, but Italy has requested a derogation for its use.
- I welcome the initiative taken by several Italian municipalities to join the European Network Pesticide Free Towns, which aims to replace pesticides with sustainable alternatives.



Summary	Italy
<b>Areas covered:</b>	Only voluntary initiatives by some town, decrees on pesticide restrictions vary
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Not national action taken to support them
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	No
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Not facilitated public authorities
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	Only on local levels
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	Only on local levels
<b>Reporting of pesticide use by municipalities:</b>	No
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	No legal provisions apply
<b>Derogations:</b>	No legal provisions apply



## Luxemburg

Already in March 2010, a national campaign “Sans pesticide” / “Ohne Pestizide” was launched as a joint initiative by a number of prominent actors working in the field of environmental protection, including, among others, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, the Administration of water management, various nature parks, NGOs and the City of Luxembourg (see [here](#)). The campaign aimed to inform both municipalities and the general public about the harmful effects of pesticides on nature and human health and to promote reliable alternative solutions that could be used on public and private land in town areas. It aimed to change citizens’ mentalities by questioning conceptions of cleanliness and ideas of beauty in public parks and other urban green areas. The campaign encouraged citizens to allow room for biodiversity in their gardens and the wider environment.

The campaign had the following objectives:

- Inform about the risks and problems of pesticide use by households and the public in the management of public land;
- Initiate discussions on conceptions of cleanliness and beauty for public greens spaces;
- To increase the acceptance of more biodiversity in urban areas;
- Present and promote alternative measures to pesticides;
- Promote alternatives to pesticides to reduce the pressure on municipalities from citizens demanding a “cleaner” city;
- To give advice on pesticide-free maintenance to municipalities and to enable their implementation.





The campaign involved several activities, especially as part of the “Pesticide Free Week”, for example showcasing wild vegetation and good examples to get rid of pesticides (See [here](#) and [here](#)). The campaign webpage includes an online repository, compiling simple information for towns, citizens, and enterprises that are looking to phase out of pesticides (see [here](#)).

In 2014, in the framework of implementing the SUD, Luxembourg decided to ban the use of pesticides in public spaces from January 2016 onwards. This includes public roads as well as places open to the public or assigned for management by public service. However, the law explicitly states that public areas used by

the public administration for agricultural and horticultural production, research and education, are not covered by the ban (see [here](#)).

### ***Implementing the pesticide ban in public areas***

The precursory campaign about pesticide-free alternatives for weed management facilitated the implementation of the ban in 2016. Towns could make use of communication materials and technical information provided. NGOs were also financially supported and involved in facilitating the phase-out and awareness-raising.

Moreover, the pesticide ban from public areas was followed by the adoption of more ambitious goals to reduce pesticides in Luxembourg on a large scale, including in agriculture. In December 2019, Luxembourg adopted a sustainable development plan “Luxemburg 2030” – in the frame of implementing the United Nations Development Goals for Sustainability (see [here](#)). The plan includes transitioning to 100% organic

agricultural production by 2050, setting the intermediate target of 20% of agricultural areas used for organic farming by 2025. The plan further set out to reduce the use of pesticides to half by 2030. In 2020, Luxembourg decided to ban glyphosate for all uses and most recently introduced a ban on the use of pesticides for non-professional usage (see [here](#)).

Summary	Luxemburg
<b>Areas covered:</b>	Public roads, areas open to the public or assigned to public service
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Ministry of Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	Not directly
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	Yes
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	Good communication campaign organised in cooperation with important public and civil society actors
<b>Reporting of pesticide use by municipalities:</b>	No
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	No
<b>Derogations:</b>	No derogations allowed

## The Netherlands

Already since the 1970s, several large municipalities in urban areas of the Netherlands have voluntarily reduced or banned the use of pesticides in amenity areas concerned about the negative side effects of pesticides. Following occurring problems with drinking water production in the 90s, several municipalities reduced the use of pesticides, stimulated by a national voluntary agreement (covenant) between governmental bodies in 1997.

### Example: Dutch cities pioneering alternatives to pesticide

*“Brushing was the first alternative technique on hard surfaces in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by flaming. The first hot water weed control machine was introduced in the Netherlands in the municipality of Heemstede in 1999.” (Kristoffersen et al., 2008, see [here](#))*

This research shows clearly that the debate about alternatives to pesticides is not at all new, and we already had the technical knowledge about alternatives 40 years ago.

