

Plenary Session

Bold visions, regular plans and limited implementation?

*Gaps and challenges within
climate planning and practices*



UP2030



Ajuntament de
Barcelona



Photo by K. Mitch Hodge on Unsplash

Pilot City: Belfast

Bold visions, regular plans and limited implementation?

Gaps and challenges within
climate planning and
practices

Moderator



Prof. Dr. Lorenzo Chelleri

Chair of the Urban Resilience Research Network
(URNet)

Speakers



Dr. Diana Reckien

Associate Professor Climate Change and Urban
Inequalities, University of Twente Coordinating
Lead Author, IPCC AR6 WGII



Gerard Martínez Görbig

PhD Candidate on Just Climate Action
Implementation in Cities, Faculty of Geo-Information
Science and Earth Observation, University of Twente

Bold visions, numerous plans and limited implementation?

Gaps and challenges in climate planning and practice

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Diana Reckien,
PhD cand. Gerard Martinez Görbig, MSc. Arch.,
University of Twente



Introduction I

Paris Agreement goals: 'global temperature < 2°C / 1.5°C above pre-industrial'

- **Keeping the 1.5°C goal is increasingly difficult**, emissions must:
 - Peak before 2025 at the latest and decline 43% by 2030 compared to 2019;
 - CO2 emissions must reach net zero by 2045/2050;
 - Cities Mission (100+ climate-neutral & smart cities).
- **Emissions gap for 2030:** +28% cut needed to keep 2°C/ 42% to keep 1.5°C
- With full implementation of conditional NDCs: warming of 2.5 - 2.9°C.
- **Current emissions: In 2023**, GHG emissions reached a new record of 57.1 GtCO₂e, a **1.3% increase from 2022 levels**.

PARIS AGREEMENT



UNITED NATIONS
2015



[UNEP - UN Environment Programme Emissions Gap Report, 2024](#)

[The Emissions Gap Report 2023 | NewClimate Institute](#)

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

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Introduction II

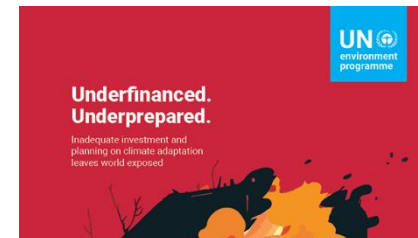
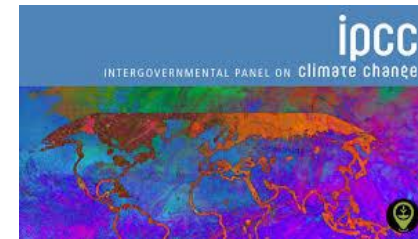
Progress in adaptation planning and implementation has been observed across all sectors and regions... (IPCC, 2022)

- **Decreasing adaptation gap?** gap between current levels of adaptation and levels needed to respond to impacts and reduce risks
 - Reckien et al. (2022): adaptation planning and quality of planning has increased but **focus on vulnerable social groups** declined
- Most adaptation is **fragmented, small in scale, incremental, sector-specific, responding to current impacts or near-term risks, and focused on planning rather than implementation** (IPCC, WGII SPM: 20, 35)

PARIS AGREEMENT



UNITED NATIONS
2015



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Introduction III

Planning

vs.

Implementation



of climate action

Introduction IV

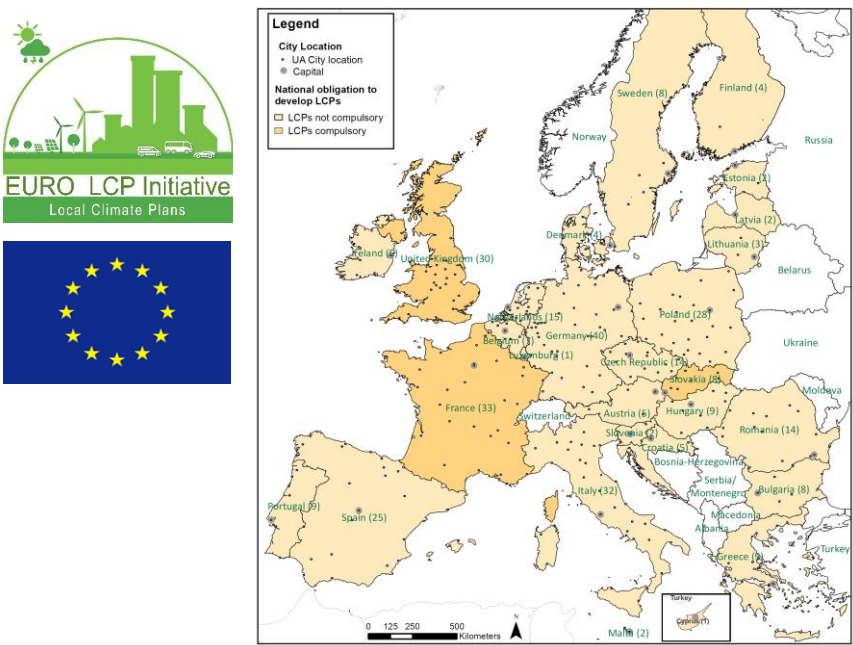
Planning

vs.

