

MAKING IT **GREEN** *TOGETHER!*

LOCAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS FOR ALL



INTRODUCTION

FOREWORD

MICHAEL BLOSS

Member of the European Parliament

This booklet is meant to give inspiration and encouragement for climate action on a local level, by people and for people all over Europe.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of 2023 states that ‘The extent to which current and future generations will experience a hotter and different world depends on choices now and in the near term.’ It is true, the time is now. We are witnessing the (irreversible) effects of global warming; changes that lead to an even faster rise in temperature. But we are also witnessing climate action becoming more and more common and widespread all over the world. Everywhere, we see young people rising up to fight for our future on this planet; we see people forming local initiatives all over Europe that have one goal: protecting, improving and reforming our own habitats to ensure a livable future. Green organisations — social advocates, neighbourhood leaders, political parties — are blossoming all over the continent. I have encountered many groups like these while travelling through Europe as a Green MEP. I encountered NGOs who managed to establish a national climate council and get a new solar plant built

on top of a former coal mine. I visited local climate activists who have created a Green social hub and community space for young people to learn about the environment. They all are part of a big Green movement for a better world. Climate action is teamwork.

Most importantly, we can learn from each other. We can give each other hope. For those who feel helpless in the face of structural barriers and climate denial, we say: We see you, your challenges are our challenges, but there are ways forward! Many groups find creative ways to change their environment or transform adverse circumstances into opportunities for fundamental change. And European solidarity is a resource in this transformation.

We are faced with a historic crossroads. These case studies show that each of us can do our part contributing to the common mission of halting climate change and creating a world beyond fossil extractionism. This booklet is meant to inspire and to help all of us find the courage to keep going. Join in!

Yours,
Michael Bloss



Michael Bloss

Through these examples across the European Union, led by green politicians and organisations, we want to show you that climate action can happen at every level. From cities to regions to countries, green decisions improve everyone's lives in many domains. These are just some examples among many — and hopefully even more to come.

Climate-friendly, sustainable policies and actions — as shown in the next pages — can be replicated and adapted to work in all corners of Europe, and beyond, and inspire you to push for more ambition in your own community.

1

PUBLIC TRANS- PORTATION

Public transport is a key alternative to reduce pollution and cut emissions down. To encourage people to prioritise this mode of transport over private cars, governments have taken measures to make it more accessible.



● LUXEMBOURG:

In 2020, Luxembourg became the first country in the world to make all public transportation free for everyone. As established by the government, through its Green Mobility and Public Work Minister, all residents and even tourists can board a train, bus or tram without buying a ticket. The goals of this measure were twofold:

reduce congestion due to car traffic, especially as Luxembourg was facing a projected future increase in mobility demand; and greater environmental ambition, allowing to cut pollution. This is a positive measure for both the cities and the rural regions, as public transport runs all across the country.

● JOENSUU, FINLAND:

In the city of Joensuu, the municipality has developed many different local climate projects with the goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2025. Some of those actions have been focused on residential blocks where locals came together to plan and implement green solutions. In 2021, the people decided they needed electric cargo

bikes to facilitate transport. Because they are expensive to buy, they came up with a free borrowing system for people visiting the Vaara libraries. Purchased through their Climate Conscious Blocks project, the goal is to reduce the use of cars and therefore the production of emissions.

● AUSTRIA AND GERMANY:

Both Austria and Germany have developed specific prices for public transport, increasing accessibility for citizens and reducing energy use and emissions. In Germany, the government started with a monthly 9-euro ticket that was available in the summer 2022 for use on local and regional transport, including buses and trains. This experiment was such a success, that it has now been turned into a permanent monthly 49-euro pass since May 2023, allowing people to use local

and regional public transportation nationwide with no limits. In Austria, a similar scheme exists with the “KlimaTicket Ö”: this is an annual ticket valid on all public transport in one or multiple regions, or the whole country, and it costs less than 100 euros a month. The government — led by the Greens — is also encouraging employers to buy those tickets for their employees or to reimburse them, tax-free.

2

LOCAL PRODUCTION

Many essentials can be produced more locally and therefore more sustainably, whether it be energy or food for example. With citizens and municipalities coming together, this process can benefit everyone, achieving a better quality of life.

● **MOUANS SARTOUX, FRANCE:**

In France, the city of Mouans Sartoux created in 2007 the Maison d'Éducation à l'Alimentation Durable (House for Education on Sustainable food) which has one goal: for Mouans Sartoux to reach food self-sufficiency so that everyone can eat healthily whatever their means, while simultaneously protecting the environment. Based on different pillars, including developing agricultural and food research, the city has bought land and is employing farmers to produce and transform food. Since

2012, all the city's canteens, including in schools, have been serving organic food, with most of it produced locally. This has been achieved with no raise in prices, as the city has also been saving a lot of money by massively reducing food waste. The Maison also organises workshops and cooking lessons for both children and adults. Consequently, all residents, and beyond, can change their eating habits for the better.



● ZAGREB, CROATIA:

The Croatian city of Zagreb has been pushing for the use of solar panels to produce renewable energy, with its Solar Roofs Programme. Starting in 2021, the goal is both to increase the production of energy and to reduce the CO_2 emissions produced by the city. The North-West Croatia Regional Energy Agency is working with the city to implement the programme. It will focus

on installing solar panels on residential homes as well as public and commercial buildings with different capacities, with the goal of producing at least 50 000 MWh in three years. The city now also offers a solar support centre for citizens and an app for assessing solar potential on every roof.

● ACROSS EUROPE:

Energy communities are also developing in many different cities and regions, where people come together to produce and use renewable energy while reducing their energy bills. Whether it be in small or big cities, energy communities are being established in diverse manners and with different goals. In a small city like Magliano Alpi in Italy, solar panels were

installed on the town hall's roof and other private and public buildings, with a principle based on financial incentive, pushing the residents to use the energy produced in the city. In capital cities like Brussels, you can also find energy communities of various sizes, and city services to assist you in getting started.