Despite these pioneering Dutch towns, introducing legal provisions to ban pesticides in public areas took another 40 years to take shape. In 2017, an amendment to the “Plant Protection Products and Biocides Decree” came into effect, prohibiting herbicide use on paved and semi-paved surfaces, such as sidewalks and streets, and for landscaping by public authorities (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Since November 1, 2017, this also applies to the use on unpaved areas. Pesticides were gradually eliminated on golf courses; restricted use is still allowed on track and sports fields, but derogations should be phased out soon.

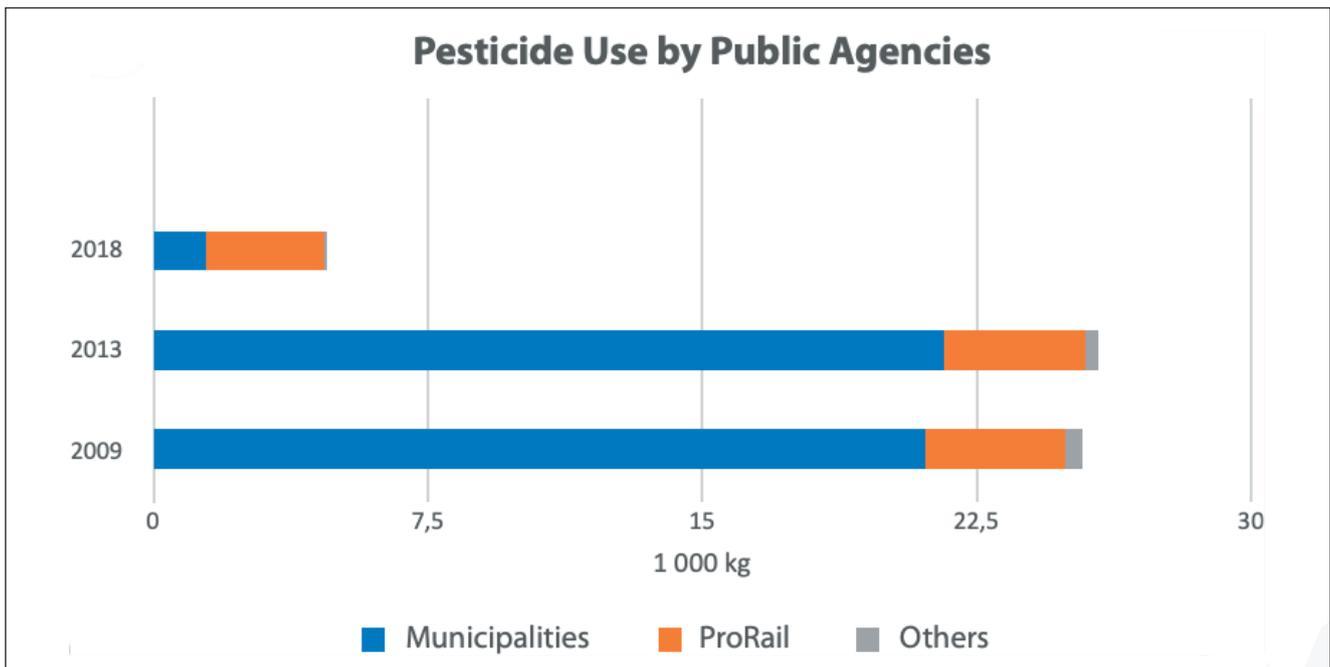
Crucially, these pesticide bans were preceded by decades of discussions and covenant (later “green deal”) agreements with communities to work towards the phase-out of pesticides. The Ministry of Environment was a key player in these lengthy processes, consulting with municipalities, promoting alternative methods, funding field tests, and training operators. These developments then open the doors to introduce legal bans. Derogations are still possible in certain cases, for example, to control for invasive and exotic pests.

### **Pesticide industry tries to block efficient regulation**

The pesticide ban on government agencies was legally challenged by associations of pesticide producers, Nefyto and Artemis. The lower court upheld the ban, but the appeal court concluded that the ban should be based upon a specific new regulation (see the verdict in Dutch [here](#)). The verdict did not change much in the field and the government assured that they would soon re-install the ban by adjusting the regulation. Public agencies already firmly adopted the use of alternative maintenance methods. However, it shows the active resistance by pesticide producers to block effective regulation.