Implementation

EURO LCP Initiative: www.lcp-initiative.eu

The Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM)

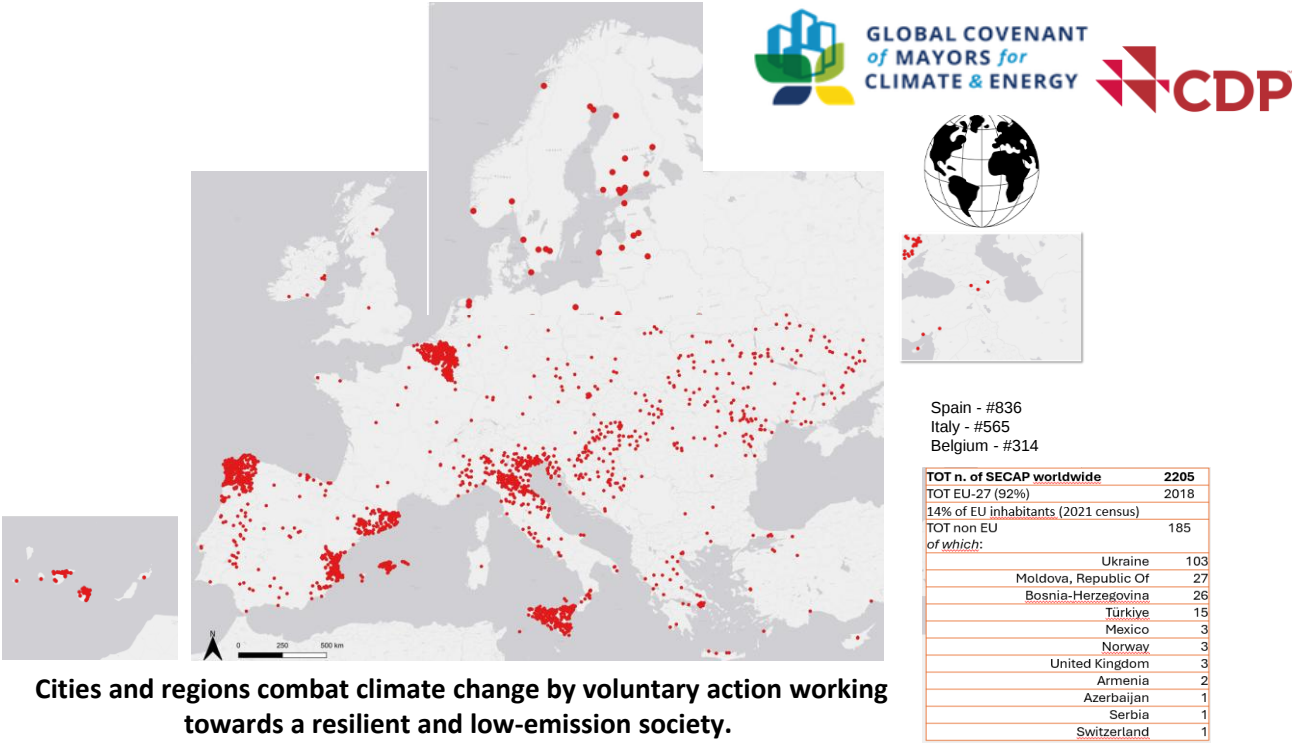


State of Local Climate Planning in European Cities, since 2009:

Updates of Local Climate Plans conducted by a scholarly team of 40 researchers across 28 European countries on representative samples of 327 or 885 European cities

&

Data from Cities Mission



Cities and regions combat climate change by voluntary action working towards a resilient and low-emission society.

Member representatives report on plans, action implementation, and monitoring progress.

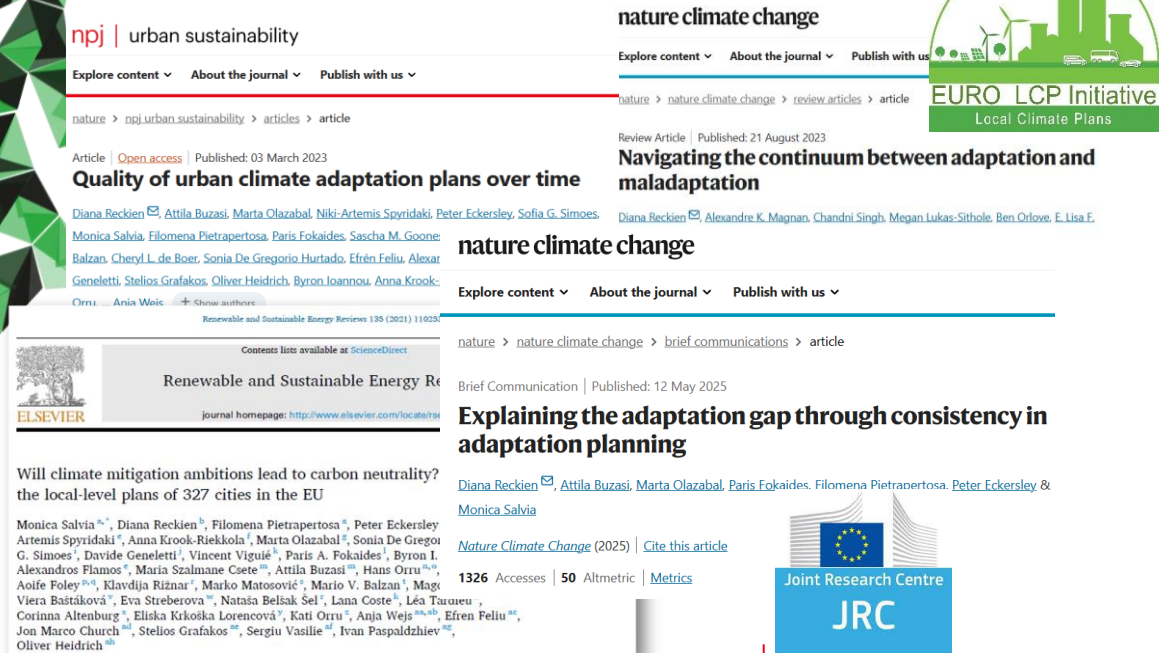
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Outline

