

Stakeholder engagement in climate adaptation & resilience

Learnings from EU Mission on Adaptation projects



Main Authors

- 🌱 Federico Aili, REGILIENCE
- 🌱 Charlotte Francois, TransformAr
- 🌱 Diana Guardado, REGILIENCE
- 🌱 Gustavo Jacomelli, IMPETUS
- 🌱 Ioana Oprisan, ARSINOE

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Executive Summary

Effective climate adaptation requires the active engagement of various stakeholders and end-users, including private sector, research institutions, non-governmental organisations and citizens. The engagement of local communities is particularly critical to ensure legitimacy and inclusivity in climate adaptation action. Nevertheless, local authorities and regions in Europe still face challenges in stakeholders and community engagement. The [EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change](#) provides some guidance and EU-funded projects under the mission support case-study regions in running engagement activities. The experience of the sister projects ARSINOE, IMPETUS, REGILIENCE, TransformAr show different approaches for engaging communities and their critical role in shaping climate-resilient development pathways.



1. Topic Overview

Adapting to the impact of climate change is a complex challenge and implementing adaptation strategies and plans require different steps, from initial assessment to monitoring and evaluation. . Mobilising and engaging stakeholders (especially citizens) in climate change adaptation planning is critical to facilitate the implementation of effective solutions. Regional and local authorities are seeking to leverage engagement opportunities to ensure future endorsement and secure long-term effective adaptation measures. Nevertheless, several regions and local authorities have limited capacities, they lack resources and often struggle to achieve effective engagement.

The EU Mission on Adaptation has provided a “do-it-yourself” guide to support regional and local authorities in identify participatory activities, tools and methods that can be implemented in each step of the Regional Adaptation Support Tools (RAST). Most of the EU-funded projects under the Mission are required to build stakeholder or citizen engagement into their activities and are exploring different approaches to build partnerships with stakeholders and engage communities. The four projects have proactively implemented engagement activities in diverse but pertinent ways. The project ARSINOE deploys a System Innovation Approach and Living Labs in its case-study regions. IMPETUS has adopted a flexible and regionally adaptative 4-step stakeholder engagement approach. REGILIENCE implemented several activities to increase awareness, build capacities and enable the engagement of citizens, for instance through citizens surveys. TransformAr created a local Innovation Ecosystem within each of its 6 Demonstrator territories, applying a Multi-Actor Approach methodology and developing a Playbook to organise co-creation workshops. Relevant insights and lesson learned have been collected to support better engagement and improve policymaking for climate adaptation.

1.1 Topic

In the context of climate adaptation, there is growing recognition that sustainable and lasting measures are best achieved through the active acceptance of end-users and the strong support of local stakeholders. Despite different definitions and formulations, local engagement usually occurs when individuals and groups actively participate in decision-making and implementation processes within their communities, cities or regions. The main benefits of engaging stakeholders in participatory initiatives include building local capacity and knowledge, increasing trust towards decision-makers, as well as creating ownership of decisions made. This is true especially for citizen groups and communities who can express their opinion and contribute to community development and enhancement.

However, local authorities often have limited capacities and resources to implement continuous and sustained participatory activities with stakeholders and communities. Both cities and regions would benefit from tools, methods and successful examples of engagement practices, for example in involving marginalized communities, showcasing the socio-economic impact of action (or inaction), and supporting behavioural change. In addition, there are also a series of obstacles that limit the participation and engagement, particularly among the most vulnerable communities. These obstacles include limited time, impairments, lack of trust, low digital literacy, concerns about privacy, language barriers, level of education, financial strains and the physical location.



According to the guide on stakeholder and citizens engagement provided by MIP4Adapt, the key elements for successful citizen engagement include communicating with a broad range of stakeholders and citizens, engaging with an inclusive spectrum of organisations and individuals, connecting stakeholders and citizens with decision-makers, and enabling stakeholders and citizens to act collectively and individually. Nevertheless, regions and local authorities need more guidance, resources and support in running these processes successfully. EU-funded projects under the umbrella of the Mission on Adaptation include engagement activities and are helping case-study regions in reaching out to a wider network of stakeholders and communities. Different approaches and methods are being deployed and lesson learned captured:

- ARSINOE project run a comprehensive stakeholder mapping process across all 9 case-studies, led by case-study leaders. The mapping was done by using the influence/interest matrix and helped guiding the selection of the Living Labs participants.
- IMPETUS adopted a flexible and regionally adaptative 4-step stakeholder engagement approach, based on identify, analyse, engage stakeholders and monitor results and lessons learned.
- REGILIENCE carried out general stakeholder mapping and implemented activities to increase awareness, build capacities and enable the engagement of citizens, for instance through citizens surveys and providing environmental literacy.
- TransformAr created a local Innovation Ecosystem within each of its 6 Demonstrator territories, applying a Multi-Actor Approach methodology and developing a Playbook to organise co-creation workshops.