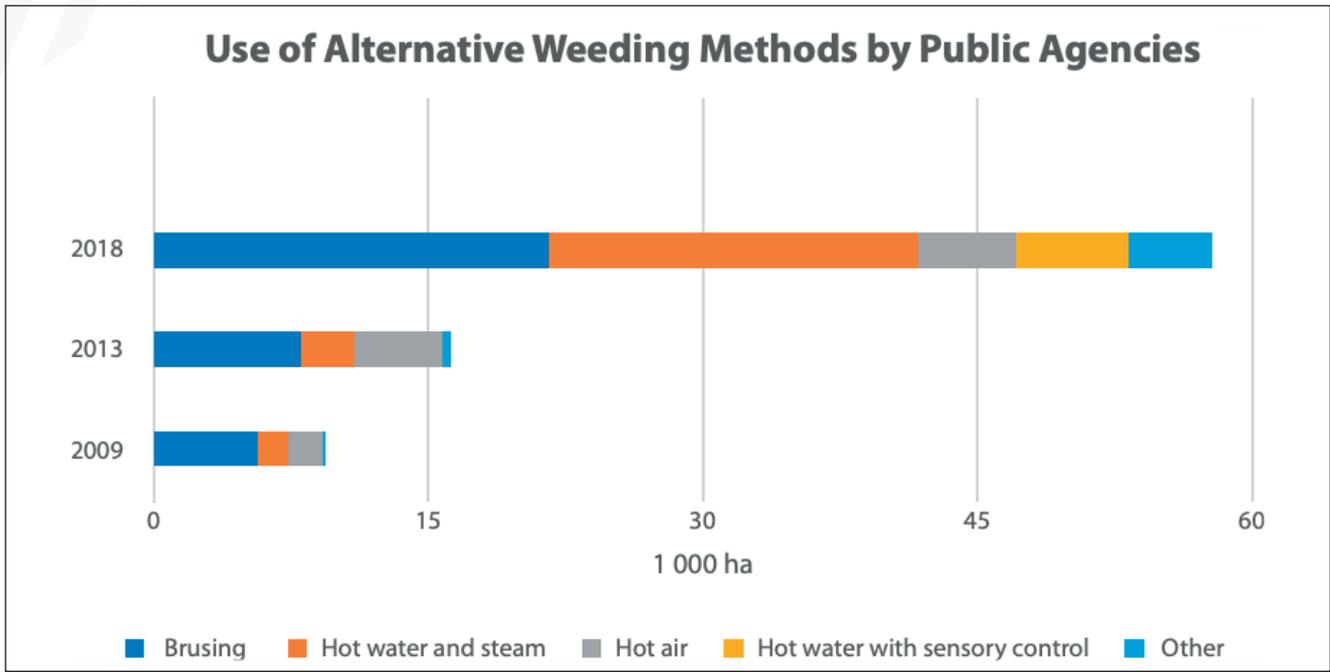
### **Well recorded pesticide use data from government agencies**

The pesticide use data from Dutch government services - municipalities, ProRail, water authorities, provinces, and the Department of Public Works – are reported and made publicly available (see [here](#)). These numbers indicate that the bans did have significant effects. In 2018, these government agencies had used about 82% fewer pesticides than in 2013. Glyphosate use by government services decreased by 90% in the same period, nevertheless, 307 kilograms of glyphosate were still used in 2018, mainly to fight exotics such as American bird cherry and knotweed. Railway tracks are generally the main locations where pesticides are still applied (see graphic below and see [here](#)).



Source: Central Bureau for Statistics (available [here](#))

Data is also available about the alternative methods used by the government agencies. The graphic below illustrates the rise in the use of alternative weed management methods: brushing, using hot water or aid have significantly increased. Additionally, these methods are becoming more precise with sensor control.



Source: Central Bureau for Statistics (available [here](#))



Credits: Pauline Laille - Plante&Cit 

Summary	Netherlands
<b>Areas covered:</b>	Paved surfaces, parks and other green areas, sports fields, golf courses
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Ministry of Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	Yes, for testing alternative methods
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes, guidance on alternatives and training of operators preceded the ban
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	Less, rather focused on communities and companies
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	Coordinated by the communicates
<b>Reporting of pesticide use by municipalities:</b>	Yes
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	No
<b>Derogations:</b>	Only a few are allowed



## Sweden

Sweden was a forerunner to regulate and ban harmful pesticides from public amenity areas. The first Swedish initiatives to ban herbicides in public areas dates back to the 1970s and 80s (see [here](#)). Until the end of the 1980s, the use of long-acting soil herbicides was common on hard surfaces. However, increased water quality controls, and the resultant detection of chemical residues mobilised initiatives to restrict the use of herbicides on hard surfaces. From 1984 onwards, city councils were granted the competencies to regulate the use of pesticides in public areas frequented by children. Within only a few years, 70% of municipal councils had banned or significantly restricted the use of herbicides in those areas (see [here](#)). In 1987, the federal government imposed higher taxes on pesticide products, successfully achieving the objective to half the use of herbicides by 1990.

