



ClimateGO

Pathways to climate-smart governance

1st Newsletter

Published: 9/2024

Climate change is already affecting Europe in various ways. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, more frequent extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, floods and storms pose significant risks to the environment, infrastructure, and human well-being across the continent. Thus, there is a need to better adapt to the situation. National, regional and local level governance that leads to actions play a crucial role here. Therefore, it is important that climate actions to increase resilience must be understood better by administration and decisionmakers, so that they can be implemented in practice, at local level in cities and regions.

ClimateGO addresses the urgent need for regions and cities to take proactive action against climate change. It emphasizes the importance of implementing laws and strategies to achieve climate targets while considering implications for society and nature. Beyond the evident focus on mitigation efforts, there is a need to emphasize the urgency of climate change adaptation and preparedness. Proactive adaptation enables larger benefits than reactive action, as both the avoidance of losses and the exploitation of opportunities are more effective. The ClimateGO project partners share a joint aim to ensure that anticipatory understanding of climate change is a central part of future decision-making.

Project Partners

Lead partner:

LAB University of Applied Sciences (Finland)

Collaborating with:

- Regional Council of Päijät-Häme (Finland)
- Alzira City Council (Spain)
- City of Grenoble (France)
- Regional development agency for Podravje - Maribor (Slovenia)
- Košice Self-Governing Region (Slovakia)
- Waterford City and County Council (Ireland)



