

Under review



(Grant Agreement 101093921)

Deliverable D5.2 – Report on online cross-regional peer-to-peer activities

WP5 – Capacity building for stakeholder engagement

Version 3 | October 2025

HORIZON-MISS-2021-CLIMA-02-05 - Local engagement of citizens in the co-creation of societal transformational change for climate resilience



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Actions under grant agreement No 101093921

Document History

Deliverable Title	Report on online cross-regional peer-to-peer activities
Brief Description	Report on online cross-regional peer-to-peer activities
WP number	5
Lead Beneficiary	ICLEI Europe
Author(s)	Benedetta Buccolini, Laura Guaita, Erica Manuelli, Jannis Niethammer
Deliverable Due Date	31/10/2025
Actual Delivery Date	31/10/2025
Nature of the Deliverable	R – Report
Dissemination Level	PU - Public

Date	Ver.	Contributors	Comment
30/09/2025	1	Benedetta Buccolini, Laura Guaita, Erica Manuelli, Jannis Niethammer	
20/10/2025	2	Benedetta Buccolini, Laura Guaita, Erica Manuelli, Jannis Niethammer, Anna Scolobig, Alfredo Reder	
27/10/2025	3	Benedetta Buccolini, Laura Guaita, Erica Manuelli, Jannis Niethammer, Anna Scolobig, Alfredo Reder	

Table of Contents



1. Executive Summary	4
2. Introduction: cross-regional peer-to-peer learning for inclusive climate resilience.....	5
2.1. Sub-Objectives	5
2.2. Task Implementation Plan	6
3. Methodology	7
4. Synergies with other WPs that informed the task implementation.....	9
4.1. WP2: Exchange based on the experiences, challenges and needs of pilots & followers	9
4.2. WP3: Community Hub	10
4.3. WP4: Addressing barriers and enablers for transformational change	11
4.4. Task 6.3: Peer-learning workshop at EURESFO	11
5. Peer-to-peer learning events implemented	12
5.1. Online Event 1: Rome, Italy	12
5.2. Online Event 2: Malmö, Sweden	13
5.3. Online Event 3: Zaragoza, Spain	14
5.4. Additional in-person event as part of Grenoble Biennale of Cities in Transition	16
5.5. Online Event 4: Dresden, Germany	18
6. Key learnings and conclusion	19

Tables

Table 1 - Implementation plan	7
-------------------------------------	---



1. Executive Summary

Deliverable D5.2 documents the design, implementation, and outcomes of the Adaptation AGORA project's online cross-regional peer-to-peer learning activities, which took place between October 2024 and September 2025. The objective was to strengthen local capacity for citizen engagement in climate adaptation by connecting stakeholders across pilot regions and follower cities, fostering mutual learning, and supporting the replication and upscaling of good practices.

The task engaged policymakers, civil society organisations, vulnerable communities, researchers, and citizens, creating open and inclusive spaces for dialogue and knowledge exchange. Activities were structured around a series of bi-monthly online events complemented by in-person workshops, all of which were integrated into the project's Digital Agora and Community Hub to enable ongoing collaboration and resource sharing.

Five major learning exchanges were organised, focusing on key adaptation challenges:

- **Rome (Italy):** Participatory approaches for climate adaptation planning and the importance of maintaining citizen involvement beyond strategy design.
- **Malmö (Sweden):** Heatwave preparedness, vulnerability mapping, and inclusive engagement strategies, with peer exchange from Valencia.
- **Zaragoza (Spain):** Developing cross-sectoral energy poverty strategies, improving data collection on vulnerable groups, and empowering citizens through community energy initiatives.
- **Grenoble Biennale (France):** Co-creating climate-resilient urban strategies while addressing trust, relevance, and structural barriers to engagement.
- **Dresden (Germany):** Strengthening heat resilience in healthcare through participatory planning, science-policy collaboration, and multi-agency governance.

The peer-to-peer exchanges revealed that climate adaptation must be treated as a continuous process, with citizens and stakeholders engaged not just in planning but throughout implementation and monitoring. In fact, sustained participation builds ownership and ensures that strategies stay relevant over time.

Successful initiatives were those that adapted their methods to local contexts, using tailored communication and inclusive formats to reach diverse communities. **Trust was consistently identified as a key enabler**, strengthened through transparent processes, early involvement, and visible follow-up. Community groups and trusted intermediaries play a vital role in connecting institutions with residents and should receive long-term support.