In 1997, Sweden's pesticide policies underwent significant reforms, as the environmental authority received more competencies. Municipalities were required to obtain a permit from the environmental authority at the municipal council to apply pesticides on the grounds of residential buildings, playgrounds, in water catchment protection areas and on construction sites (see [here](#)). Municipal officials had to further inform the environmental authorities about any use of pesticides on railway embankments, sports grounds and areas larger than 1000 square meters, to which the public has access (non-agricultural land) (see [here](#)).

In the following decades, the usage of synthetic pesticides in public areas by public bodies continued to decrease and the use of alternative methods became more widespread.

Private professional pesticide users are also required to attain a permit from municipalities to apply pesticides in certain areas, such as roads and railway embankments, on gravel and permeable surfaces (see [here](#)).

In 2021, in the framework of implementing the EU Directive on Sustainable Use of Pesticides, the Swedish government decided to introduce a total ban on pesticide use in various public areas (see [here](#)):

- in schoolyards, courtyards of preschools or in playgrounds to which the public has access
- in recreational areas, primarily intended for recreation, such as parks and gardens
- in allotment garden areas or in greenhouses used for non-professional purposes
- on land for residential buildings and in private gardens
- on plants indoors, except in production premises, warehouses and similar places.

The ban applies to both professional and private users, regardless of the authorisation class of the pesticide product. However, the Swedish Chemicals Agency can allow general derogations from the ban for certain active substances, where the agency deems that these substances pose only limited risks to human health and the environment (see [here](#)). Additionally, exceptions can be granted by various authorities to where they deem it necessary to control invasive species (see [here](#)).

## **Efforts to support the implementation of the pesticide ban in public areas**

Like Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, Sweden has a long tradition of moving towards pesticide-free public areas. Nevertheless, it equally took a very long time to introduce a national legal ban – and this ban still leaves room for many exemptions. Little information was available concerning the support and guidance provided to municipal maintenance services to end pesticide use and employ alternative techniques. The Swedish Chemicals Agency

provides information on pesticide use (see [here](#)). Municipalities' websites provide further information on pesticide regulations. The Swedish 'National Action Plan for sustainable use of plant protection products for the period 2019-2022' foresees that further efforts need to be undertaken and supervisory guidance should be provided for municipalities to 'reduce the impacts of the use of pesticides' (see [here](#)). To our knowledge, no national programme or communication campaigns exist to encourage municipalities to adopt and implement zero-pesticide policies.

Summary	Sweden
<b>Areas covered:</b>	Schoolyards and playgrounds; recreational parks and gardens, allotment garden areas and greenhouses used for non-professional purposes, home gardens, etc.
<b>Ministry responsible:</b>	Ministry of Environment
<b>Financial support to towns:</b>	No
<b>Technical support to towns:</b>	Yes, but limited
<b>Cooperation with NGOs and other actors involved:</b>	No information found
<b>Communication campaign organised:</b>	No information found
<b>Reporting of pesticide use by municipalities:</b>	No
<b>Monitoring or control mechanism:</b>	Yes, a control system in place concerning the permit-system in place for pesticide application
<b>Derogations:</b>	Yes

# Outlook: Ongoing EU political developments

The EU Commission is currently working on a revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticide directive. Discussions are ongoing about adding new provisions to generally prohibit pesticide use in “sensitive areas”, which include areas used by the general public, parks, or

garden, recreation or sports grounds or a public path, areas used by vulnerable groups, urban green areas and ecologically sensitive areas. Such provisions would establish a step forward, requiring members to implement pesticide bans in public areas.



## ***What PAN Europe is asking for?***

Civil society organisations, including PAN Europe, are calling upon the Commission to enshrine a ban of pesticide use in public areas and for non-agricultural private uses in the upcoming revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive. PAN Europe raises the following demands:

### ***Banning pesticides in public areas***

The use of pesticides in close proximity to residential and recreation areas represent major routes of exposure for citizens and these practices should be banned immediately.

PAN Europe asks for the revised legislation to impose a ban on the use of synthetic pesticides in all public areas from 2025. Some Member States have extensive experience in managing public spaces without pesticides. This should be the base for spreading good practices throughout the EU, hence leaving more space for nature while protecting people's health, in particular, that of the most vulnerable.