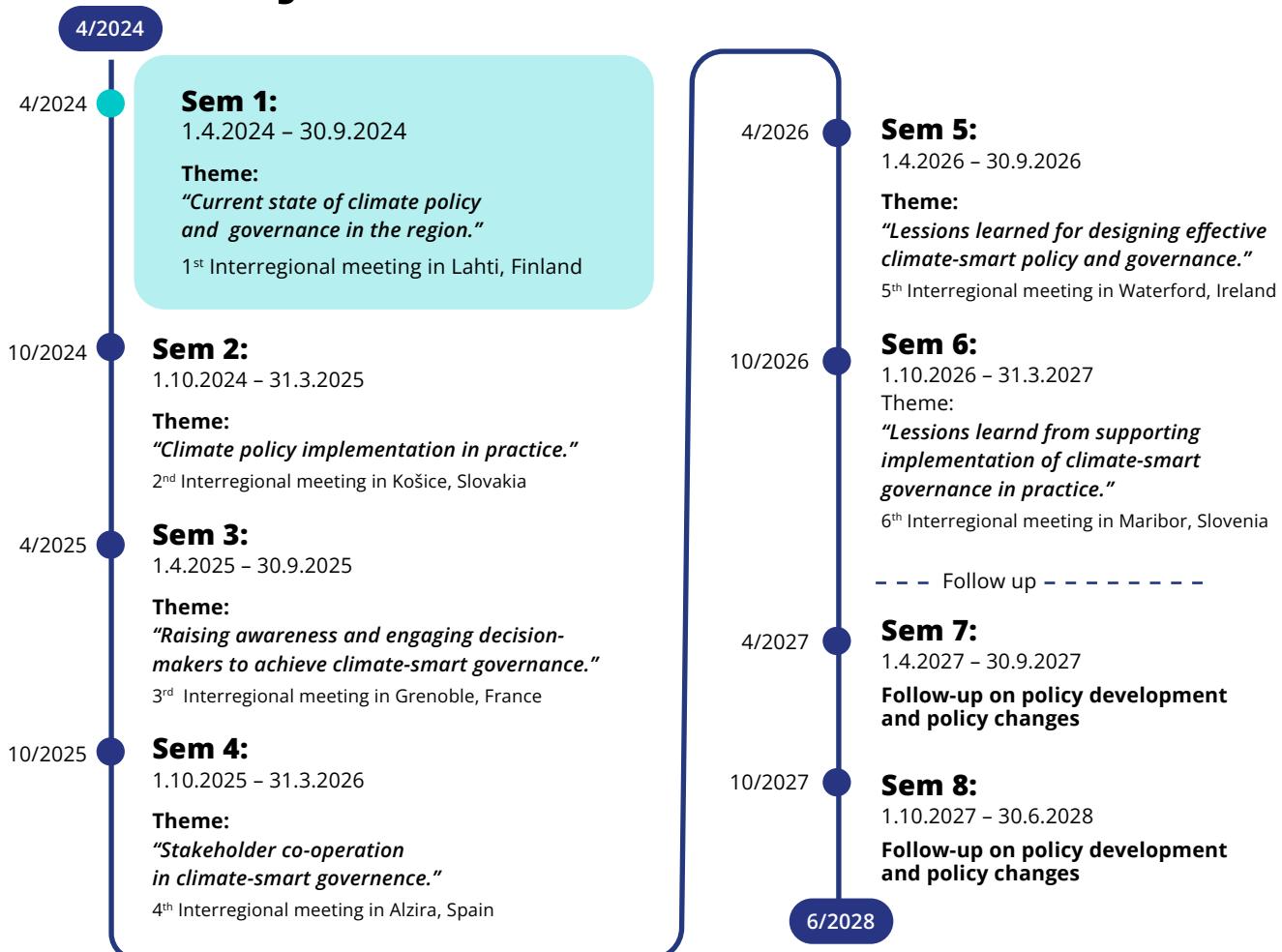
Budget
1,491,245 €



Duration
1st Apr 2024 – 30th Jun 2028



Project Timeline



1st Interregional Meeting

Creating Common Understanding

About Climate-smart Governance

The 1st interregional meeting of ClimateGO – Pathways to climate smart governance -project was arranged in Lahti, Finland on 11.-12. June 2024.

Altogether 20 project partners and stakeholders from six European countries gathered to meet and greet each other and to discuss the current state of climate policy and governance in the regions. The meeting was hosted by LAB University of Applied Sciences and Regional Council of Päijät-Häme.

Regions represented were Alzira (Spain), Podravje-Maribor (Slovenia), Grenoble (France), Waterford (Ireland), Košice (Slovakia) and Päijät-Häme (Finland).



Picture: Katerina Medkova, LAB University of Applied Sciences

Similar challenges unite partner regions

The main goal of the ClimateGO-project is to enhance the capabilities of administrative bodies and policy-makers to create effective climate-smart and resilient policies, as well as to improve their ability to implement these policies successfully. With this target in mind, each project partner presented their region's plans and tools to solve the challenge at hand.

During the discussions inspired by the presentations, joint challenges were recognized. One crucial question to be solved is how to keep up the dialogue on climate actions with policymakers between the reigns. To enhance the continuity of the climate work on an administrative level the ClimateGO-project can have an important role e.g., by actively engaging regional stakeholders. The role of stakeholders becomes important precisely from the point of view of continuity. Therefore, regional stakeholder groups have been formed in each partner region.

Other common challenges identified were the slowness of decision-making processes and difficulties identifying the importance of the operational level. Climate work doesn't end in the finalization of strategies. The project partners also agreed that even though many of the problems are the same, solutions can vary between different regions.

How is the narrative of climate-smart governance?

When talking about the implementation of climate-smart and resilient governance, one important aspect is the level of ambition. How do we define a success story? To answer this question Elina Ojala and Laura Matkala from the city of Lahti presented how Lahti has succeeded in getting climate plans into actions. Lahti's journey from industrial city to European Green Capital in the year 2021 has been eventful. It all started with the restoration of Lake Vesijärvi 50 years ago. Now, words and actions point in the direction of nature positivity. One concrete example of living like you are writing in strategies is the renovation of the Lahti city hall during which up to 99% of the demolition waste was recycled on site.

Climate walks and other good practices

At the heart of Interreg Europe projects is to recognize and share good practices among different regions. Good practices are defined as inspiring and tested policy solutions identified by cooperation projects. As a one example of good practices, participants took a climate walk along stormwater management site at Hennala district. The walk was conducted by stormwater management specialist Juhani Järveläinen from the city of Lahti. Climate walks are a concept developed to guide policymakers and administrators in climate-smart decision-making through concrete examples.