Participants also emphasized the need to **link climate action with tangible social benefits**, such as cooling centres, energy support schemes, and healthcare measures, so that adaptation becomes directly relevant to citizens' daily lives. In addition to that, collecting and using robust local data allows resources to be targeted where they are most needed and ensures fair outcomes.

Finally, **technical solutions must be paired with education and behavioural change** efforts. Infrastructure investments are most effective in combination with awareness-raising and capacity-building activities that help communities adopt, maintain and upscale climate-resilient practices.

Overall, the peer-to-peer learning process enhanced the collective capacity of participating cities and stakeholders, fostered cross-regional alliances, and contributed to the co-creation of more inclusive and impactful climate adaptation policies. The insights gained will feed into future capacity-building efforts and support the European Union's mission to accelerate societal transformation for climate resilience.

2. Introduction: cross-regional peer-to-peer learning for inclusive climate resilience

2.1. Sub-Objectives

As stated in the Grant Agreement, T5.2 task operated in synergy with WP2 and WP4 to promote online cross-regional and cross-pollination possibilities through peer-to-peer processes. The peer-to-peer process allowed the groups involved to share their experiences with the tools and learn from each other, and to foster a communication process of debate, relationship and alliance building, conflict resolution and improved ability of society to deal with its differences. These interactions were eased and supported by dedicated theme and event pages, as well as forums and articles, on the Agora Community Hub (Task 3.3), which enhanced pool participants' collective and individual impacts, including exchanges, embedding and twinning to share learning and evaluate progress in achieving the goals of the Mission.

More specifically, the task aimed to:

- Connect stakeholders from the pilot regions, the wider Adaptation AGORA network, civil society and community-led initiatives.
- Provide an informal, open and inclusive space for exchange, discussion and mutual learning.
- Foster knowledge exchange by learning about common challenges and opportunities to citizens' engagement in climate adaptation, and therefore those that can be good practices or no-gos when designing, implementing and monitoring engagement processes.



- Support capacity building by strengthening the skills and competencies of individuals and organizations by learning directly from peers with relevant experience and knowledge.
- Promote the upscale, replication and transferability of good practices, tools and knowledge co-created in the Adaptation AGORA project, in a way that can support and foster the upscale of citizen engagement in climate adaptation initiatives. Promote online cross-regional and cross-pollination possibilities through peer-to-peer processes.

To this purpose, the task has targeted policy makers, civil society organizations, vulnerable communities, local stakeholders, citizens and research representatives.

2.2. Task Implementation Plan

The planning and implementation of the task have been broken down into five different activities, taking place between 2024 and 2025 (Table 1):

- **Activity A5.2.0:** Identification of activities to be carried out within the Task, clarification of partners' roles and input from other activities (M16-M17).
- **Activity A5.2.1:** Planning of online events series, in cooperation with partners: identification of topics, dates, target groups, possible guests, and language.
- **Activity A5.2.2:** Events implementation: four bi-monthly online events and one in-person workshop.
- **Activity A5.2.3:** Integration of peer-to-peer activities in Community Hub to enable continuous exchange.
- **Activity A5.2.4:** Draft and consolidated version of the Deliverable, as well as potentially other forms of reporting.



	2024							2025							Activities description	
Task	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	A		S
T5.2 (ICLEI)																A5.2.0 - before Task begins in M18: ● Clarify partners' roles ● Organise AGORA event at EURESFO24 (June 2024)
A5.2.1																A5.2.1: planning ● Plan online events series, with other AGORA WPs (topics, dates, target groups, possible guests, etc.) ● Plan space for peer-to-peer process (e.g.Digital Agora)
A5.2.2	EURESFO				X	X				X	X				X	A5.2.2: Events implementation. ● kick-starting event at EURESFO - June 2024 ● 4 online events + 1 in-person event ● Create a space for exchange before and after events (e.g. through the Agora Community Hub and continuous engagement)
A5.2.3															D5.2	A5.2.3: Draft and consolidated version of the Deliverable D5.2

Table 1 - Implementation plan

3. Methodology

The process methodology adopted for this task follows a structured and collaborative approach. It is organised into four main phases, based on the subtasks already described in the previous paragraph, and supported by continuous communication among partners to align the activities with the tasks of other project work packages.

During **the first phase (Activity A5.2.0)**, dedicated meetings were organised with all partners involved to agree on roles and responsibilities, including how to incorporate inputs from other work packages—particularly WP2, WP3, WP4, and WP6—and to define modalities for liaising with the pilot regions. These discussions were complemented by discussions held during consortium and work package meetings, which served to confirm key decisions and gather feedback from the broader partnership.