However, successful approaches and useful lessons learned, vulnerable regions still face challenges when it comes to engagement, such as how to run engagement activities on the ground in regional contexts (wider than a municipality), and how to select the most appropriate engagement tools and methods.

1.2 Policy challenges

Local authorities primarily face financial constraints that limit their ability to fund and implement activities. Engaging stakeholders and communities often include scheduling meetings, organizing workshops, outreach campaigns, local events. These activities require budget resources, are time-consuming and for this reason are often deprioritized. EU-funded projects do not cover the lack of funding streams but can support the planning and implementation of some of these activities. Moreover, international consortium partners support regional and local authorities in carrying out stakeholder mappings, but they cannot take over the task of identifying stakeholders and approaching them at the beginning of a project. In fact, effective engagement requires dedicated personnel with appropriate skills and expertise. Local authorities frequently lack human resources to manage stakeholder engagement process, often resulting in poor communication and coordination. Investing in skilled personnel should therefore be a priority for regions and local authorities. Alternatively, they should invest in capacity-building and upskilling activities.

Furthermore, another critical challenge is the integration of engagement activities into broader policy framework, ensuring alignment with other policy areas to mainstream climate adaptation and improve the coherence of climate adaptation initiatives. This integration should also facilitate institutional coordination between departments, reducing duplications and disjointed engagement activities. Lastly, a coordinated approach facilitates the political will and commitment to implement climate adaptation actions.



2. Recommendations

Based on the experience of the four projects, the following recommendations are highlighted:

Recommendation 1: Facilitate the adaption of the tools to the local context.

The challenges to engagement are somehow similar across different regions, although solutions can be different. Each context is specific and requires a different treatment. In this sense, there is no standardised approach to citizen engagement, but strategies and tools need to be tailored to the local context and communities' needs. A solid understanding of the local context and stakeholder analysis is essential before applying different engagement methods. Rather than a specific tool, there are combinations of tools and techniques that can be well-suited for a specific situation. The choice and the combination of tools should depend on the purpose of engagement, complexity of the topic, typology of stakeholders involved, and available time and resources..

Recommendation 2: Maintain the engagement in the long-term beyond the EU projects timeline

Maintaining the engagement of communities in the long-term is difficult and requires balance and renegotiation. Setting clear objectives, expectations, building trust, maintaining contact and clearly communicating benefits are important components. At the same time, tensions may arise due to divergent priorities or power unbalances. Establishing Living Labs can facilitate the institutionalisation of engagement activities, and it is important to maintain these beyond the duration of single projects. At the same time, the identification of local ambassadors and facilitators can help connect different stakeholder groups and ideas, improving communication and storytelling.

Recommendation 3: Maximize the use of existing engagement tools

There are several resources available, including tools, methods, and examples of engagement. Local authorities and regions do not need to invent new tools from scratch but should adapt what fits the best in a specific local context. The guide provided by MIP4Adapt provides examples of tools for all phases of the RAST process (from stakeholder analysis to community of practices). TransformAr has developed a playbook for accelerating and upscaling transformational adaptation, including guidance on how to engage stakeholders and planning workshop activities; Arsinoe has tested the use of citizen science to collect knowledge from stakeholders within regions; REGILIENCE project has implemented citizen survey to assess citizen's level of awareness and engagement on regional adaptation actions, aiming to increase their engagement in climate adaptation.



Recommendation 4: EU-funded project can foster successful local engagement practices

EU-funded projects can support local authorities in engagement activities, providing frameworks and methodologies for engagement activities, such as stakeholder mapping and guidance to run local workshops. However, international partners cannot cover or replace human resources at the local level to identify and target local stakeholders. In addition, successful and impactful EU-projects can help building local political consensus and support for climate adaptation.

Moreover, capacity building plays a crucial role in fostering local engagement. EU-funded initiatives can offer training programs, educational resources, and technical support to empower local stakeholders, including public authorities, NGOs, and community groups. This investment in skills development not only enhances the ability of communities to respond to climate challenges but also promotes long-term resilience by enabling them to take ownership of adaptation measures. By combining participatory approaches with capacity building, EU-funded projects can create a strong foundation for successful and enduring local engagement in climate change adaptation.



3. Project Group

Please introduce the project group here including logos and websites.

Project Group Leader: Regilience

Contact: Federico Aili failli@resilientcitiesnetwork.org