To share a common understanding and to be able to recognize and share good practices of climate-smart governance, the "Good practices" for the project were defined together. To bring the jointly defined concept

on a practical level, we also heard presentations of two ERDF-funded projects, Pilot Green, and Steps to prepare for climate change. In these projects the developed and tested tools and models, such as climate walks, could further serve as regional examples from good practices identified in Päijät-Häme.



Sustainability and green transition are at the core of Päijät-Häme regional strategies. As a Regional Council, we also support municipalities in, for example, drafting their own climate plans. ClimateGO provides a valuable opportunity to share information and lessons learned about climate smart governance to ensure the continuity of strategies, and their implementation

Maarit Virtanen,

Project Manager – Regional Council of Päijät-Häme

Project activities continue by enhancing the regional stakeholder cooperation. Next interregional meeting in Slovakia will take its place in the beginning of year 2025. The theme of the next meeting is *"Climate policy implementation in practice"*.

Good Practices

Inspiring and tested policy solutions identified by Interreg Europe cooperation projects

During the project implementation time all ClimateGO project partners will identify and publish tested policy solutions from their own regions and cities.

The main idea is that these tested solutions can be transferred to other European regions and cities. Learning from each other and making use of already tested methods and solutions will help different European regions to develop further and more efficient.

Definition of ClimateGO Good Practices:

- proved to be successful
- transferable
- scope on city or region level
- sustainable (ecological, economic and social)
- related to climate change mitigation or adaptation
- systemic (changes in processes, structures and practices)
- increases regional resilience to climate change



The Current State of Climate Policy in Päijät-Häme Region

Picture: Hanna Suutari, LAB University of Applied Sciences



Climate-smart governance is enhanced in Päijät-Häme region through regional climate work coordination and municipalities climate plans. Päijät-Häme has set the target to be climate neutral in 2030. According to Päijät-Häme Green Transformation Programme launched in 2024, this means fostering emission reductions, the circular economy, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation in the region.

Although regional and municipal level climate plans exist, and are under preparation, there is need for greater emphasis on interaction, knowledge enhancement, dialogue between decision-makers and citizens, and nature-positivity. These needs are supported by the ClimateGO-project in which regional stakeholder group engagement and interregional exchange of knowledge are the key activities. In addition, to further develop the policy instrument Innovation and Skills in Finland 2021–2027, new projects financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are sought.

ClimateGO also supports Päijät-Häme's role as a member of the EU's climate change adaptation mission. The mission provides networking and funding opportunities to increase adaptation capacity and to implement actions.

Active stakeholder group work has started in the region

As the first steps of project's activities, a regional stakeholder group was assembled. The group consists of representatives from the Päijät-Häme municipalities, LUT University, Regional cooperative store Osuuskauppa Hämeenmaa, Wellbeing Services County of Päijät-Häme and the Regional Board.

The stakeholder group's first tips for action were to increase the competences of decision-makers by communicating concrete solutions and the positive synergies between the environment and the economy. The company representative of the group reminded e.g. about the importance of responsibility when applying for corporate loans.

To deepen the regional co-operation stakeholders gathered for the second time in a face-to-face meeting in late August. Municipalities' climate plans and sustainable mobility sparked a lot of discussion. The themes are current in the region, as seven municipalities are currently preparing their own climate plans and the coming year 2025 will be the theme year of sustainable mobility in Päijät-Häme.

As one of the stakeholders stated;



*Climate actions are relevant
to many actors in Päijät-Häme
at the moment.*

The current state of climate policy in Podravje region

The current state of climate policy in Maribor and the region of Podravje focuses on comprehensive climate change adaptation. Key priorities include assessing climate-related risks, integrating adaptation into existing initiatives, and engaging stakeholders. Major challenges are identified concerning heat extremes, water management, energy efficiency, infrastructure resilience, public health, economic resilience, and governance, with recognised interdependencies between urban and rural areas, addressing cascading effects on neighbouring regions.

