

SPONGE 2020

Cross Border Action Plan

Integrating participative adaptation into local climate strategies



Leiden



Cross Border Action Plan: Integrating participative adaptation into local climate strategies

The Sponge 2020 project aims to integrate a participative approach into the implementation of climate adaptation measures. This means involving various stakeholders throughout the process who typically would otherwise not be engaged with climate change adaptation.

The 10 partners, together with the 3 observers, carried out several projects to test this participative approach. The journey varied widely for the different partners. Sometimes the scope of the project had to be modified due to the influence and feedback of the involved stakeholders (Antwerp), and sometimes the approach had to be modified (Rotterdam). In the process we learned that co-created climate adaptation measures not only work technically, but also enhance the usability of a place and the well-being of the visitors (Basildon). A description of the projects carried out can be found on the website <https://www.urbangreenbluegrids.com/sponge/pilots>.

Overall, through the pilots we found that a participative approach can help with the implementation of the adaptation measures and can help gain support for the measures amongst stakeholders. It also helps ensure that the measures that are built are sustainable and well-maintained, because the participative process has instilled a feeling of joined ownership of the problems caused by climate change and their solutions.

At the end of the Sponge 2020 project, we are now seeking to help other practitioners to implement this successful and beneficial participative approach in future projects. Sponge 2020 itself can be seen as a pilot, but how do we stimulate the use of a participative approach in upcoming projects? And how can you ensure that it is being effectively implemented? This Cross Border Action Plan is a short guide to implementing this approach in your region.

Three steps towards implementation

The Sponge 2020 project was aimed at densely-built areas, where the impacts of climate change often hit the hardest: the most heated areas, the most paved areas and areas that can retain very little water.

Traditionally, the approach to water management in densely-built areas has been to remove surplus rainwater as quickly as possible. However, when drought strikes, like in summer of 2018, critically low water levels put a strain on the livability of our neighbourhoods and urban green spaces.

Another factor to take into account is that these densely-built areas house the largest number of residents, and each of these residents is a stakeholder. There has been increasing support over the last 2 years to really take measures to mitigate, or adapt to, the consequences of climate change. At the same time, there has been an increase in organisations and private stakeholders taking steps to 'do their bit' - playing a role and participating in these changes. Since the reach of local governments to implement measures is typically limited to the public domain, public-private partnerships are becoming an increasingly important tool to achieve city-wide climate adaptation initiatives.

These valuable partnerships take time and work to establish and build up. So how can local authorities start to effectively and systematically integrate participation with local stakeholders in their daily climate adaptation policy making initiatives? We see a three step method for this, which we have laid out on the following page...

For more information and to learn about more stakeholder engagement and adaptation measures, visit www.urbangreenbluegrids.com/sponge

1 Step 1: Encourage and enthuse

Participation by definition requires engagement by third parties, so it is vital to enthuse stakeholders and support them when they bring forward ideas. We also recommend collecting 'best practice' examples of successful projects: you can start from a good idea and avoid making some of the same mistakes.

This combined offer will help to influence management and policy makers, because all the right ingredients are already there: "We have a good idea, enthusiastic stakeholders to participate and it has been shown to work in the past". Enthusiastic residents will also have significant influence.

And most of all, show the many advantages of participative climate adaptation: the success rate of this approach, the lower costs, fewer barriers, and the potential multiple additional benefits, such as greater social cohesion and more support from stakeholders.

Through the Sponge 2020 project we have collected a large number of working examples of participative climate adaptation. Take a look at these projects on the toolbox website: <https://www.urbangreenbluegrids.com/sponge>. There are also a large number of other examples, outside of the Sponge 2020 project, of climate adaptive projects and measures on this website.

2 Step 2: Quick wins through pilot projects

Go for the low-hanging fruit. If support within your organisation is currently low, then start with small pilot projects. Smaller projects are usually simpler and easier to make a success. They don't cost much and take less time to implement, so you will be able to show results within a short timeframe.

After a pilot has run its course, you will have gained useful insight in the advantages and disadvantages of your approach. For the Sponge 2020 project, we collected our best practice guidance and lessons learnt, based on our own experiences, which might prove useful in order to avoid some of the more difficult situations we have encountered: <https://www.urbangreenbluegrids.com/sponge>.

3 Step 3: Implement the participative approach in your policies

To really embed a participative approach into the organisation, you need to embed it in your policies. That may not be easy, but gaining support through the previous steps makes it a real possibility. If you feel there is some ground to work on for implementation into policy, here is an example of a policy statement which you could adjust to your circumstances:

Maintaining the current robust system is and will remain the duty and responsibility of the government and local authorities. But this is not enough; even a robust system cannot cope with heavy downpours. The urban development needs to be adapted in order to deal with these climate effects. Furthermore, climate change adaptation requires cooperation with other parties. Adaptation concerns the urban environment, therefore inhabitants, businesses, universities and colleges and interest groups can all participate and actively contribute to making our city/area climate proof.

The goal of a participative process in climate adaptation is to achieve shared ownership and a common acceptance of plans or policies and programmes of action which will resolve conflicts and achieve a co-produced decision-making.

Through investing in participation, we stimulate the initiatives of inhabitants in the field of climate adaptation. Through this we enhance the connection with our inhabitants and the awareness that climate adaptation is a common responsibility.