The second phase (Activity A5.2.1) started with internal discussions at ICLEI, the Task Leader, to explore format options and prepare a concept proposal for the consortium. The initial concept was then presented and discussed with all project partners during consortium and work package meetings, with subsequent adjustments made based on the needs and priorities of the pilot regions. Following these consultations, partners agreed on a general implementation plan for the series, including the timeline of events, the allocation of pilot regions to specific sessions, the selection of overarching themes—developed in close collaboration with WP2 partners—and language preferences.

Bilateral discussions were also held with each pilot region to tailor the peer-to-peer learning sessions to their specific needs. These exchanges helped define the session’s language, thematic focus, and potential guest speakers or peer cities to invite, ensuring that each event responded to the concrete interests of the pilot regions.

During **the third phase (Activity A5.2.2)**, once the general implementation plan and related timeline were defined, each event of the series was organised separately, following the same structure that is described in detail in this [planning and reporting template](#) (Annex II). The template includes all the steps of the session preparation, dissemination and reporting for follow up.

Firstly, an online meeting with pilots’ local stakeholders and speakers was organized to co-define the focus and priorities to be discussed in the session, and a potential date. Based on the discussion with the city, the team at ICLEI Europe brainstormed and identified cities and local governments, among the ICLEI network and the Adaptation AGORA followers, that could contribute to the peer-learning.

Once the set of speakers had been confirmed, a coordination meeting with all of them was organized to further define the scope of the session and better understand what they were interested in learning from each other. The meeting, ideally taking place three to four weeks before the online session, also represented an opportunity to finalize the title and description of the session for dissemination purposes. Finally, the speakers were asked to contribute ahead of the sessions, adding relevant content to a set of slides, structured following a ping-pong format.

The session itself used a ping-pong format, an interactive methodology where speakers and panellists engage in a dynamic back-and-forth dialogue. Instead of individual and separate presentations, speakers shared their perspectives and experiences, building on each other’s points in a conversational style. As mentioned previously, a topic of interest was agreed upon together with the speakers, and based on that, two to three sub-themes were identified to guide the conversation and exchange. This format encouraged active participation, fostered a more informal and open environment for participants, and therefore provided a more engaging experience for the audience. Rather than a lecture-style and one-way communication formats, through a ping-pong

style, participants were also encouraged to share personal experiences, enriching the conversation and fostering peer-learning and knowledge exchange with a broader community.

Finally, **one more phase (A5.2.3)**, related to the integration of peer-to-peer activities into the project's Agora Community Hub, took place across the entire duration of the planning and implementation of the task, due to the transversal nature of the action. Early discussions with WP3 partners were planned to explore potential synergies and assess available technical options for the Agora Community Hub's involvement in the peer-to-peer learning activities. Throughout the process, continuous communication with partners enabled iterative improvement of the Hub's functionality and relevance, drawing on feedback and lessons learned from each event.

4. Synergies with other WPs that informed the task implementation

4.1. WP2: Exchange based on the experiences, challenges and needs of pilots & followers

The focus of the events organized as part of the peer-to-peer learning exchange series has been based on the experiences, challenges and needs identified by the Adaptation AGORA project pilots.

In the pilot region of Rome, the activities have been focused on the definition of the city's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the involvement of citizens, especially in vulnerable situations, in its design and implementation. Therefore, the focus of the peer-to-peer learning session with the pilot region of Rome has explored challenges, good practices and opportunities for citizen engagement in the development and implementation of Climate Adaptation Plans. The session has seen the participation of representatives from the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, in the North of Italy, as followers of the Adaptation AGORA project and replicators of the Italian Pilot methodologies and tools for citizen engagement in climate adaptation.

In the **pilot region of Malmö**, the first inception workshop that took place on the 12th of September 2023 focused on the city's adaptation to heatwaves, with particular attention to vulnerable groups. The aim was to co-explore and build a shared understanding of who is most affected and why, considering both social and physical vulnerability factors. Thus, the focus of the peer-to-peer learning workshop has been on adaptation to heatwaves, especially targeting vulnerable groups. The exchange has seen the participation of representatives from the city of Valencia, for an exchange on the challenges, practices and measures supporting local governments in the engagement and protection of vulnerable groups during heat waves.