Specific sectors targeted for adaptation in Maribor and the region include water management, energy efficiency and renewable energy, urban planning and green infrastructure, public health and safety, agriculture and food security, biodiversity and ecosystem services, education and community engagement.

The foundation for climate change adaptation activities in the Podravje region is a commitment, marked by Maribor and other municipalities, by signing the Convention of Mayors on Climate Change and Energy, Maribor's commitment to preparation of the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP), adoption of the Strategy for the Transition of Podravje region to a Bio-circular Economy (early 2024), revision and adaptation of the Strategy for the Transition of the City of Maribor to a Circular Economy to a novel document (in progress), the status of Podravje as a pilot region within the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative, all that with comprehensive stakeholder engagement. Instruments for implementation include regulatory measures, financial incentives, public awareness campaigns, and collaborative platforms.

One of the most valuable foundations for the work of the Regional Development Agency for Podravje-Maribor on climate change adaptation challenges is the ClimateGO project. In Autumn 2024, the Agency plans the first stakeholder meeting, engaging key regional and national organisations relevant to climate change adaptation

Picture: Hanna Sutari, LAB University of Applied Sciences



to implement the following steps towards a more climate-change-resilient region in the most efficient and synergistic way. The regional stakeholder engagement and the sharing of good practices on climate-smart governance among partner regions during the ClimateGO project will lead to the upgraded Strategy for the Transition to the Circular Economy in the Municipality of Maribor.

Overall, Maribor, supported by robust political endorsement and a multifaceted policy portfolio, aims to build a comprehensive and resilient approach to climate adaptation, enhancing sustainability and livability in the region.



The current state of climate policy in Waterford City

Local Authorities in Ireland were identified under the National Adaptation Framework 2018 as key drivers of climate action. Each Local Authority, including Waterford, subsequently developed its own Climate Adaptation Strategy in 2019. Waterford City and County Council also became a signatory of the Covenant of Mayors to participate in international efforts to reduce emissions and set targets in line with municipalities across the world. At an Irish level the positions of Local Authorities in delivering Climate Action were strengthened further in late 2019 by the signing of the Local Authority Climate Action Charter. This commits Local Authorities to monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of climate actions on an annual basis.

The first sector-wide climate strategy was published by the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) in 2022. The Irish National Plan, Delivering Effective Climate Action (DECA) obligates all Local Authorities to longterm climate action and to take on a leadership role within their area. This strategy ties in with the Charter and National Climate Action Plan. Actions in Chapter 4 and 5 in this plan each have an associated goal from the Delivering Effective Climate Action (DECA) strategy. Waterford City and County Council published a Climate Action Plan in 2024 that will stand until 2029 and that the Local Authority will have to report annually on their progress on meeting their climate goals in the areas of Governance and Leadership, Built Environment and Transport, Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure, Communities and Sustainability and Resource Management. There is also a chapter in the Plan with over 100 actions related just to Waterford City, as Waterford City had been chosen 2 years previously as Waterford's Decarbonising Zone.

In 2022 Waterford City was chosen as Waterford County's Decarbonising Zone. Each county in Ireland was asked by the National Government to choose an area which would be a test bed for trialling low carbon technologies and ways of living and working, a Decarbonising Zone. Waterford City was the only city in Ireland to include its entire metropolitan area as its Decarbonising Zone and set out its goal to become Ireland's first Carbon Neutral City by 2040. Waterford City and County Council in partnership with the Southeast