3

PUBLIC green and blue SPACES

Public green and blue spaces in cities are invaluable. As the European Environment Agency explains, they are key for the well-being and health of all, especially children, the elderly and people with lower incomes. They provide spaces for social interaction, physical exercise but also improve air quality and the quality of life in general.



● DUBLIN, IRELAND:

In Dublin, Ireland, the Royal Canal Greenway is the longest greenway in the country, opened in 2021. Its development was planned and implemented by local authorities and the Dublin City Council is now working on its third phase. Already stretching along 130 km, for both pedestrians and bikes, the project consists of

extending the greenway by 2.1km alongside the river with even more public green space accessible to all inhabitants. The construction is meant to end in 2025, having started at the beginning of 2023, connecting different parts of the city and always with the overarching goal of reducing the city's carbon footprint.

● ZAGREB, CROATIA:

In Zagreb, in Croatia, the city has opened a therapeutic garden in a former industrial complex in the eastern part of the city, as part of a project funded by the European Commission. Part of a “living lab”, the goal is to offer access to this space for gardening, interaction and rest. Opened in 2021,

it was designed alongside local people, especially groups working with people with disabilities. You can find a mini-farm or raised garden beds, with the space itself being thought of as a “multi-sensory park”, where workshops also take place.

● BARCELONA, SPAIN:

The city of Barcelona, in Spain, has been developing and overseeing the Superblock program, which the progressive government started back in 2015. The goal is to “fill the streets with life” by improving public spaces, including by increasing the amount of greenery while dealing with pollution levels and environmental noise. With open and public participation of residents, organisations, experts and technicians, the programme is looking into different districts, or superblocks,

going through diagnosis, drafting, planning and implementation. All of this is to address the problem that the blocks’ internal areas, which were at first meant to be green open spaces, have been increasingly filled with buildings and vehicles. By reclaiming these spaces, Barcelona has pedestrianised areas like the Poblenou superblock for example, in order to move towards more sustainable transportation and reduce pollution.

● STUTTGART, GERMANY:

In Germany, the city of Stuttgart is taking the opportunity of the Opera house’s planned renovation to act in favour of climate, reducing traffic and space for cars. In 2020, the city decided to remove one car lane with the goal of reducing traffic by half. Instead of a car-filled road, the

local government is providing new public spaces with more trees.

Whether they be small or big interventions, all actions that reduce car traffic as well as increase green and blue spaces are ultimately beneficial for all.

4

CLIMATE PLANS

Many cities are designing and implementing climate plans, to achieve climate goals in line with the Paris agreement of limiting global warming to below 1.5 degrees, and the European Union's engagement to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030. These climate plans are usually co-created with local citizen participation, integrating their concerns and issues, as locals will be the first affected by policy changes.

● ÉRD, HUNGARY:

The city of Érd in Hungary established its first Citizens' Assembly in June 2022 based on the principles of participatory democracy. This was the third city in Hungary to do so, after Budapest and Miskolc. On the topic of "Roads and Routes for Relief - How can we transform Érd from a commuting town into a vibrant, green city?", the city randomly selected residents and sent them an invite to this Citizens' Assembly. Out of the respondents, the city held a lottery to select 50 people who would adequately

represent the diversity of the population with regards to age, gender, place of residence and level of education. Over two weekends, the residents came together to draft and vote on seven proposals, helped by experts, with a focus among others on reducing car traffic and Érd's ecological footprint and increasing green spaces. The feedback from the participants and organisers was overwhelmingly positive, noting the importance of the "wisdom of crowds".



● **BRUSSELS, BELGIUM:**

In Brussels, the city adopted in 2022 an ambitious Climate plan to take concrete climate action until 2050 and improve its citizens' lives. Following previous efforts in 2008 and 2018, the city of Brussels committed to the following goals: 55% GES reduction by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050, in line with European objectives.

To develop its climate plan, the city of Brussels organised a participative process where inhabitants could share their concerns and demands through various

channels including: interviews, workshops, meetings and targeted reaching out to young people.

To further involve inhabitants of Brussels in developing and implementing the climate plan, a Local Climate Assembly will be established, identifying local actors from relevant organisations and companies as well as from academia. It will be charged with controlling and monitoring the development of climate objectives.

● **BARCELONA, SPAIN:**

In Barcelona, which has been facing more and more extreme weather conditions, a Climate plan was adopted for the period from 2018 to 2030. It is based on four strategic lines: mitigation, adaptation and resilience, climate justice and promoting citizen action. It was built through a co-creation process, with the organisation

of participatory meetings and the development of a toolkit so people can bring these conversations to their own communities. Focused on people and their well-being, the climate plan tackles issues like energy poverty or taking a sustainable approach to urban planning.

CONCLUSION

Local action and participation are key in implementing policies and programmes that have a positive impact both on our planet and on the health and quality of life of its inhabitants. The projects cited here are just a few examples of what can be achieved at either city or regional levels, whether big or small in scale.

MARIE TOUSSAINT

Member of the European Parliament

“Our hope is that you will now be inspired to take action: learn and get in touch with your communities, your cities and regions’ councils. Elect people that care about green policies at all levels. Get involved in local politics. Bring your ideas to the forefront. We can all act for a better today and tomorrow”.





PÄR HOLMGREN

Member of the European Parliament

“We need a carbon-neutral Europe. While we act at the European level, we need cities to continue their crucial work in being part of this objective: a better life for all means cutting drastically our emissions, through energy communities, bigger green spaces, more local circuits of production, better public transportation and concrete climate plans among many other green local solutions”.



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