Planning

EURO LCP Initiative: www.lcp-initiative.eu

What do we know about adaptation and mitigation **planning** in European cities?



npj | urban sustainability

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nature > npj.urban.sustainability > articles > article

Article | Open access | Published: 03 March 2023

Quality of urban climate adaptation plans over time

Diana Reckien^a, Attila Buzasi, Marta Olazabal, Niki-Artemis Spyridaki, Peter Eckersley, Sofia G. Simoes, Monica Salvia, Filomena Pietrapertosa, Paris Fokaides, Sascha M. Goone Balzan, Cheryl L. de Boer, Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado, Efrén Feliu, Alexar Geneletti, Stelios Grafakos, Oliver Heidrich, Byron Ioannou, Anna Krook-Orru, Ania Weis

nature climate change

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nature > nature climate change > review articles > article

Review Article | Published: 21 August 2023

Navigating the continuum between adaptation and maladaptation

Diana Reckien^a, Alexandre K. Magnan, Chandni Singh, Megan Lukas-Sithole, Ben Orlove, E. Lisa F.

nature climate change

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nature > nature climate change > brief communications > article

Brief Communication | Published: 12 May 2025

Explaining the adaptation gap through consistency in adaptation planning

Diana Reckien^a, Attila Buzasi, Marta Olazabal, Paris Fokaides, Filomena Pietrapertosa, Peter Eckersley & Monica Salvia

Nature Climate Change (2025) | Cite this article

1326 Accesses | 50 Altmetric | Metrics

Joint Research Centre JRC

Will climate mitigation ambitions lead to carbon neutrality? the local-level plans of 327 cities in the EU

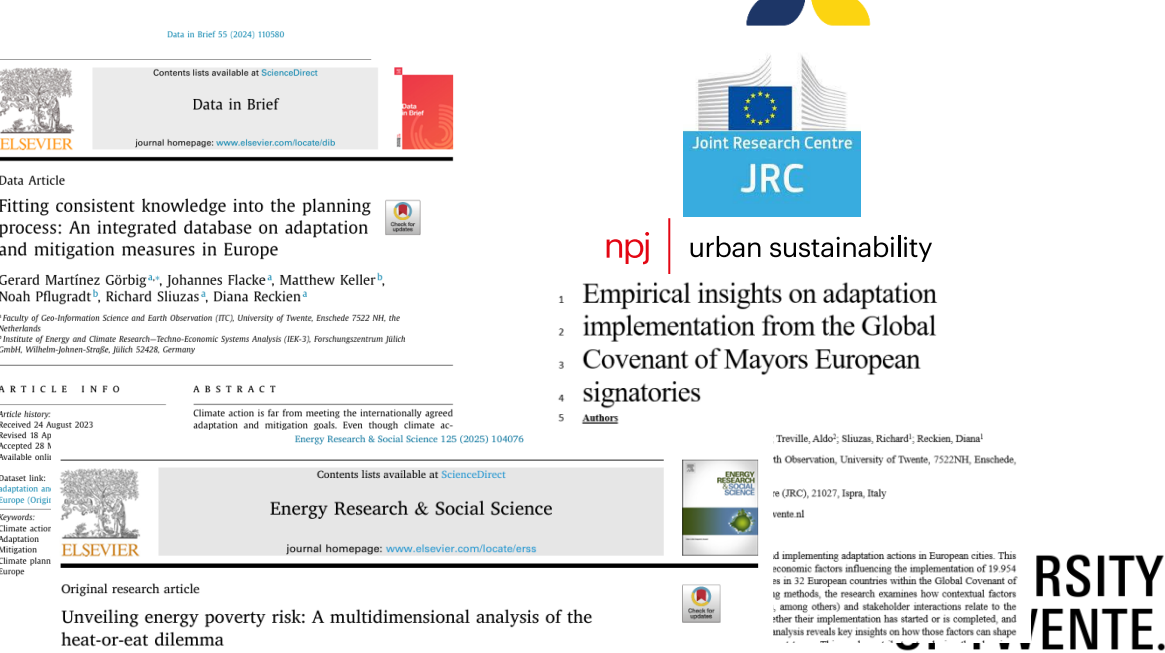
Monica Salvia^{a,*}, Diana Reckien^b, Filomena Pietrapertosa^a, Peter Eckersley Artemis Spyridaki^a, Anna Krook-Riekkola^a, Marta Olazabal^a, Sonia De Gregorio G. Simoes^a, Davide Geneletti^a, Vincent Viguié^b, Paris A. Fokaides^a, Byron I. Alexandros Flamos^a, Maria Szalmancse^a, Attila Buzasi^a, Hans Orru^{a,c}, Aoife Foley^{a,d}, Klavdija Rižnar^a, Marko Matosović^a, Mario V. Balzan^a, Mag Viera Bastáková^a, Eva Streberova^a, Nataša Belšak Sel^a, Lana Coste^a, Léa Taruieu^a, Corinna Altenburg^a, Elliska Krkoška Lorenčová^a, Kati Orru^a, Anja Wejs^{a,b}, Efrén Feliu^a, Jon Marco Church^a, Stelios Grafakos^a, Sergiu Vasile^a, Ivan Paspaldzhiev^a, Oliver Heidrich^a