The workshop held on October 24th **in the Zaragoza pilot** gathered 18 participants from diverse sectors of Aragonese society to collaboratively identify and discuss the social, environmental, and economic impacts of climate change in the Aragón region. Through group discussions and a SWOT analysis focused on health, desertification, water poverty, and vulnerable groups, the workshop laid the groundwork for future participatory activities aimed at enhancing regional climate adaptation strategies. After that, energy and energy poverty have been identified as a pressing issue for the pilot area, which started to develop an Energy Poverty Plan. In line with this work, the peer-to-peer learning workshop brought together representatives from the municipalities of Valencia, Barcelona and Almada to discuss the challenges, opportunities and practices in the development of integrated and inclusive energy poverty plans.

In Germany, in the **pilot area of Dresden**, the inception workshop held on November 16, 2023, brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, from local government to civil society and academia, to collaboratively explore the city's climate vulnerabilities, particularly related to heatwaves and heavy rainfall. More specifically, health workers were recognized not only as first responders to these challenges but also as a group personally vulnerable to working under extreme conditions. In September and October 2024, two focus groups were organised with health workers from the city's hospital, underscoring the need for strengthened healthcare system preparedness, additional resources, and protective measures for staff during heat events. For this reason, the peer-learning exchange was organized to bring together healthcare workers, policymakers, and researchers from across Europe to share experiences, challenges and strategies for heat adaptation in healthcare.

4.2. WP3: Community Hub

The online peer-to-peer activities did not only foresee a series of ad-hoc online events, focusing on each Pilot Region, but also the integration of the Agora Community Hub platform into the broader peer-to-peer exchange strategy. The objective was to provide different online spaces for interested citizens and practitioners to exchange knowledge, learn from other cities with similar challenges and connect with peers from different contexts. In fact, the idea has been to provide, through the opening of event-dedicated Forum posts, an additional space for people and stakeholders to interact, exchange and build on the discussion held during the live events. Moreover, the platform functions as an online archive, collecting relevant information and resources gathered during the live discussions, as well as the recordings and summaries, to allow interested local governments and practitioners to access the material and connect with speakers also after the events.



4.3. WP4: Addressing barriers and enablers for transformational change

In line with the project's focus and goals, T5.2 has been informed and has integrated results from WP4, more specifically from T4.5. Even though the relationship between WP4 and T5.2 has primarily been of an indirect nature, the findings of WP4, particularly regarding barriers and enablers to transformational change, have consistently re-emerged as reference points within the peer-to-peer learning exchanges conducted under T5.2. These results have provided a valuable analytical framework to interpret and structure the discussions held among participants. In addition, the in-person event organised as part of Grenoble Biennale of Cities in Transition within the scope of T5.2, served as a dedicated occasion to present and discuss the findings from T4.5 with policy makers, thereby facilitating their integration into broader policy dialogues.

4.4. Task 6.3: Peer-learning workshop at EURESFO

The series of peer-to-peer learning events kicked off with an in-person workshop at the 11th European Urban Resilience Forum held in the city of Valencia, from the 26th to the 28th of June 2024. The workshop, co-organized together with the Urban ReLeaf and the ACCTING projects, has brought together five municipalities around the questions:

- How can local governments design and implement citizen engagement in climate resilience/adaptation planning and implementation, especially to involve the most vulnerable groups in society?
- How to do so in a meaningful and effective way, beyond just “ticking the box of participation”, considering substantial resource constraints imposed on local governments?

Participants engaged with five real-world case studies from Malmö, Dresden, Rome, Messina, and Utrecht. Each case was facilitated by local experts and drew on insights from the Adaptation AGORA, UrbanReLeaf, and ACCTING projects.

Participants had the chance to discuss challenges, strategies and good practices to promote inclusive participation and community engagement in the co-creation of adaptation solutions at the local level, addressing the specific needs and constraints of each case.

The Forum has represented a great chance for the Adaptation AGORA Project to connect not only with other projects working on the topic of citizen engagement in climate adaptation, but also to bring together different local and regional governments. It thus kick-started the formation of a network of peers that was continuously engaged in online peer-learning events.



5. Peer-to-peer learning events implemented

5.1. [Online Event 1: Rome, Italy](#)

On the 17th of October 2024, the event *"Citizenship and Climate Adaptation: Participatory Experiences from Rome to Friuli Venezia Giulia"* brought together experts and participants to discuss citizen engagement in climate adaptation. Edoardo Zanchini, Director of the Rome Climate Office, and Paolo De Alti, Director of Water Resources Management Services in Friuli Venezia Giulia, shared insights from their respective regions. The event highlighted Rome as a pilot site and Friuli Venezia Giulia as a follower region within the Adaptation AGORA project, emphasizing the diverse participatory approaches employed to involve local communities in addressing climate challenges.