Roadmap to a Carbon Neutral Waterford and ClimateGo

Gráinne Kennedy
Climate Action Coordinator
gkennedy@waterfordcouncil.ie

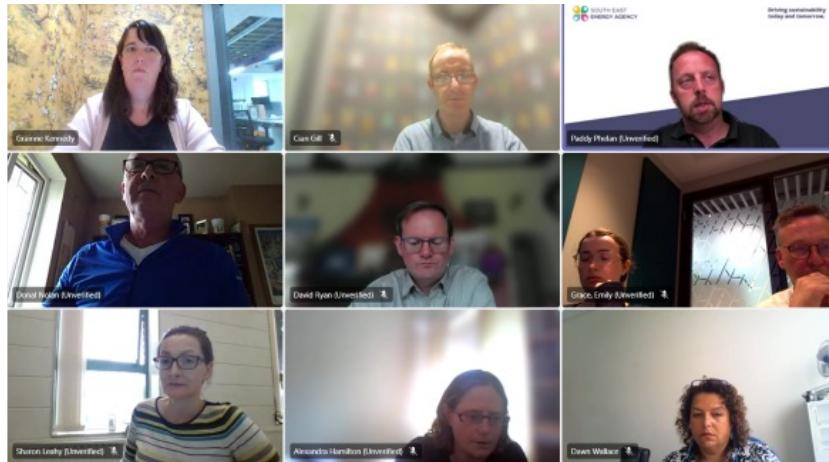
14th August 2024 | Online

Technical University and the Chamber of Commerce published its strategy to reach these goals, a Roadmap to a Carbon Neutral Waterford. This is the policy document that we have brought to the ClimateGo project, the policy that we hope to improve, monitor and put in motion as part this Interreg project.

In the City the Council is responsible for 1.6% of the emissions arising in the City. Across all Council operations energy efficiency is to be improved by 50% by the end of the decade and Waterford City and County Council must reduce emissions by 51%. Waterford City and County Council successfully met our previous target of reducing our energy consumption by 33% in 2020 and are well on our way to remove all fossil fuel heating systems from public buildings. The Council also has a programme of upgrading our housing stock to a Building Energy Rating of B2 or higher and is working towards making energy efficiency improvements in all 5000 houses that are Council owned.

Being a leader in delivering Climate Action in Irish Local Authorities is relatively new phenomenon with dedicated Climate staff being put in place since 2022. Although energy reduction has always been a priority for the Council, the scale of improvements has increased, and we are expanding our influence into Climate Adaptation and Climate Proofing all Council projects. There is however a gap between the emissions reductions that can be achieved by the Council on public owned buildings, the emissions reductions that can be achieved in private households and the wider reduction effort that needs collaboration between organisations in the city e.g. District Heating. At a national level support for the Decarbonising Zone has at times ebbed, as responsibility for the Zones has moved between Government departments but the policy commitment to the Decarbonising Zones like Waterford City has been reinforced

Picture: Waterford City and County Council



recently and a national steering group has been put together. Waterford City will of course follow the guidance of the steering group but through the ClimateGo project we can go forward, put in place our own policy with the city partners, set up the Governance, review the policy and start delivering coordinated Climate Action across the City. As one of the first Irish Local Authorities putting in place its policy for its Decarbonising Zone/Carbon Neutral City we hope to be able to share the learnings from our efforts with other municipalities in Ireland and further afield. Waterford City and County Council has already had some success in reducing our own emissions through lighting, building and Active Travel improvements and in the support we give businesses to reduce their emissions. Businesses in Waterford who commit to reducing their emissions receive a rates discount and this discount in the coming years will be based on how successful the businesses are in meeting their climate goals. These are actions that Waterford City has complete control over, the Roadmap to Carbon Neutral Waterford has actions that the Council are responsible for but also actions where collaboration across city partners is needed.

The Roadmap to a Carbon Neutral Waterford set out how Waterford City and County Council would use its influence in the sectors of Transport, Residential and Commercial, along with the emissions reductions that the Council are delivering in our own operations, to achieve a carbon footprint reduction of at least 60% per capita by 2040. The Governance requirements within the Roadmap lays out how the Council is to work in partnership to deliver this change.