vs.

Implementation

The Global Covenant of Mayors

What do we know about (A+M) how **planning** compares with **implementation**?



GLOBAL COVENANT of MAYORS for CLIMATE & ENERGY

Joint Research Centre JRC

npj | urban sustainability

1 Empirical insights on adaptation implementation from the Global Covenant of Mayors European signatories

2

3

4

5 Authors

Treville, Aldo¹, Sliuzas, Richard¹, Reckien, Diana¹

th Observation, University of Twente, 7522NH, Enschede,

re (JRC), 21027, Iapra, Italy

vente.nl

d implementing adaptation actions in European cities. This economic factors influencing the implementation of 19 954 as in 32 European countries within the Global Covenant of ig methods, the research examines how contextual factors - among others) and stakeholder interactions relate to the other their implementation has started or is completed, and analysis reveals key insights on how those factors can shape

RSITY NTE.

Original research article

Unveiling energy poverty risk: A multidimensional analysis of the heat-or-eat dilemma

Gerard Martínez Görbig^{a,*}, Johannes Flacke^a, Richard Sliuzas^a, Diana Reckien^a

Department of Urban and Regional Planning and Geo-Information Management, Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation, University of Twente,

Urban climate Mitigation PLANNING

Findings#1

Mitigation:

- In 2018, 78% (#254 of 327) of EU cities had mitigation plans with GHGeq targets
 - On average, targets were about 40% (range from 2-100%) emission reduction, with **most targets between 1 to 20%**
 - On average, target year was 2027 (range 2019 – 2050) --> **a lot of small targets rather soon**
 - **25% (#81) of 327 cities had carbon neutrality targets** (i.e. at least 80% reduction by 2050 (#59; 73%) or sooner (22; 27%))
 - **The average target year was 2045 (range 2020 - 2050)**



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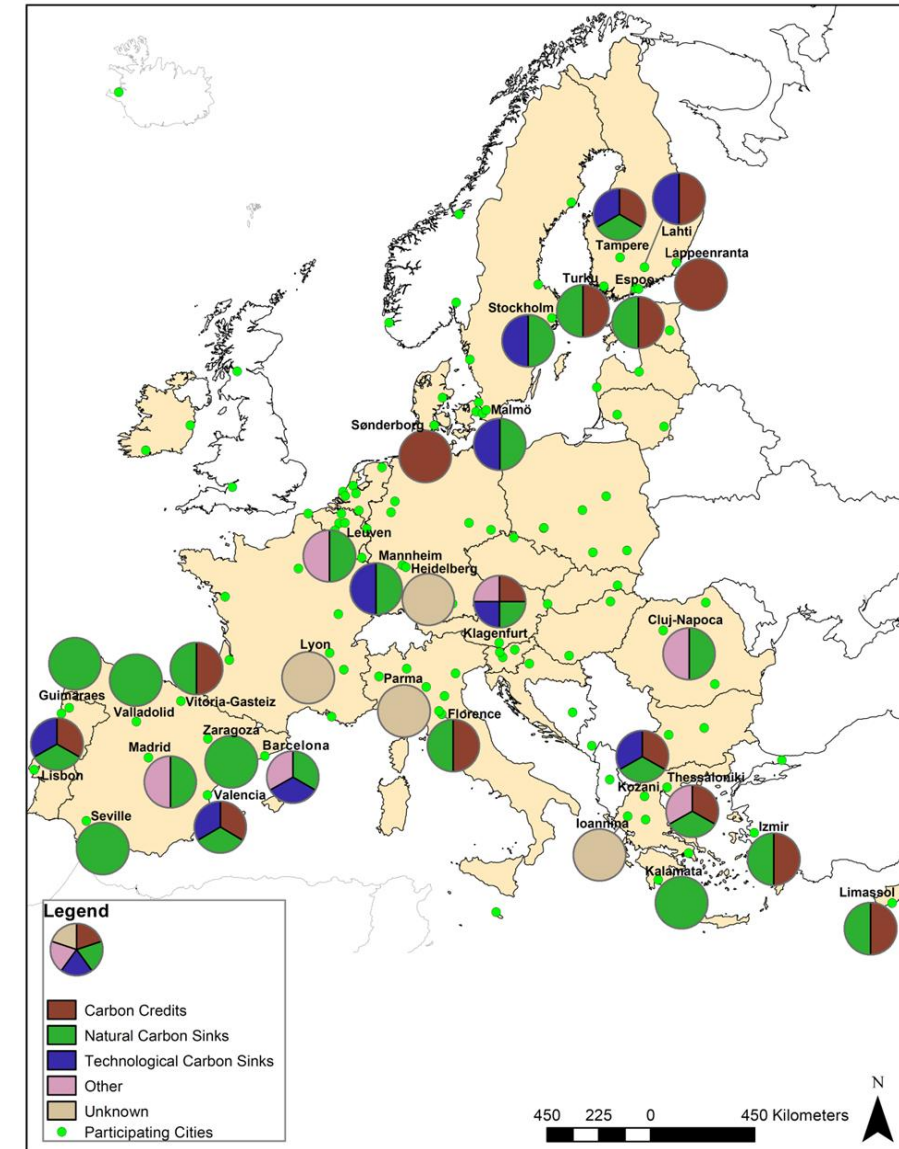
Urban climate Mitigation PLANNING

