



Covenant of Mayors
for Climate & Energy
EUROPE

Building Resilience through Adaptation at the Local Level

 **Policy Support Facility Final Report**



POLICY SUPPORT FACILITY

From planning to implementation
of adaptation actions at local level



About the Policy Support Facility

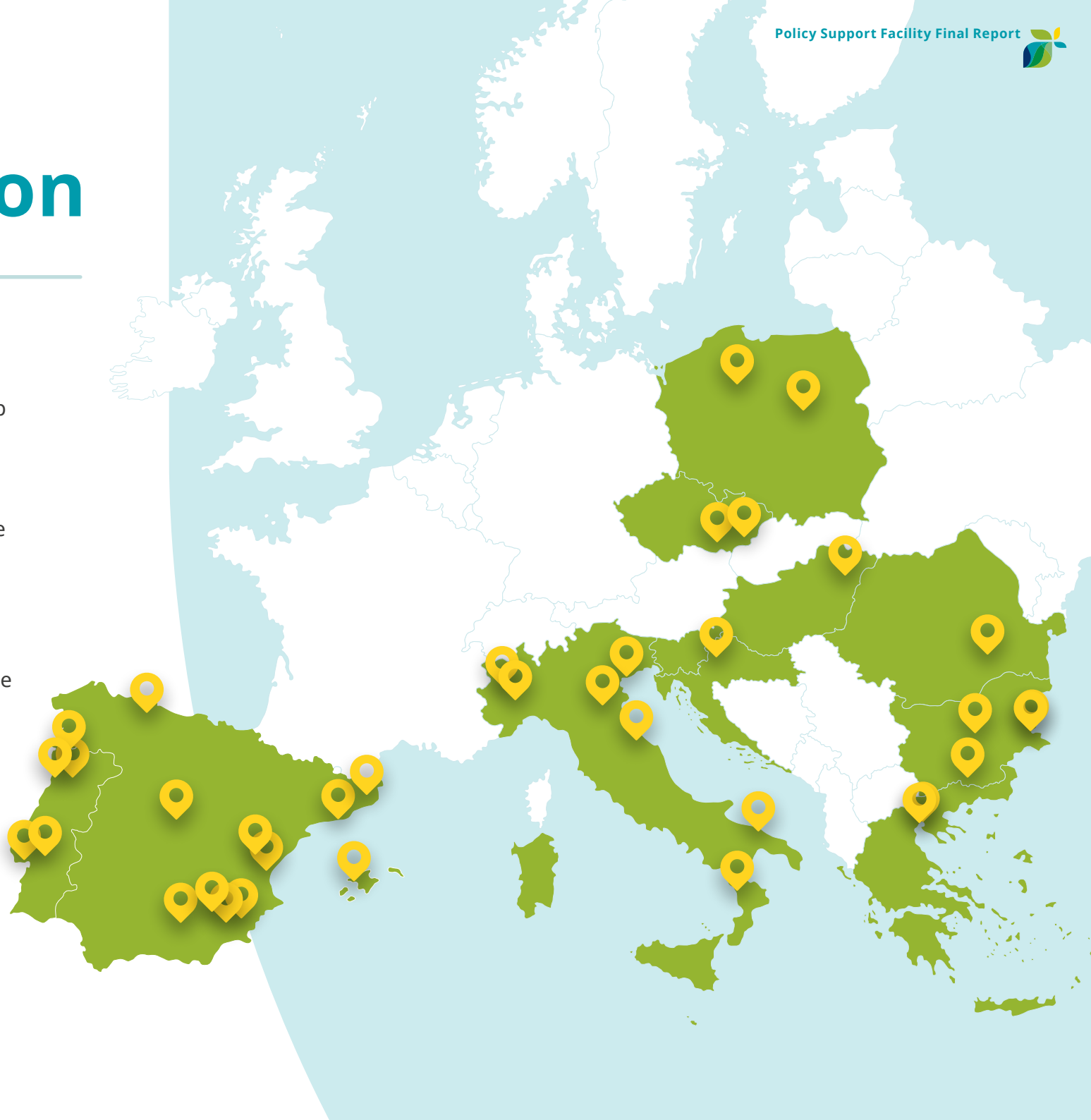
The 2021 EU Adaptation Strategy highlights that impactful adaptation action happens at the local level. This is why the Policy Support Facility, under the Covenant of Mayors Europe, was launched by the European Commission to help local and regional authorities develop and implement climate adaptation measures, with a real emphasis on moving from the planning stage into implementation.



