



Climate Active Neighbourhoods



Climate Alliance

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Climate Action – Why Neighbourhoods Matter

"Buildings account for around 40% of energy consumption and 36% of CO₂ emissions in the European Union. Following the signature of the Paris Agreement, the EU set ambitious CO₂ emissions goals for 2020: a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) and a 20% increase in energy efficiency. As almost 75% of the building stock is not energy efficient and on average only 1% of the building stock is renovated each year, we must drastically improve the energy efficiency of existing residential areas if we are to achieve these goals.

At the same time, keeping the promise to leave no one behind as agreed upon by all countries in 2015 via the Sustainable Development Goals requires this transition to be socially just and involve all parts of society.

This is where the Interreg NWE project "Climate Active Neighbourhoods" (CAN) came in, focusing on disad-

vantaged neighbourhoods in need of rehabilitation. In doing so, CAN found ways to collaborate on eye-level with residents and thus to enhance municipal climate action measures. The result is a colourful bouquet of exemplary renovations and fascinating examples of how citizens throughout North-Western Europe can actively participate in achieving EU objectives. CAN showed that climate action should be fun and that it can also provide solutions to other social problems. Last but not least, the project showed once again that cooperation across national borders is needed – it is the exchange between partners across Europe that made this project such a great success. We hope it will find many imitators!

Be inspired!"

Thomas Brose,
Executive Director of Climate Alliance



Main Messages of Climate Active Neighbourhoods

Transforming Municipalities into Facilitators – Finding the Right Strategy

Moving from top-down towards bottom-up approaches constitutes both a great opportunity and a challenge for municipalities. Joint development and implementation with local stakeholders solidly anchors a project in the neighbourhood. This not

only achieves the best long-term results, but also provides the opportunity to build mutual trust beyond the project. Municipalities and their partners become allies on equal terms that strive towards a common goal.

Neighbourhood bottom-up energy transition requires innovation, time, patience and flexibility. Municipalities and local partners have to grow into their new role and be aware of the potential implications. A mutual coaching arrangement and cooperation at eye-level allows shifting activities and responsibilities from municipalities towards local partners. Local initiatives become more professional and assume responsibilities for the achievement of low carbon goals in the neighbourhood. In Arnhem (NL), the municipality developed a framework for fostering the partnership between municipalities and neighbourhood initiatives, the “Arnhem Approach”.

Municipalities acting as facilitators: from watchdog to ally. A municipality's willingness to innovate in its own role is crucial for the long-term success of neighbourhood climate action. Developing a constructive partnership with neighbourhood initiatives requires a recalibration of the role and methods of the municipality. Ongoing mutual learning should therefore be supported and embraced by the project managers, but also by key decision makers from the municipality and its partners.





Offering support and incentives for sharing responsibilities.

Initiatives benefit from financial and advisory support while the municipality benefits from the initiative's local network, their reputation within the neighbourhood and the direct link to the residents. Local dynamics, identity and specific neighbourhood issues influence how climate action is implemented and enhanced. Residents become encouraged to participate in shaping the neighbourhood's future and share this responsibility with the municipality.

For more information please consult Chapter 1 of the Practice Cube.

A central service point for all services related to energy retrofits and financial aids increases effectivity. The city of Liège (BE) cooperated with the local energy service provider and created an easily accessible service for citizens to seek guidance and support. Combined with an effective communication strategy, this has led to significantly higher numbers of retrofitting measures in the area. "Thanks to the Maison de l'Habitat, a 47% increase in interactions with citizens could be recorded within one year and the number of loans increased by nearly 60%!"

Alison Colon, Liège-Energie

Costumising Solutions for Each Neighbourhood – No “One-Size-Fits-All” Solutions

Each neighbourhood is different, thus it is vital to gain knowledge before approaching residents. Knowledge of people's motivation and way of life is necessary for a successful strategy. The results of a prior assessment guide the choice of

the approach, for example a face-to-face or a grassroots approach.

Discovering a neighbourhood's motivations can be achieved in different ways. A dialogue with community centres, faith groups and local clubs or commissioning a study to discover best practices are a good starting point. In active neighbourhoods, creating cooperative working groups with local stakeholders can accelerate the process. In precarious neighbourhoods of Mantes-la-Jolie (FR), privately co-owned properties tend to be excessively run-down. As a result, EPAMSA – a public development agency responsible for urban development and renovations in the Grand Paris region – successfully implemented Energy Performance Contracts to improve energy efficiency of the buildings by specifically targeting private, precarious co-owned properties.

Flexibility of the local authority is crucial to adapt different approaches for different neighbourhoods.