Findings#2

Regarding Carbon neutrality:

- Most planned GHGeq reduction in building (60%) and transport sector (24%) to get to 80% GHGeq target
 - Transport sectors most difficult to mitigate
- Residual emissions (remaining 20%) can be compensated
 - 77% of cities plan to cut residual emissions through natural sinks/ greening/ NBS
 - 45% of cities carbon credits/ off-setting
 - 32% through technological sinks
 - 13% of cities 'no compensation'
- Current policies would reduce emissions by 49% (by 2030)
- +31% needed to reach carbon neutrality by 2030

Sample of 31 cities striving for carbon neutrality



Urban climate **Adaptation PLANNING**

Findings#3

Adaptation:

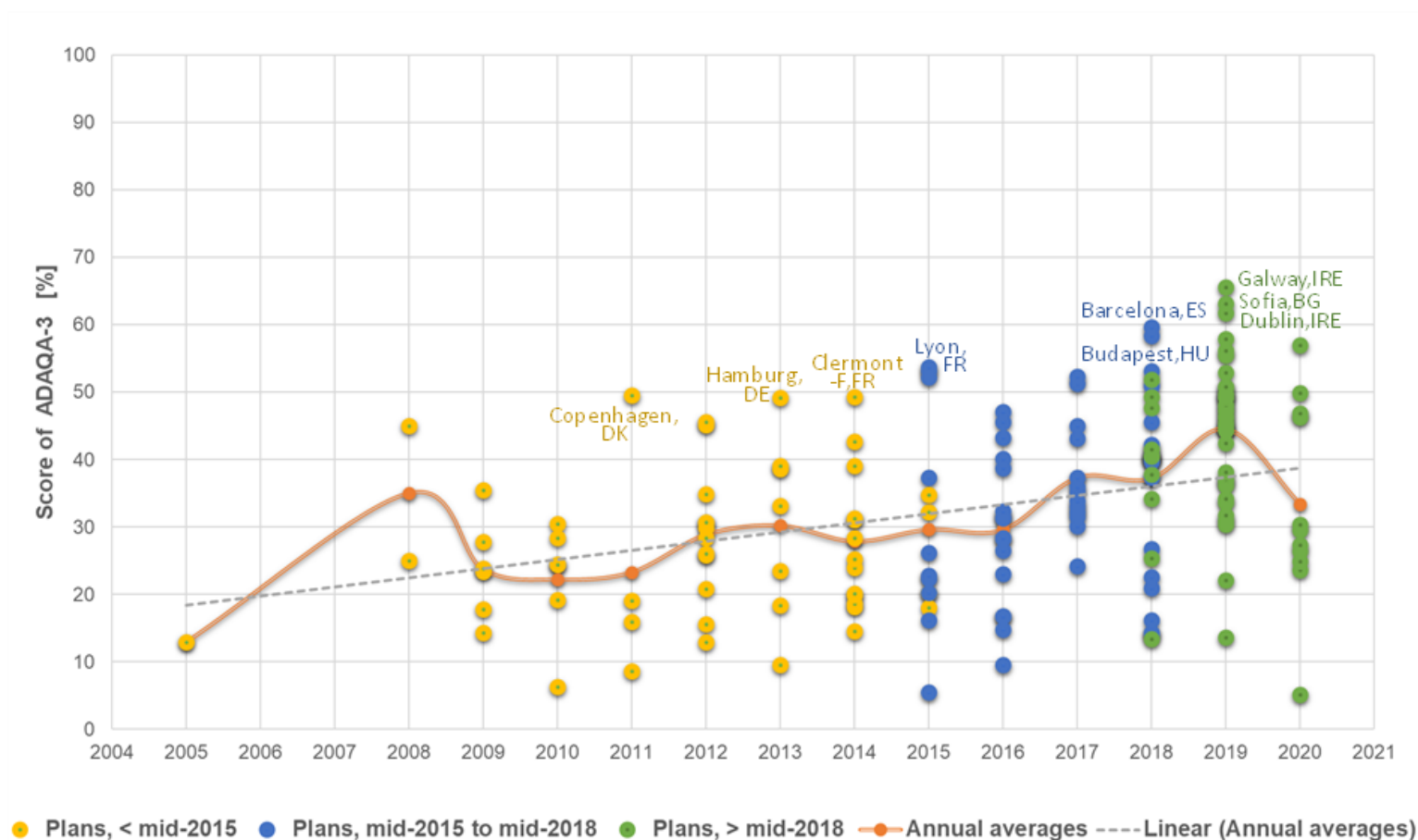
- In 2020, about 51% (167 of 327) of EU cities had an adaptation plan
 - Continuous increase in numbers from 2005 – 2019/2020

**But what do we know about the characteristics/ quality of plans,
influencing implementation?**

Urban climate Adaptation PLANNING

Finding#4: Plan Quality in European cities has increased from 2005 to 2020, by about 1.3 percentage points/ year.