The partners identified to deliver the Roadmap to a Carbon Neutral are Waterford City and County Council (WCCC), SETU (Southeast Technical University), Southeast Energy Agency (SEEA), Waterford Chamber of Commerce, IDA (Industrial Development Authority), HSE (Health Service Executive) Waterford Port and Bus Eireann (Regional Bus Company).

WCCC, SETU, IDA, HSE, Bus Eireann and the Port of Waterford all have a target to reduce emissions by 51% by 2030.

Waterford City and County Council is the municipality responsible for managing roads, social housing, business supports and other services such as Libraries and Fire Stations. SETU is the local University with a campus in the City. Southeast Energy Agency is the Energy Agency for Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford and Waterford they work in partnership to deliver energy saving projects for the local authorities, communities and individuals in the Southeast. Waterford Chamber of Commerce provide support and develop business in Waterford. The IDA again supports business but is at the scale of foreign direct investment and works in partnership with the Council and the Chambers to provide the appropriate conditions to attract investment to Waterford. The HSE is our national health authority, and they operate hospitals in the city including the University hospital that serves patients from across the Southeast. Waterford Port is a port in the neighbouring county of Kilkenny, the port had originally been situated in Waterford City and as a result the Port owns a large amount of land on the Quays in Waterford City. Bus Eireann is the bus service provider in Waterford City. All organisations were invited to a Stakeholder meeting online on August 14th 2024 and representatives from WCCC, SETU, the Chambers of Commerce, SEEA, IDA and the HSE were in attendance and contributed. We would hope in future that representatives from the Port and Bus Eireann would also be available to join us.

The group agreed to meet on a quarterly basis in person and work together towards meeting the goals set out in the Roadmap to Carbon Neutral Waterford. The group will also work together to identify meaningful KPIs and to carry out research on the effectiveness of our actions. The ClimateGo Officer in Waterford City and County Council will be appointed in the coming months and that person will liaise with all stakeholder group members to help them put in place the requirements of the Roadmap to Carbon Neutral Waterford in their organisation's operations.

The current state of climate policy in Košice Self-Governing Region

On October 22, 2018, the Council of the Košice Self-Governing Region approved the Landscape Renewal Program, aiming to transform the management of forest, agricultural, and urban lands. The program focuses on implementing water retention measures to retain rainwater, restore biodiversity, enhance soil fertility, increase water resources, and improve the local climate. The 2019 Action Plan, approved in February 2019, facilitated the 1st Landscape Restoration Conference, which produced essential guides like the "Methodology for the Establishment of Water Councils" and the manual "Restore Your Forest/Agricultural Land/Land." These resources support stakeholders in aligning with the program's goals.

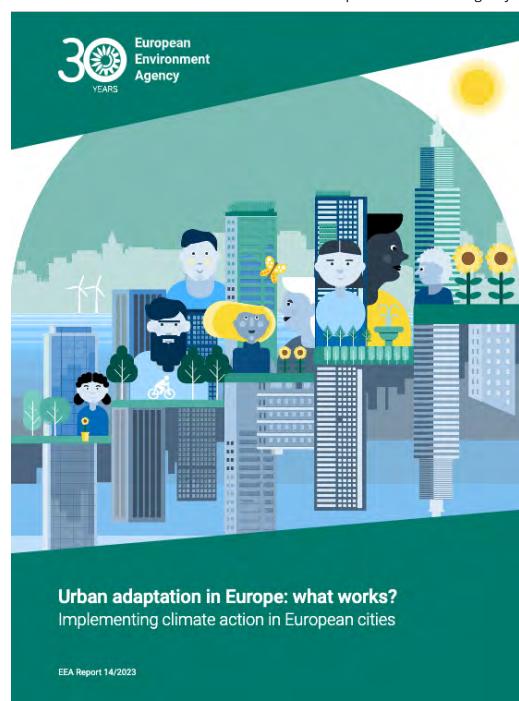
The program is tightly integrated with the region's broader climate strategies, including the

- Adaptation Strategy,
- Hydrogen Strategy,
- Low Carbon Strategy,
- Smart Strategy, and
- Regional Innovation Strategy.