The conditions and needs vary in each neighbourhood, hence different strategies need to be developed and implemented instead of focusing on a single blueprint. The local authority has to meet the needs of the neighbourhood, which can include the transfer of responsibilities and budget to stakeholders. In Arnhem (NL), a practice-based, ongoing learning process continuously improves cooperation between municipality, grassroots initiatives and other stakeholders. A dedicated advisor observes, collects experiences and evaluates activities. These results are shared with all stakeholders.





Tailored messages for specific residential groups have more impact. Understanding the needs of local residents is essential. Residents with social issues in deprived areas, residents in privileged neighbourhoods or environmentally active citizens are sensitive to differing arguments which must be reflected in the approach. Plymouth (UK) acquired the knowledge of resident motivation on energy retrofits through focus groups, interviews, and literature reviews. The resulting key messages, “Save Money, Reduce Energy Waste and Keep Warm”, were successfully used in all communication activities of the project.

For more information
please consult the Practice Cube.

*“Just like at the restaurant,
we don’t serve the same thing
to everybody. We never
impose a method or a format;
we always integrate our actions
into the existing ones in the
neighbourhood. It is all about our
capacity to adjust our actions
to the people who are in front
of us, to ‘blend into the scenery’.
Complementarity and adaptability:
these are the key words.”*

Cécile Cloarec & Florent Coquio, Ener’gence

Relying on the Locals – No Need to Reinvent the Wheel

Neighbourhood initiatives and residents have first-hand knowledge and are able to give insightful advice. Fostering collaborations with local partners not only gives a head-start in trust, and saves time and resources, but also results in

broad and long-term impacts.

Supporting neighbourhood initiatives provides a strong basis for ambitious measures.

The initiatives are built on social relationships and residents' motivation to improve their environment. Capitalising on this, the Energy Agency of Rhineland-Palatinate (DE) implements a participation approach with key actors, avoiding the complexity of a broad participation process. At the same time, trained multipliers spread knowledge on the issue of energy transition.

Providing steady and continuous support to neighbourhood initiatives is necessary to achieve a high level of activities and to foster trusting relationships with the locals.

Direct contact and training is essential to spread information about energy issues. The availability of support structures, such as funds or events, strengthens the impact of neighbourhood initiatives. By facilitating the exchange of experiences and know-how, the municipality thus enhances the local learning process.

Residents' skills and knowledge are valuable resources to learn about local needs and to develop bottom-up solutions.

Offering support and training to local specialists and leaders so that they become 'multipliers' enables efficient learning at the neighbourhood level. Multipliers improve resident knowledge, communication and lead to a high success rate in engaging residents directly. They increase the acceptance of the message and thereby empower the community to act. In Hastings (UK), "Energy Champions" were trained to provide residents with advice and seasonal tips on energy efficiency and retrofits.



© Energise Sussex Coast



Cooperation with initiatives and their networks is key to amplify awareness-raising. Via cooperation with local organisations, municipalities learn new approaches and increase their climate actions' range. A better outreach to residents and local stakeholders can be achieved by incorporating existing local activities and events. Energise Sussex Coast in Hastings (UK) carried out pop-up events at various community events that allowed the 'hard to reach' residents to access support services.

For more information please consult Chapters 1 and 2 of the Practice Cube.

The city of Arnhem set up a local fund ('AANjaagfonds') to support and consolidate existing neighbourhood initiatives to implement CO₂ reduction measures. It finances external expertise and support, studies and communication activities.

The fund also establishes a long-term and active civil representation in energy transition processes. Initiatives appreciate the simple procedures put in place. The number of initiatives rapidly increased, mainly due to word-of-mouth and active communication from the municipality.

Changing Residents' Behaviour Requires Multiple Incentives

Behaviour change is an essential component for CO₂ emission reduction and energy efficiency. However, changing habits is a lengthy process that must be encouraged by municipalities. A clear communication of the goals is indispensable to positively impact people's behaviours.

The first step to change people's behaviour is to raise awareness on energy consumption, its costs, and the possibilities to reduce these costs. Communicating the potential increase in quality of life or giving people a sense of control are suitable strategies to spark interest. In Hastings (UK), such strategies were jointly applied, for example during neighbourhood events where residents were introduced to energy retrofits and possibilities to reduce energy bills. A Community Solar Share initiative also raised awareness about renewable energy while offering cheaper energy tariffs for residents.

Providing incentives encourages residents to adopt energy-efficient habits. Saving money is one of the best motivators for long-term change. Thus, it is relevant to point out the savings that can be realised thanks to better appliances and encourage residents' to go that extra mile.

Local role models raise awareness of behaviour change and make it more accessible.