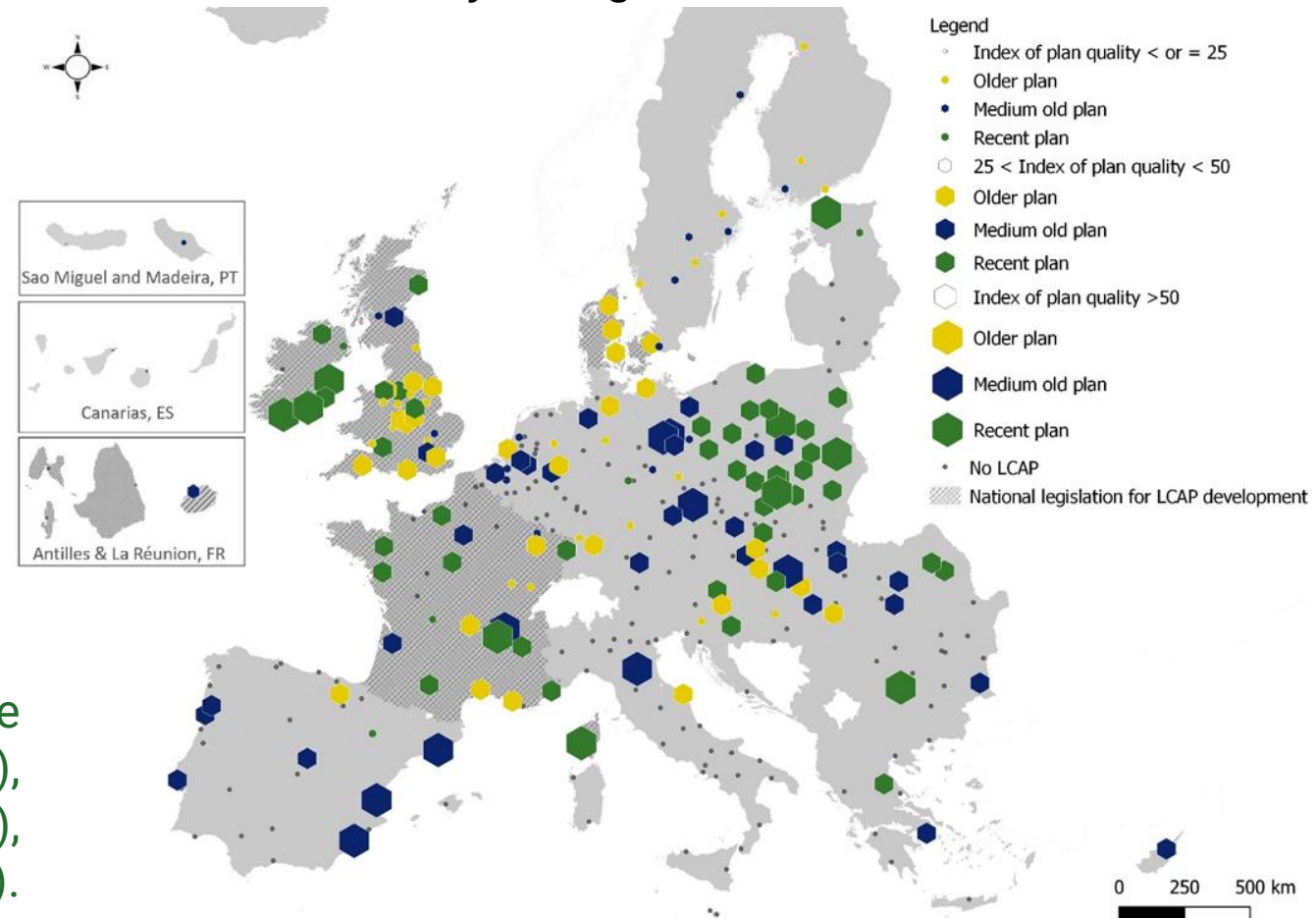
--> we see more adaptation plans and adaptation plans with better quality over the years.



Urban climate **Adaptation PLANNING**

Finding #5: Newer plans, higher in quality, are mainly found in cities in Ireland, France, and Eastern Europe, in particular Poland. Most of these cities follow a national model.