Introduction

For the past two years, the Covenant of Mayor's Policy Support Facility has worked with cities across Europe to help them implement climate adaptation measures.

The Facility, a two year pilot programme which ran from 2022-2023, took shape over the course of four modules. Through a series of national workshops bringing together local authorities across 12 Member States, peer exchange opportunities, and technical expertise, regional and local authorities across Europe received tailored assistance to develop and implement adaptation measures, thus setting them on a path to build further resilience to climate change.



This report synthesises the key learnings from this two year programme and dives into four thematic areas. From **financing** and **just resilience** to **nature regeneration** and **disaster risk reduction**, in this interactive report, you'll get access to resources such as case studies, podcasts, and webinars that dive into the experiences of cities along their journey to strengthen their climate resilience and implement adaptation measures.

4

Thematic
Areas

12

Member
States

36

Cities receiving
Technical
Assistance

10

Cities
involved in
peer-exchange

250+

Local
authorities
engaged in
12 National
Workshops

Disaster risk reduction



Disaster risk reduction

The rate of climate-related disasters is on the rise. Compared to the previous 20 years, these climate events have almost doubled, making the existing inequalities within and between countries even worse. Across Europe, extreme climate events and natural disasters are affecting cities and regions with episodes of droughts, forest fires, heatwaves, storms, and heavy rain. The summer months in 2023 were the hottest on record, showing that disasters such as these are more likely to take place. It is not even that the summer was particularly warm that the situation is getting worse, but rather it signals this shift.

When climate-related disasters take place, it is often the most vulnerable communities which suffer the most and it is often these groups that have the least capacity to adapt to them. But there are not only social costs, climate disasters have an economic price as well. Between 1980 and 2022, climate-related extremes caused economic losses of assets estimated at EUR 650 billion in EU Member States, of which EUR 59.4 billion was felt in 2021 and EUR 52.3 billion in 2022 alone. This makes it imperative that communities across Europe have the resources they need to reduce their vulnerabilities and exposure to risks. Prevention measures and crisis plans can help reduce the social and financial impact of climate disasters. By developing roadmaps that local governments and community organisations can use to take action during climate-related disasters can help ensure that a city's residents, in particular its most vulnerable, are prepared.

In the context of collective action, cities and regions play a critical role in building resilience. This means implementing actions that make urban and regional infrastructure more resilient to these events and reducing damages when such events occur, including both economic losses and fatalities.

This requires technical capacities, which not all cities have, and which the PSF aimed to address. Under the PSF programme, 13 cities and regions received support from disaster risk reduction and built environment experts to increase their urban resilience to extreme events through implementing adaptation actions.

From flood control measures in Asti (Italy) to climate shelters in Valencia (Spain), check out case studies from these cities to learn how such disaster risk reduction measures could be implemented in your own community.

“We are not talking about climate change but about a climate crisis. Think global act local. Reach the regional and municipal level to provide solutions everywhere.”

Evangelos Gerasopoulos

Director of the Environment & Sustainable Development
Research Institute of the National Observatory of Athens
(PSF Greece National Workshop – Adaptation to
Climate Change: Challenges and Prospects)