Local role models, for example local politicians or well-known neighbourhood activists, showcasing climate friendly behaviour appeal directly to residents and promote a behaviour change. Promoting and publicising their behaviour – for example their energy bill – can be used as a benchmark tool that allows direct comparison among neighbours, thus sparking a change in behaviour.





Climate friendly behaviours are promoted as the “new normal”. Establishing trust with residents and including their feedback into the behaviour change programme is essential for success. Further, a behaviour change programme needs to be accompanied by a long-term communication strategy. Local events focussing on energy issues enhance the behaviour change programme and reinforce climate friendly behaviours. Transition tours performed in Germany illustrate how green initiatives or alternative shops impact the residents' perception of their neighbourhood – and in consequence their daily behaviour.

For more information please consult Chapter 2 of the Practice Cube.

The city of Essen (DE) promotes behaviour change through an app that rewards climate friendly actions, such as using eco-friendly transportation or supporting local, sustainable products. The app provides sustainability tips, information on energy issues and local activities. By partnering with local initiatives, residents discover positive changes in their area and become an active part of the change – all while also benefitting from these positive evolutions.

Connecting Energy Efficiency and Social Issues – Create Additional Benefits

The combination of weak insulation, old and inefficient appliances, high energy prices and low household incomes are key factors of energy poverty, and thus cause profound social issues. Energy poverty affects health, physically and mentally,

as well as social exclusion. Deprived neighbourhoods and low energy efficiency are often interconnected.

Addressing energy needs with residents often uncovers profound social issues. Face-to-face visits or neighbourhood events with residents of deprived neighbourhoods lead to a better understanding of the present situation. Recognising this connection between different social issues enables municipalities to tailor approaches and instruments towards the residents' specific situation.

Positive messages and incentives for residents are a pathway to success. One of the biggest challenges is to raise attention and to get residents involved. It is beneficial to strategically communicate positive messages and incentives to the residents. Coupling the message with the social issues of the neighbourhood – like being able to save money by installing more energy efficient household appliances or improving health with better thermal insulation – is an effective approach to raise the residents' motivation and to successfully implement energy efficiency measures.



Energy retrofits and energy advice as means for social cohesion.

Providing energy advice and small retrofits tackles bad thermal insulation and social isolation at the same time. By offering small, low-threshold steps towards energy efficiency the obstacles are being lowered decisively. Local renewable energy production, e.g. in a solar energy community, also contributes to community shared responsibility. Working together towards a common cause will increase social cohesion.

Improving energy efficiency and tackling energy poverty go hand in hand.

Tackling energy poverty starts a positive cycle for residents in deprived areas that are often affected by several social issues. Providing support and guidance jointly with local stakeholders ranging from financial aids to face-to-face visits leads to a strikingly improved quality of life for the beneficiaries – socially, economically and health-wise. Ultimately, this approach fosters a better quality of life and is a win-win-situation for both the residents and the environment.

For more information please consult Chapter 3 of the Practice Cube.

"I live in an old house. At the beginning of home-ownership, my mind was full of projects and I started renovating. Then the breaks: first my relationship, then my job and finally my health. Social ties disappeared year after year and loneliness settled in. A social worker in the district put me in contact with Cécile from Ener'gence. With empathy and without judgement, she examined the whole home. The most urgent work has been carried out within a few weeks. The efficiency of this networking between different stakeholders has allowed me to spend winter in the warmth."

Testimony by a Brest resident
who received an energy visit

Benefits of Transnational Exchange – Seize Opportunities of Cooperation

The partnership from five countries has benefitted tremendously from the exchange of ideas and methods among peers. Looking at common obstacles from a different point of view offers the unique opportunity to learn from each other

and to work towards better solutions with combined forces.

Combining local and cross-regional perspectives. Regular meetings of the CAN-partnership facilitate the exchange of practical individual experiences. This leads to the adaptation and improvement of methods by another partner. Local neighbourhood funds for climate action or thermography walks as awareness-raising activities for residents are some successful examples of such adapted measures.

Thanks to inspiration from Brest and Plymouth in particular, Arnhem took the topic of energy poverty on their radars. It significantly improved the city's understanding of its residents' needs.

Communities of Practice are a useful and effective tool to get to know about each other's approaches in more detail by visiting one another in their city. Partners who share similar specific interests show the visiting partner promising activities on-site and commonly discuss new ideas. For example, neighbourhood initiatives got insight and ideas how initiatives in other countries work (see quote).