### ***Banning pesticides for non-agricultural private uses***

The use of pesticides by non-professionals and their use in non-agricultural private properties are also major routes of human exposure and lead to the destruction of biodiversity. Such practices must thus be banned as soon as the new legislation is published.

Some countries such as France and Belgium have already banned the use of pesticides in non-agricultural areas. These countries should serve as an example for the Member States that are less advanced.

### ***Appropriate no-spray buffer zones***

PAN Europe considers that a mandatory minimum non-sprayed buffer zone should be put in place throughout the EU:

50m buffer zone next to private and public properties, roads and paths as well as watercourses.

25m buffer zone next to fields from a neighbouring farm.

# Conclusion



This report set out to explore the various approaches taken by European member states to reduce or ban pesticide use in "sensitive" public areas and towns at large. The report underscores that phasing out pesticides in these areas is a matter of political will and that pesticide-free town maintenance is already successfully implemented by a multitude of actors and municipalities.

The report highlights that there remain large discrepancies between states when it comes to effective national policies on pesticide use reduction in public areas. Belgium, France, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden already adopted national legal provisions – to different degrees – to ban pesticide use in 'sensitive public areas', such as playgrounds and parks. In the Netherlands, Belgium or Denmark pesticide use data for municipalities and/or public authorities are available. These numbers clearly refute any doubts that pesticide-free town maintenance is possible. Re-designing public space with more green areas and involving locals in their maintenance went along with changing

mentalities to accept 'weeds' and biodiversity areas in urban settings.

We can see that Member states chose varying approaches with different emphases. Luxemburg and Belgium made significant inroads to reduce pesticide use on a national level, placing emphasis especially on public awareness-raising and cooperation with NGOs. The Dutch authorities provide a good example of gradually phasing out pesticides for town maintenances, emphasising reporting and investing in alternative methods. However, the Dutch example also shows the active resistance from pesticide producers against effective regulation.

Overall, all countries in which successful pesticide bans in public areas are implemented had long periods of precursory initiatives, exchanging knowledge on alternative methods, raising awareness and mobilising citizens and adopting gradual phase-out plans. Moreover, across all countries, we can find examples of towns and municipalities that go beyond provision in national pesticide policies, adopting a role of forerunners for a pesticide-

free future. Such initiatives enjoy widespread support by citizens: to our knowledge, no country/region/town faced resistance from the general public on pesticide reduction in public areas.

From these observations, we can derive three concluding remarks relevant for a successful ending of pesticide use in public areas:

### **1. An EU-wide effective pesticides ban for public areas is feasible**

The revision of the so-called 'Sustainable use of pesticides' Directive at EU level needs to bring about effective provisions to ban pesticides from public areas. With some member states and many municipalities already implementing such policies, anything less would not be justifiable.

### **2. Sharing best practices is a crucial stepping stone to speed up the implementation**

For all the countries analysed in this report that have in place legal provisions to ban pesticides in public areas, the adoption of these provisions took decades of preparatory developments. This highlights that there is a strong need - and many possibilities - to learn from each, how to communicate a transition towards "pesticide-free" public maintenance to citizens, sharing knowledge on alternative methods and training of operators. Such processes would facilitate and speed up this process in other cities, regions and member states. With a new EU regulatory proposal likely to require member states to implement pesticide bans in public areas and green spaces, cooperation and learning from



the decades of experiences from those countries that already successfully adopted these policies will be crucial.

### **3. Adopting stricter pesticide policies - beyond EU or national regulations - should be permitted and supported**

The report highlights that there are strong arguments for citizens, towns and mayors, or even member states to be pro-active and enact pesticide bans that go beyond EU regulations, or national legislations respectively. It would be important that these (local) government competencies are acknowledged and supported.

Active involvement of citizens that wish to reduce pesticide use is very important. The successful Save Bees and Farmers ECI shows that there is a strong and widespread concern for health, clean water and biodiversity. The involvement on a local level can be significantly improved if the methods already tested and applied by some would gain traction all over Europe. This would contribute to reducing health and environmental hazards and achieving pesticide reduction goals. The examples show that we don't need pesticides in our towns. We and our children and grandchildren deserve to live in a toxic-free public space. Let's make it happen, soon!



**Pesticides Action Network (PAN Europe)** is a network of NGOs working to reduce the use of hazardous pesticides and have them replaced with ecologically sound alternatives. We work to eliminate dependency on chemical pesticides and to support safe sustainable pest control methods. Our network brings together 40 consumer, public health and environmental organisations and women's groups from across Europe.

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