Main takeaways:

During the discussion, Edoardo Zanchini, director of the Rome Climate Office, explained how the **dialogue with citizens during the development phase of Rome's Climate Adaptation Strategy** highlighted the request from part of citizens to continue the information and participation process also in the subsequent phases of the strategy and on the identified projects and measures to be implemented.

Paolo De Alti, Director of the Water Resources Management Services of the Friuli Venezia Giulia, explained that **water resource management is one of the most pressing challenges**, especially in the low Friulian plain, where the shallow water table allows easy, cost-free extraction. Historically, no aqueduct was built for supply, so residents rely on personal wells, with around 50-60 thousand wells serving hundreds of thousands of people. This has led to major water loss, with around 1 billion cubic meters dispersed. The depletion of the aquifer has also allowed saltwater intrusion, harming agriculture and posing health risks for the local population, as the water is neither monitored nor certified. This phenomenon is **expected to worsen due to climate change**.

The Peer-to-Peer discussion highlighted two main learnings:

- **The need to continue citizen engagement in the implementation phase of a project:** the citizens involved during the development phase of Rome's Climate Adaptation Strategy expressed interest in continuing the participation process also in the following phases.
- **The wish for tailored engagement methodologies to tackle different challenges:** in Rome, one challenge is maintaining a dialogue with local committees and groups advocating for specific interventions, which are more difficult to involve if not by directly addressing their requests. In Friuli Venezia Giulia, water scarcity represents a problem of cultural approach and lifestyles, rather than disinformation, and it poses challenges to engage citizens and to



gain their support. Tailored engagement methodologies can support the regions to address different issues and foster behavioural change in the face of a changing climate.

For the full report, please see Annex I.

5.2. [Online Event 2: Malmö, Sweden](#)

On the 5th of December 2024, the event *"Engaging Local Communities in Heatwave Preparedness and Response: A Dialogue with the Cities of Malmö and Valencia"* explored inclusive strategies for adapting to extreme heat. Speakers from Malmö and Valencia shared insights on their approaches to community engagement. Representing Malmö, Emanuel Toft, Ludwig Sonesson, and Mathilda Englund discussed the pilot city's context and efforts, while Emilio Servera-Martinez presented Valencia's perspective as a follower city. The discussion centered on local heat challenges, identifying vulnerable populations, and enhancing preparedness measures through participatory approaches.

Main takeaways:

1. What is the heat context in Malmö and Valencia?

- The **city of Malmö** has historically prioritized winter-proof infrastructure and only recently, due to temperature rising and heat trap effects, has taken steps to incorporate heat vulnerability considerations into urban planning.
- The **city of Valencia** has more experience with heat issues and has a series of strategies and frameworks in place to tackle it, such as an early warning system coordinated as part of the Regional Heatwave Programme and multiple strategies addressing heat from several perspectives.

2. Who is vulnerable and where?

- In the context of **Malmö**, while socio-economic status often indicates potential vulnerability, cultural and social resilience sometimes lessens heat-related impacts. However, critical issues such as high indoor temperatures, poor ventilation and social isolation persisted as significant concerns.
- In the context of **Valencia**, citizens' vulnerability is strictly connected to the urban heat island effect. However, urban morphology and the different distribution of services and green



infrastructure can lead to different sensitivity to heat and adaptive capacities in different areas.

- Other important factors to consider when mapping vulnerability are the **role of cultural adaptive capacities** (beyond physical ones) and **social capital and trust in local authorities**.

3. Key strategies to increase heatwave preparedness.

- **Adapt the built environment** to reduce over-reliance on air conditioning and the effect of heat traps
- **Embed heat adaptation into urban infrastructure and planning**, including low-tech cooling solutions, and upscaling cooling (climate) shelters.
- **Prioritize investments and interventions based on vulnerability mapping** from different perspectives.
- Increase the number of **training programs and educational workshops** targeting behavioural shifts, also with the help of **social networks**.
- **Identify and support hard-to-reach groups** like homeless individuals and pregnant women, through the engagement of proxies and the **collaboration with local organisations and associations already working with vulnerable groups**.

For the full report, please see Annex I.