More Resources



WEBINAR

Fostering a local just
resilience – part 2 – Reducing
the risk of disasters



PODCAST

Ion Sola Torralba on Assessing
adaptation, March 2023

Thessaloniki adapts, June 2023

Barrelling forward in
Debrecen, November 2023

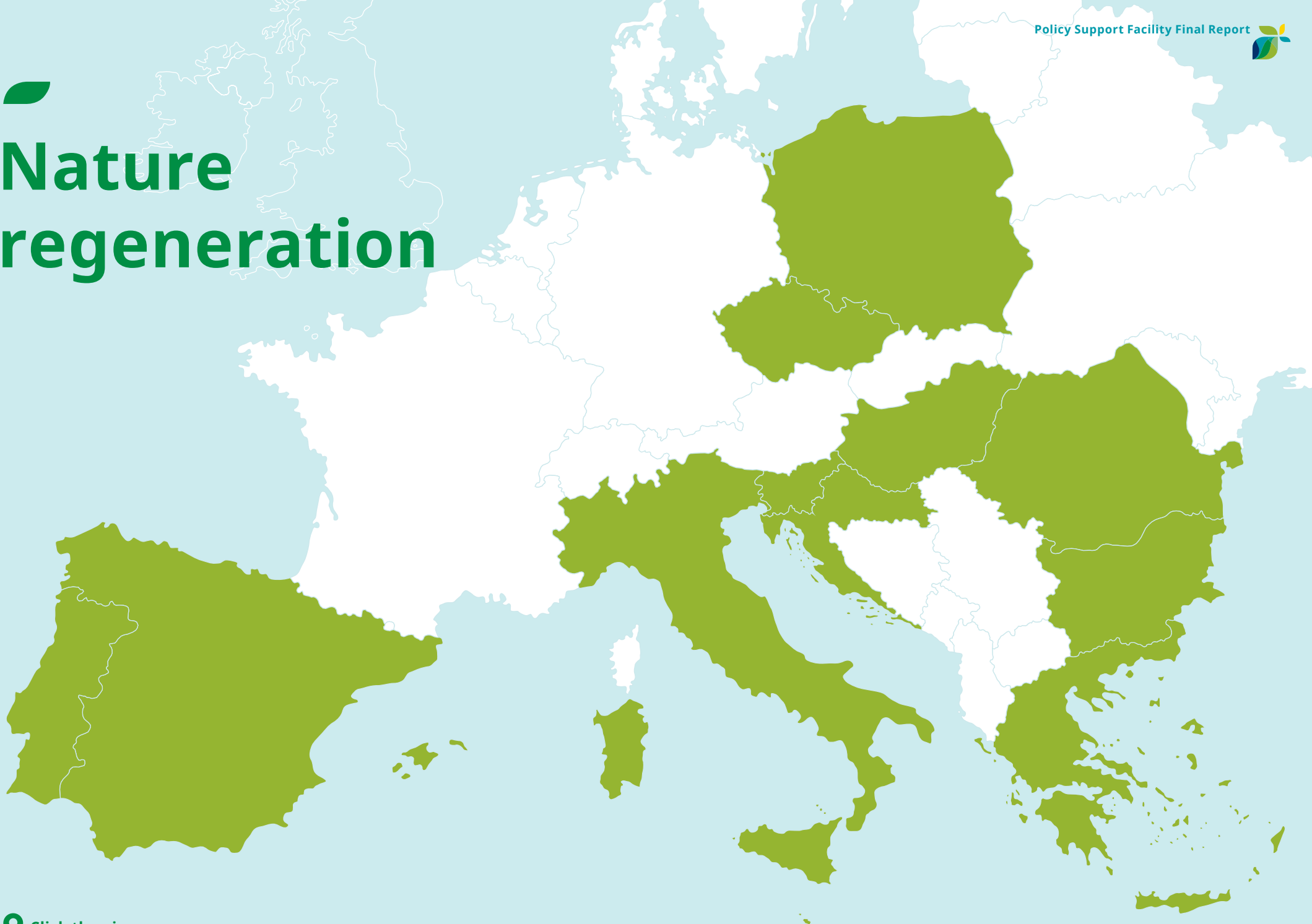
Mining for Inspiration,
January 2024



IN THE NEWS

Accelerating adaptation in
cities to reduce climate risks –
March 2023, The Mayor.eu

Nature regeneration



Nature regeneration

Nature regeneration and green solutions are important adaptation measures because of the many benefits they can provide to different sectors. This includes climate change mitigation, biodiversity protection, noise reduction, citizen engagement, and more. The EU Adaptation Strategy defines blue and green infrastructure as a “no regret solution,” one that, “simultaneously provide[s] environmental, social and economic benefits and help[s] build climate resilience.”