These documents underscore the region's commitment to becoming greener and more sustainable. The Landscape Renewal Program specifically addresses critical climate challenges such as water scarcity, land degradation, and the increasing frequency of floods and droughts.

Thanks to the ClimateGO project, we can continue develop the Landscape Renewal Program and actively involve stakeholders in planning other activities to improve the climate in the Košice region. The program's success is supported by international cooperation, where the Košice Region engages with project partners from other regions, sharing best practices and refining policies to better meet climate challenges. This collaboration enhances decision-making processes and optimizes existing mechanisms within the region.

Picture: European Environment Agency



Recognized at the European level, the program's action plan is featured in the report *"Urban adaptation in Europe: what works? Implementing climate action in European cities"*. As the program evolves, it remains focused on refining policies and deepening the integration of climate adaptation measures, particularly in water management, land use, and ecosystem restoration.

Read more

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/urban-adaptation-in-europe-what-works>

The Current State of Climate Policy in Alzira

Alzira Leads the Way Towards a Resilient Future with Its Urban Agenda

In December 2020, the Alzira City Council signed a General Action Protocol with the Ministry of Transport, Mobility, and Urban Agenda, defining the Alzira Urban Agenda as a pilot project that can guide other municipalities in preparing their own action plans. This initiative not only positions Alzira as a reference in sustainable urban development but also aligns with the goals of the European ClimateGO project, which supports regions and cities in creating climate-smart and resilient policies.

Alzira: A River Toward the Future

Alzira and the Xúquer River have been intrinsically linked since the beginning. Leveraging the potential of the Xúquer, which flows through the city, and with the help of new policies, Alzira aims to lead the future with its own Urban Agenda. This agenda promotes a green, resilient, digital, and sustainable transition, fostering social cohesion while capitalizing on its rich cultural, historical, and environmental heritage. Just as Alzira was once key to the Kingdom of Valencia, today the Xúquer and its surroundings are central to our future, inspiring the motto of our Urban Agenda: "Alzira, a River of the Future."

The Alzira Urban Agenda reflects the principles and objectives promoted by ClimateGO, a project that aims to strengthen the capacity of local governments to develop and implement resilient climate policies. Alzira focuses on preventing and reducing the impacts of climate change, particularly through interventions to mitigate flooding caused by torrential rains. These actions are aligned with ClimateGO's goal of enhancing climate resilience in European cities and regions.



Alzira is working on flooding that are causing heavy torrential rains that are suffered in recent years by climate change. Therefore, they are making some interventions in the ravines to channel run-off.

Urban Agenda: Sustainability and Resilience

The Urban Agenda is a strategic document which pursues sustainability in our local urban development policy. It also constitutes a working method and a process for all actors, public and private, who engage in Alzira and who seek equitable, fair and sustainable development in their various fields of action.



Strategic objectives pursued by the Alzira Urban Agenda are:



1. Organize the territory and make rational use of the land, conserve and protect it
2. Avoid urban sprawl and revitalize the existing city.
3. Prevent and reduce the impacts of climate change and improve resilience.
4. Ensure sustainable management of resources and promote the circular economy.



5. Promote proximity and sustainable mobility.
6. Promote social cohesion and seek equity.
7. Promote and favor the Urban Economy.
8. Guarantee access to housing.
9. Lead and promote digital innovation.
10. Improve intervention instruments and governance.



The Alzira Urban Agenda has been developed in four complementary phases through an open and shared participation process:

Phase 1:

A diagnosis of the urban and regional reality.

Phase 2:

A strategic framework structured in a Decalogue of Objectives with specific objectives and their possible lines of action.

Phase 3:

An Action Plan with concrete proposals.

Phase 4:

A monitoring and evaluation system based on indicators that facilitate its implementation, also including an Urban Data Observatory.