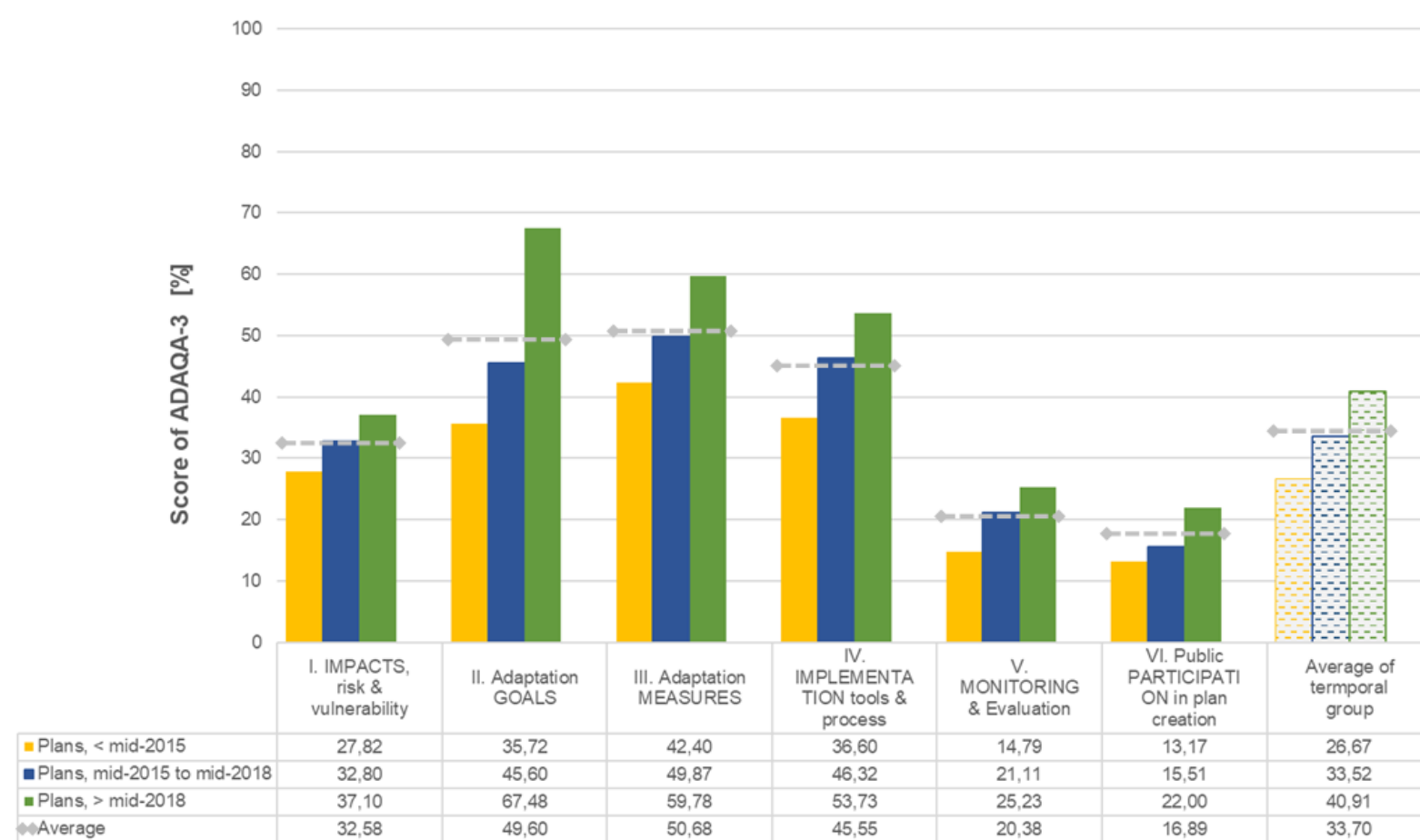
- There are also some good plans before 2018, mostly in larger cities.



Top-ranking cities are
Sofia (BG), Galway (IE),
Waterford (IE), Dublin (IE),
and Potsdam (DE).