5.3. [Online Event 3: Zaragoza, Spain](#)

On 13th March 2025, the event *"Inclusive Measures to Address Energy Poverty: A Peer-to-Peer Exchange with Almada, Barcelona, Valencia and Zaragoza"* brought together representatives from four European cities to discuss collaborative approaches to tackling energy poverty. As part of the Adaptation AGORA initiative, the pilot city of Zaragoza, along with follower cities Almada, Barcelona, and Valencia, shared experiences on developing cross-sectoral energy poverty strategies. Speakers explored key themes, including the design of inclusive action plans, local-level data collection, especially related to vulnerable groups, and effective methods for citizens' engagement in community energy initiatives.

Main takeaways:

1. Designing a coherent and cross-sectoral energy poverty strategy:



- **Zaragoza:** the creation of a comprehensive strategy is hindered by challenges such as fragmented responsibilities, a lack of harmonized data, and difficulty in integrating initiatives.
- **Almada:** to tackle bureaucratic and political barriers, the city formed an interdepartmental working group to delineate a five-step approach for 2025-2026, so as to define objectives and a governance structure, collect relevant data and develop targeted interventions.
- **Valencia:** the city completed a draft of the Energy Poverty Strategy and conducted two working sessions, sharing the preliminary version with internal departments and external actors, making sure to adapt the “energy language”.
- **Barcelona:** Energy Poverty goals and measures are integrated into the city’s Climate Action Plan, such as refurbishment initiatives, solar energy instalments and energy advisory points, with a clear climate justice and just transition angle.

2. How to gather data (especially vulnerable groups) at the local level?

- **Valencia:** the city is building partnerships with NGOs, municipal statistics offices, and social services, including the Voluntary Manager Foundation and Caritas.
- **Barcelona:** the city relies on a network of energy advisory points and climate shelters to provide direct assistance and to communicate the benefits of the [Social Bond](#), offering discounts on energy bills.
- **Milano:** Cooling Centers, managed by the Red Cross, have been crucial to assist elderly people and to gather data on the impact of such centres. The city’s Urban Resilience Department is collaborating with C40 to conduct a [Community Resilience Assessment of the Crescenzago neighborhood](#).

3. Engaging and empowering citizens through community energy initiatives:

- **Valencia:** through the [EnerCMed project](#), the city is exploring combined solutions of energy communities and nature-based solutions to tackle energy poverty, aiming to involve NGOs, local associations, schools and social services in the creation of two renewable energy communities for vulnerable households.
- **Zaragoza:** the Oliver Energy Community successfully involved 50 participants from one of the city’s poorest neighbourhoods, by including social organizations and local institutions in the Board of the energy community to be as close as possible to people.
- **Barcelona:** within the Sun4All project, the key to engaging people has been to build and keep trust, through community work and good information, but also by providing easy access to



support. The city also developed a protocol to speed up all legal procedures and simplify bureaucracy in public housing buildings.

- **Almada:** within the Sun4All project, the key to motivating people has been to foster regular interaction, to focus on concrete benefits for the beneficiaries – for example, with tailored training – and to manage expectations about the implementation timeline.

Conclusions:

- Improved interdepartmental coordination plays a crucial role in enhancing data integration and monitoring.
- Political commitment and support remain fundamental in driving effective policies, ensuring long-term impact.
- Citizen engagement is vital, with community energy initiatives proving successful in fostering participation, engagement and trust.
- Robust data collection and integration are necessary to track progress, refine strategies, and ensure targeted interventions for vulnerable populations.

For the full report, please see Annex I.

5.4. Additional in-person event as part of the Grenoble Biennale of Cities in Transition

On Friday, May 16th, the workshop *“Engaging Citizens for Climate Resilient Cities: A Peer-Exchange Workshop with ICLEI Europe and the Adaptation AGORA Project”* brought together city practitioners and project partners to explore inclusive strategies for citizen engagement in climate adaptation. The workshop was part of the International Days programme of the Biennale des Villes en Transition (Biennale of Cities in Transition) organized by the City of Grenoble. Moderated by ICLEI’s Erica Manuelli and Jannis Niethammer, and introduced by Enora Bruley of the Adaptation AGORA project, the session featured insights from representatives of Grenoble, Waterford, and Alzira. The interactive workshop focused broadly on the importance of involving communities, especially those most vulnerable to climate risks, in shaping just and effective urban resilience measures, while addressing common barriers such as trust, relevance, and accessibility.