Yet according to the European Commission, **81% of habitats in the EU are in poor** condition and in need of restoration. However, every Euro invested into nature restoration efforts adds between **8€-38€ in benefits**. This is why urgent action is required to enable long-term and sustained biodiversity recovery and nature regeneration. The agreement between different stakeholders around the high ambitions of the Nature Restoration Law shows the urgency of tackling this issue at the EU level, including no net loss of green urban spaces by 2030 and a 5% increase in urban space by 2050.

Restoring nature and developing natural solutions in an urban context, however, is not always easy. If wrongly implemented can lead to a series of **negative consequences** including overlooking indigenous peoples’ and the rights of vulnerable communities, contributing to gentrification, unfairly distributing benefits, promoting industrial agriculture and monoculture planting, land grabbing, displacing communities, and failing to truly contribute to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

To avoid such issues, technical support is needed to make sure that this process is just and drives the local transition to resilience. Focus on local implementation can even be a driver for replication and upscaling. Supported by the Policy Support Facility, 12 cities with the help of experts took action to implement nature-based measures, including restoring existing natural resources and enhancing them to create a green urban network. From ecological corridors in Bydgoszcz (Poland) and tree planting in Setúbal (Portugal), get inspired by a series of PSF case studies focused on nature regeneration in their communities.

“Natural solutions have a particularly important role to play in addressing climate challenges. The preservation and development of urban green systems pave the way to achieving the common goals for a low-carbon society.”

Reneta Koleva

Deputy Minister of Environment and Water

(PSF Bulgarian National Workshop - “Integrating Mitigation and Adaptation Measures to Cope with Climate Change”)



More Resources



PODCAST

Teaming up to adapt, October 2023



IN THE NEWS

Knowledge exchange to build resilience: what cities can learn from one another as they adapt to climate change July 2023, European Commission

Just resilience and well-being



Just resilience and well-being

It is not enough to simply develop resilient climate measures. We must ensure that the benefits from adaptation actions are shared equally and inequalities are limited. Implementing a just transition and ensuring well-being for all is the only possible solution.

Although climate change affects us all in different ways, the most vulnerable people and communities are among those most at risk from the negative impacts of climate change and have a **low capacity** to adapt to them. Since vulnerability to climate change differs from region to region, the impacts on vulnerable communities need to take the local context into account. This means considering physical, economic, and social conditions.

Not taking justice into account when developing adaptation measures can have costly social consequences. The lack of justice considerations and due processes can result in '**maladaptation**', which can redistribute burdens or even enhance risks for regions or groups.

So how can local governments go about ensuring that the element of justice is properly considered when developing adaptation and resilience measures? Just resilience needs to be taken into account from the very beginning. Including input from a diverse group of stakeholders, particularly the most vulnerable, addressing the specific needs coming from vulnerable groups most affected by climate impacts, and acknowledging and respecting diversity can be an effective place to start.

A justice perspective can and must be mainstreamed in different climate adaptation measures to ensure their social sustainability in the long term. Within the Policy Support Facility, 10 local and regional governments have implemented climate actions specifically aiming at improving climate justice and the well-being of the most vulnerable. From just transition action in the Veneto Region (Italy) to diverse stakeholder engagement to integrating adaptation into the climate city contract in Thessaloniki (Greece), check out a series of case studies addressing just resilience in their communities.

“Everything can change. That’s why it’s something everyone should do every day. Because you never know which drop will make a full glass overflow. Which drop will lead to change.”

László Radics

Mayor of Répceszemere, Hungary

(PSF Hungarian National Workshop -

“In community for livable settlements”)



More Resources



WEBINAR

Fostering a local just resilience – part 3 – Integrating the social dimension into planning adaptation



PODCAST

Alexandra Popartan on just resilience, February 2023

Saša Heath-Drugovič on Celje on making change a reality, September 2023



IN THE NEWS

The Uneven Burden of Climate Change in Cities – March 2023, The Mayor.eu

Financing



Financing

If adaptation action implementation is needed to respond to increasing climate crises and risks, enabling a financial environment that supports this process locally is key. This means ensuring funding and financial flows throughout the whole process of planning, implementing and monitoring adaptation actions across different sectors.