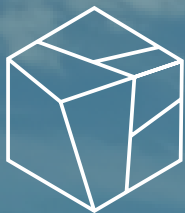


Thinking Outside the Box. The topic of energy poverty has not initially been one of the main objectives but came into focus through the collaboration of the partners – learning from the approach of Brest metropole – who came to see it as a very pressing issue. Especially the partners from Arnhem, Brest, Hastings and Plymouth are now working towards implementing specific measures to tackle energy poverty and to offer support to residents affected by it.

Trust and Mutual Learning. Acting from a place of trust enriches the partnership not only strategically, but also in terms of mutual reinforcement. Getting to know about experiences of peers from other cities or countries puts one's own challenges into perspective. Mutual learning is a key benefit of transnational cooperation.

“At the end of the visit from our partners from Hastings, we agreed that international exchange has a high value and must be continued in the future. The peer to peer transfer of knowledge in a community of practice as well as the exchange of approaches and ideas in both directions is a useful tool for the development and correction of both strategies and projects. Even if the structures and current events in the two countries are different, the challenges with regard to renewable energies as well as the challenges of energy poverty and climate justice are very similar.”

Kai Lipsius, Essen



Practice Cube – a Tool to Inspire YOUR Neighbourhood Climate Action

The Practice Cube offers a look into the experiences made over three years by the partners of the Interreg NWE funded project „Climate Active Neighbourhoods“. The multi-national consortium based in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK has closely collaborated on methods and solutions for realising a low carbon future, increased energy efficiency and a socially just energy transition on the neighbourhood level.

The Practice Cube is a collection of best practices and is targeted towards municipalities, who are looking for successful climate actions. The best practices are divided into three categories:

- “New Ways of Cooperation” showcases the importance of rethinking the municipalities’ role towards facilitation and bottom-up cooperation on the local level in direct contact with the residents & neighbourhood initiatives.

- “Engaging Residents for Change” displays methods of engagement and of fostering intrinsic motivation by positive communication.

- “Support & Financial Tools” focusses on offering residents and neighbourhood initiatives the support they need, starting from personalised advice services up to the creation of new financial tools on the neighbourhood level.

Get inspired and become (more) climate active within YOUR neighbourhood!

Find more information here:

climatealliance.org/activities/toolsand-methods/practice-cube/

Goal:

**Improved
Energy
Standards**

**Reduction
of CO₂
Emissions**

**Improve-
ment of
Health &
Wellbeing**

**Reduction
of Energy
Costs &
Energy
Poverty**

**Taking
Action on:**

**Energy
Retrofits of
Buildings**

**Energy
Efficient
Appliances**

**Behaviour
Change**

**Bottom-Up
Parti-
cipation**

Via:

Cooperation

Facilitation

**Support &
Financial
Tools**

Incentives

Who:

**Muni-
cipalities**

**House
Owners**

Tenants

**Housing
Cooperations**

Neighbourhood Initiatives

About Climate Active Neighbourhoods

The Interreg NWE funded project „Climate Active Neighbourhoods“ aimed to increase the capacity of municipalities to implement their climate action strategies more effectively using a neighbourhood approach. It aimed at bottom-up participation addressing energy consumption paradigms on a neighbourhood level, with a special focus on deprived areas in need of energy retrofits. It empowered residents within the neighbourhoods to take measures on climate action. Strategic incentives for energy retrofits, increasing energy efficiency and behaviour change have been offered. This approach ensured coherence between bottom-up activities and city-wide strategies.

The CAN consortium was composed of a variety of stakeholders: cities – Arnhem (NL), Brest (FR), Essen (DE), Hastings (UK), Liège (BE), Plymouth (UK), Worms (DE) – a European city network (Climate Alliance), energy agencies (Energieagentur Rheinland-Pfalz and Liège-Energie), a social housing association (Optivo), a non-profit (Energie Sussex Coast) and a public authority responsible for urban development and renovations (EPAMSA). This multi-stakeholder approach ensured that the project adopted a broad vision of the issues at stake and the solutions needed.

In the frame of the CAN project, three main approaches have been used by the various partners to empower neighbourhoods. The **grassroots approach** focused on supporting local initiatives whether financially, strategically or administratively in order help them deepen their activities or increase their outreach. The **face-to-face approach** consisted in personalised interviews with residents of the neighbourhood, whether through home visits or centralised energy advice. And finally, **the multiplier approach** involved training local residents with potential to further spread their knowledge or skills, hence increasing the outreach. These approaches are complementary and can be adapted to each municipality's situation.

CAN Quick Facts

- Duration February 2016 to April 2020
- 10 project partners from 5 countries
- € 7.8 million total project budget
- € 4.7 million funded via the European Regional Development Fund
- Total results in numbers: 1,100 households with improved energy classification with 1,400 t CO₂ eq emission reduction per year.

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