Main takeaways:



Enora Bruley's presentation highlighted a persistent gap between "good practices" for citizen engagement, such as including affected stakeholders, co-defining roles, integrating diverse voices, clear communication, and ensuring accountability, and structural barriers that limit their effectiveness, including governance frameworks, institutional capacity, socio-political context, and citizens' own capacities. Feedback from participants reinforced these challenges, with limited knowledge or misinformation among target groups, low citizen capacity, difficulties engaging vulnerable populations, and weak institutional support ranked as the most significant barriers.

The **Grenoble** case illustrated urban heat challenges, with city-centre temperatures rising by 3°C. Environmental initiatives remain high on citizens' agendas, as reflected in participatory budgeting projects like the green transformation of a schoolyard and children's square, which incorporated children's perspectives. Yet, the engagement of a truly diverse audience, particularly disadvantaged communities, remains a central challenge.

In **Alzira**, historically an island now facing increased flood and wildfire risks, a severe flood in October 2024 exposed weaknesses in emergency communication and public compliance – one critical issue being that citizens did not trust the municipality enough to follow emergency orders. The city is now advancing a resilience strategy based on blue and green infrastructure, forest management, and citizen engagement. Engaging residents continues to be difficult, especially among the poorest (due to time and resource constraints) and the wealthiest (who feel less personally affected).

Waterford, a small town, emphasized that public consultation is hindered by misinformation, low climate literacy, and a lack of personal relevance. The city counters these through honest communication, creative education, and connecting climate action to everyday life. A standout initiative used community-created knitted art to visualize rising global temperatures, effectively engaging a wide audience and sparking awareness across generations.

Overarching lessons from the discussions included:

- Lack of trust in institutions can severely limit public engagement, especially during crises, and may be politically instrumentalized.
- Crises can also catalyse new levels of engagement and solidarity if nurtured appropriately.
- Community groups are crucial for reaching residents, but need adequate support, resources, and training.
- In contexts where climate change feels less urgent (e.g., Ireland, Finland), mobilizing immediate action is more difficult.
- Effective engagement requires clearly communicating the link between causes and impacts, emphasizing proactive planning, and adopting inclusive, representative approaches.



5.5. [Online Event 4: Dresden, Germany](#)

On 22nd September 2025, the event “Heat Resilience in Healthcare: A Peer-Learning Exchange with Dresden, Grenoble and Barcelona” brought together leading practitioners and researchers to explore how European healthcare systems can adapt to rising heat risks.

The discussion featured Marit Gronwald from the City of Dresden’s Public Health Department, Maria Binder from Dresden Hospital, and Sina Lehmann from Health for Future Dresden, who shared insights from their participatory approach to heat adaptation in historic hospital buildings. Emmeline Lagrange, neurologist at the University Hospital of Grenoble, highlighted the role of science-policy collaboration in designing heat-resilient infrastructure and health-promoting neighbourhoods. From Barcelona, Anna Riu Llena, nurse at the Raval Nord Primary Health Centre, spoke about working with socially vulnerable populations and the importance of coordinated citywide measures such as climate shelters and early warning systems.

Together, the speakers addressed the overarching theme of strengthening heat resilience in European healthcare systems, focusing on three key levers: participatory adaptation that involves healthcare staff at every step, integration of scientific expertise into hospital and urban planning, and multi-agency governance that connects health services with municipal and civil society actors.

Main takeaways:

Participatory adaptation and occupational safety: Dresden Municipal Hospital focused on organizational measures, for instance by adjusting work schedules, improving access to water, and providing staff education, to cope with heat in historic hospital buildings. Participatory workshops with nurses, doctors, and administrators improved feasibility and staff buy-in. Climate adaptation was reframed as part of the hospital’s legal duty of care, supported by digital training modules and an Occupational Safety working group.

Integrating science into health and urban planning: Grenoble is moving beyond energy efficiency toward long-term climate resilience, including rebuilding hospital infrastructure and creating health-promoting neighborhoods. Also, the collaboration with local climate-health research centres ensures evidence-based planning, though national governance and funding constraints remain barriers.

Addressing social vulnerability with multi-agency action: Barcelona’s Raval Nord health centre plays a key role in reaching vulnerable residents by adjusting treatments, providing home visits, and offering behavioural advice. The city’s Heat Wave Action Plan (with climate shelters,



communications, and a 10-year heat strategy) highlights the importance of coordination between public health services and municipal planning.

Overcoming barriers to engagement: Participants stressed the need to position heat as both a public health and occupational safety concern, leverage trusted professional networks and share case studies to build momentum for institutional action.