While combining public and private funding to pursue public ambitions remains an issue in responding to the adaptation needs, cities and regions often struggle to [navigate and access available funding opportunities](#) as well as attracting investment. Different stakeholders need to be brought together to channel and prioritise adaptation financing action locally. This means cooperation remains a central component for success. Similarly, [innovative financing instruments](#) such as pooled investment funds, climate (resilience) bonds, and public-private partnerships can serve as alternative options for financing adaptation measures.

The EU has championed initiatives to speed up the resilient and green transition of cities and regions by bridging the gap between sustainability ambitions and financing opportunities. For example, since 2018, the Smart Cities Marketplace has matched 130 green projects with investments at a magnitude of approx. EUR 670 million.

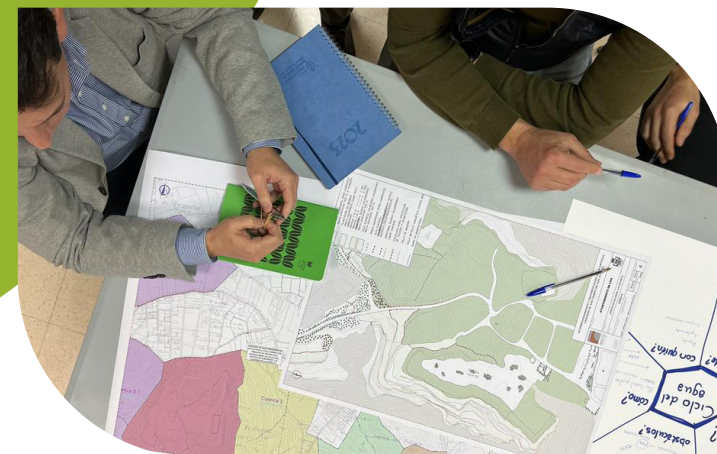
Also key is the capacity to [collect and understand data](#). Climate data informs adaptation financing needs and a complete picture influences how precisely local and regional governments can estimate their financial needs. Not only data, but political involvement can help facilitate access to funding. Political leadership, awareness and support are needed to channel public and private funding to the implementation of adaptation action. In order to achieve this, Innovative Financing Mechanisms must be included in resilience strategies.

In order to make adaptation action happen swiftly, financial resources must be made available and accessible to local and regional levels. All cities and regions involved in the technical assistance programme of the Policy Support Facility were assigned a governance expert, with the scope of supporting navigating the national legislative and financial environment, thus unlocking available funding and financing opportunities and making implementation possible. The case studies focused on [disaster risk reduction](#), [nature regeneration](#), and [just resilience](#) all encompassed financial considerations. To access more resources on financing adaptation, check out a podcast and webinar on financing just adaptation measures.

“There are big differences between local authorities, they either have the idea, the knowledge, or the capacity but they need help with the details. There is a lack of understanding that engagement is necessary, that writing a project is not the end, it is then that the action follows. Those who have the idea and the capacity to find the money to implement their measures, will find someone who will know how to do it and how it can be financed.”

Ana Maria Boromisa Ph.D.

Scientific Advisor, Institute for Development and International Relations
(PSF Croatian National Workshop – „Adaptation to climate change through the creation and implementation of SECAPs“)



More Resources



WEBINAR

**Fostering a local just resilience – part 1 –
Navigating the EU policy and financial landscape**



PODCAST

**João Dinis on cities and states adapting to climate change,
December 2022**

**City and region's experiences in the Policy Support Facility,
January 2024**

Published by the Covenant of Mayors – Europe Office in February 2024

Designed by unger+, www.ungerplus.de

© Graphic visuals by Norma Nardi

Photos from the PSF Technical Assistance Programme



© European Union, 2024

This publication does not involve the European Commission in liability of any kind.



A member
of the