By implementing these phases, Alzira is not only moving toward more sustainable and resilient urban development but also serving as an example of best practices for other cities and regions, in line with ClimateGO's approach to cooperation and shared learning.

The Current State of Climate Policy in Grenoble

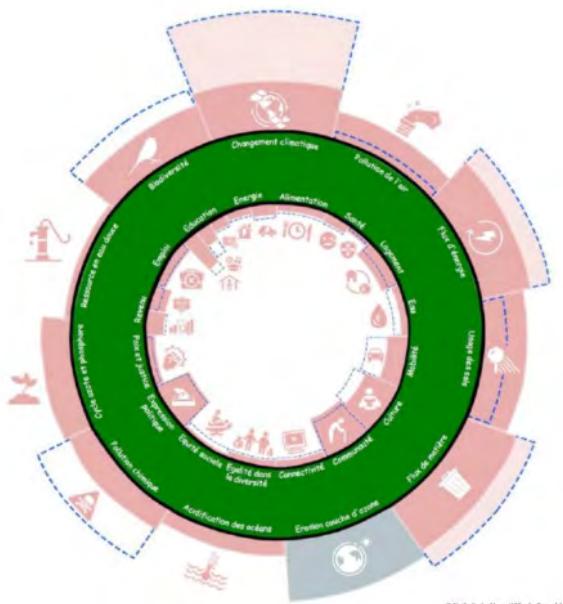
Grenoble's Climate Strategy: Embracing the Donut Portrait

For the ClimateGO project Grenoble decided to address its Strategy of territorial resilience. It is a new policy instrument that combines firm principles with flexible, adaptable actions. The instrument will be revised and enhanced through exchanges with the consortium partners, allowing for adjustments based on their experiences and insights. This European project is jointly supported by the Open City Department and the Department of Prevention and Risk Management of Grenoble's municipality.

Understanding Grenoble's climate policy and its strategic choices is crucial as the city navigates the complexities of environmental sustainability. In 2022, Grenoble was awarded the European Green Capital title. The numerous initiatives and strong engagement driven by this recognition highlight the city's vitality in tackling the significant challenges and uncertainties of the 21st century.

Grenoble City Council approved the launch of the "Grenoble 2040" initiative with the goal of providing children born in 2022 the chance to celebrate their adulthood in a city that is both ecologically safe and socially just by 2040. To update its long-term vision for 2040, addressing both ecological and social urgency, the City of Grenoble has adopted the Donut framework. This approach emphasizes the dual imperative of operating within planetary boundaries and achieving social justice.

The initial Donut Portrait of the City of Grenoble has provided a comprehensive diagnostic of the territory, addressing various environmental and social issues, some of which fall under public services and municipal responsibilities. To strengthen and consolidate this diagnostic, an analysis of local plans and public policies was conducted to



assess how the city addresses these issues and identify areas for improvement. Leveraging recent updates and publications of various action plans over the past two years, a thorough analysis of the key strategic areas in these documents was performed, resulting in the creation of synthetic and cross-cutting "Donut maps."

1st ClimateGO Webinar

EU guidelines 2024–2029
in climate and
sustainability policy

Wed 16th oct 2024
10 CEST

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Lead Partner



LAB University of Applied Sciences
Finland – Etelä-Suomi

Contact

Marjut Villanen
RDI-specialist
+358 44 708 5208
marjut.villanen@lab.fi

Susanna Vanhamäki
Chief Specialist
+358 44 708 1516
susanna.vanhamaki@lab.fi

Hanna Suutari
RDI-Specialist
+358 50 473 4754
hanna.suutari@lab.fi

Project Partners



Regional Council of Päijät-Häme
Finland – Etelä-Suomi



Alzira City Council
Spain – Comunitat Valenciana



City of Grenoble
France – Rhône-Alpes



Waterford City and County Council
Ireland – Southern



Košice Self-Governing Region
Slovakia – Východné Slovensko



**Regional development agency for
Podravje - Maribor (RDAPM)**
Slovenia- Vzhodna Slovenija