For the full report, please see Annex I.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Key learnings on citizens' engagement in climate adaptation initiatives

Make participation continuous, not one-off

Across Rome and Dresden, a clear message emerged: citizen and staff engagement cannot stop after the strategy design phase. People want to remain involved throughout implementation and monitoring. Not only that, but ongoing dialogue also builds ownership and ensures that measures are responsive to evolving needs.

Tailor engagement methods to local contexts and communities

To begin with, Malmö stressed mapping vulnerabilities to prioritize who to engage (homeless individuals, pregnant women, and the elderly). Also, Rome highlighted the need for different and tailored approaches for different groups, identities, uses and cultural attitudes. Finally, Zaragoza and Barcelona showed that simplifying language (“energy language”) and bureaucracy helps make policies accessible and inclusive. In countries where climate impacts feel less urgent (e.g. Ireland, Finland), efforts should focus on linking causes and impacts, stressing the value of proactive planning, and ensuring inclusive and representative participation processes.

Build and maintain trust

Through Zaragoza’s community energy boards or Dresden’s participatory workshops, trust was identified as a cornerstone of successful adaptation. A lack of trust in institutions can undermine action and can be exploited politically during crises. Transparent communication, early involvement, and visible follow-up are key to countering distrust. At the same time, crises can spark solidarity and new forms of collective action, which should be actively supported and sustained.



Support and empower community groups

Community-based organisations are crucial for reaching vulnerable residents, particularly those who are hard to engage through formal channels. However, they require adequate resources, training, and long-term funding to play this bridging role effectively.

Leverage trusted intermediaries and local networks

From Barcelona's health centres and energy advisory points to Dresden's nurses and civil society groups, trusted community actors are key to bridging the gap between institutions and residents. Malmö also underscored the value of collaborating with NGOs and associations that already work with local communities, including vulnerable groups.

Integrate social protection with climate measures

Citizen engagement is strongest when linked to tangible benefits, such as cooling centers, climate shelters, social energy tariffs or medication adjustments. These interventions show that adaptation is not only about infrastructure but also about protecting health and livelihoods.

Use data to drive action and monitor equity

Cities like Valencia, Barcelona, and Milano highlighted the importance of collecting data on vulnerable groups through partnerships with NGOs, statistics offices, and frontline services to target resources where they are most needed and measure impact. Data collection also supports continuous monitoring and more equitable allocation of resources.

Reframe climate risks as health and safety issues

Dresden's experience shows that framing heat as an occupational safety concern can mobilize institutional action and trigger practical action, such as adjusted work schedules and training. This framing also makes the issue more immediate and relevant to both workers and managers, encouraging stronger engagement.

Combine technical and behavioural solutions

Malmö emphasized that infrastructure changes must go hand in hand with behavioural shifts, supported by education and training. Similarly, Dresden combined building assessments with staff training modules to address both the physical and human dimensions of heat stress. Infrastructure adaptation must go hand in hand with education, training, and communication to promote lasting shifts in behaviour and resilience.



6.2. Conclusions on the task process

The outcomes of the activity process closely align with the initial objectives, demonstrating tangible progress toward building a connected, collaborative, and learning-oriented community around climate adaptation, focusing on stakeholder and citizens engagement. The fact that participants continued to join subsequent sessions created a *community of learning*, reflecting the achievement of the first task objective, which aimed to connect stakeholders from the pilot regions, the Adaptation AGORA network, and beyond. The creation of an informal peer-learning environment, based on a format combining the presentation of real experiences and open discussions, directly supported other main task objectives, providing inclusive spaces for exchange and mutual learning while strengthening the capacities of individuals and organisations through shared experiences and practical insights.

The active *cross-pollination* of ideas and concrete examples among cities and practitioners involved in the sessions further advanced one of the main aims of the task, which is fostering knowledge exchange on common challenges, opportunities, and good practices in citizen engagement. Positive participant feedback confirmed the usefulness and relevance of these exchanges, showing how such interactions can help cities identify replicable approaches and avoid duplicating efforts—thereby contributing to the task objective of promoting replication and transferability of good practices.

Finally, the emergence of new relationships beyond the project partnerships, with participants continuing contact and collaboration independently, demonstrates the long-term networking impact envisioned by the task. While post-event engagement could have been further strengthened through better integration with digital tools like the AGORA Community Hub, the interest of participants in contacting speakers and other cities involved bilaterally already signalled the establishment of a meaningful, self-sustaining exchange network—fully in line with the project's objectives of connection, learning, and collaboration across regions.