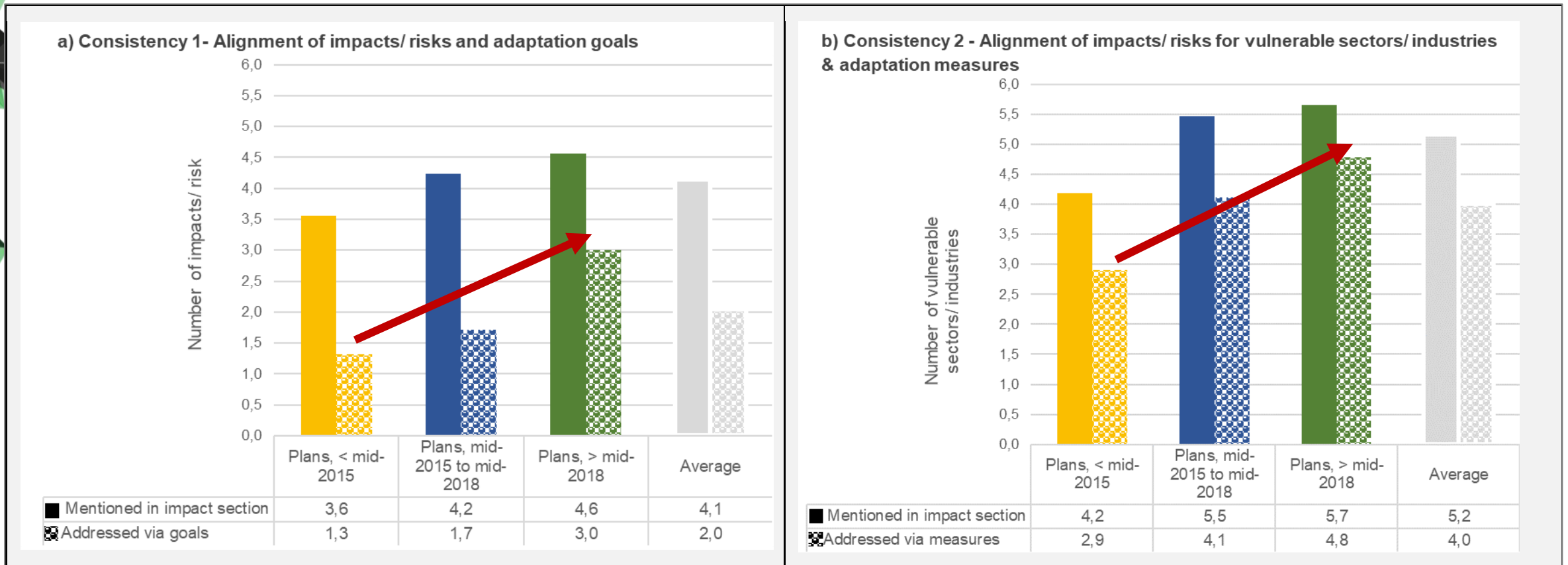
Urban climate **Adaptation PLANNING**

Finding #6: Across principles, adaptation goals improved/ got more specific in recent plans. Specifying monitoring & evaluation, and participation is generally low.



Urban climate Adaptation PLANNING

Finding #7: Adaptation plans are consistent to a degree between risks to specific hazards and adaptation goals, and risks to economic sectors and related measures.

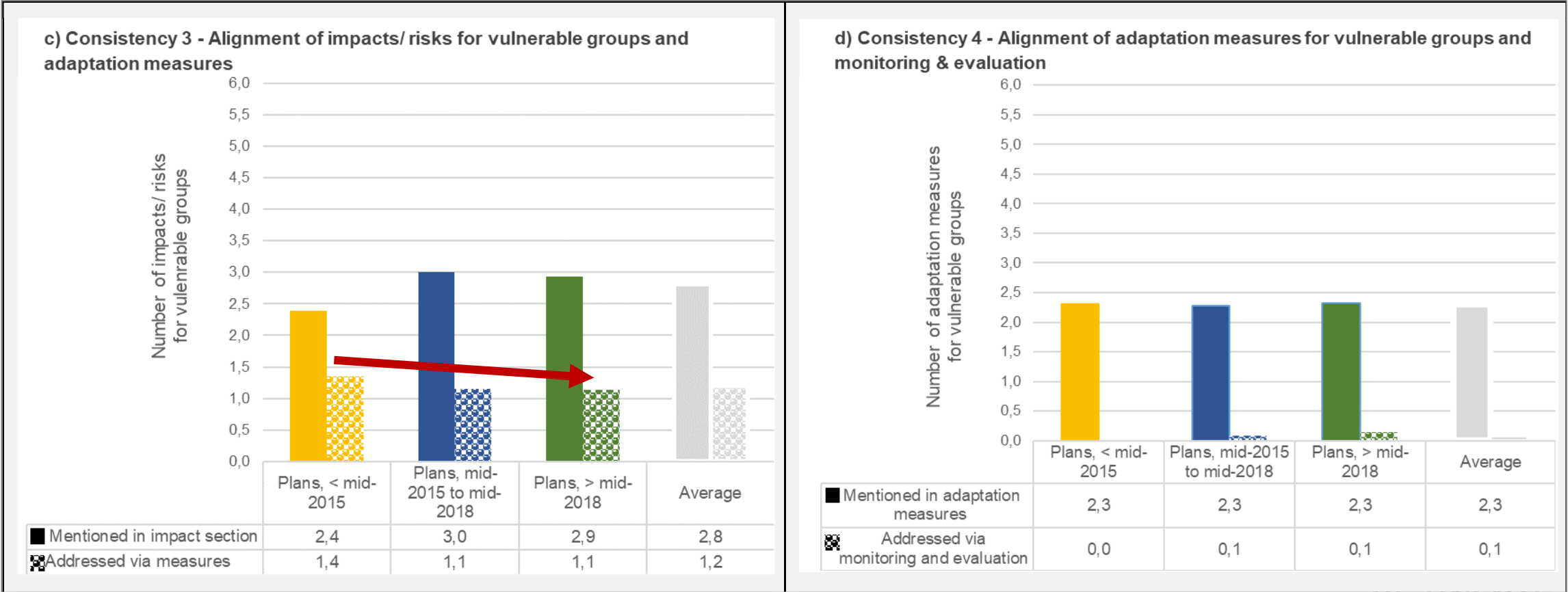


OF TWENTE.

Urban climate Adaptation PLANNING

Finding #8: Consistency decreased when looking at risks for vulnerable groups and related measures.

Consistency between measures for vulnerable groups and M&E, and risks for vulnerable groups and participation is nearly non-existent.



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Urban climate Adaptation PLANNING

Finding #9:

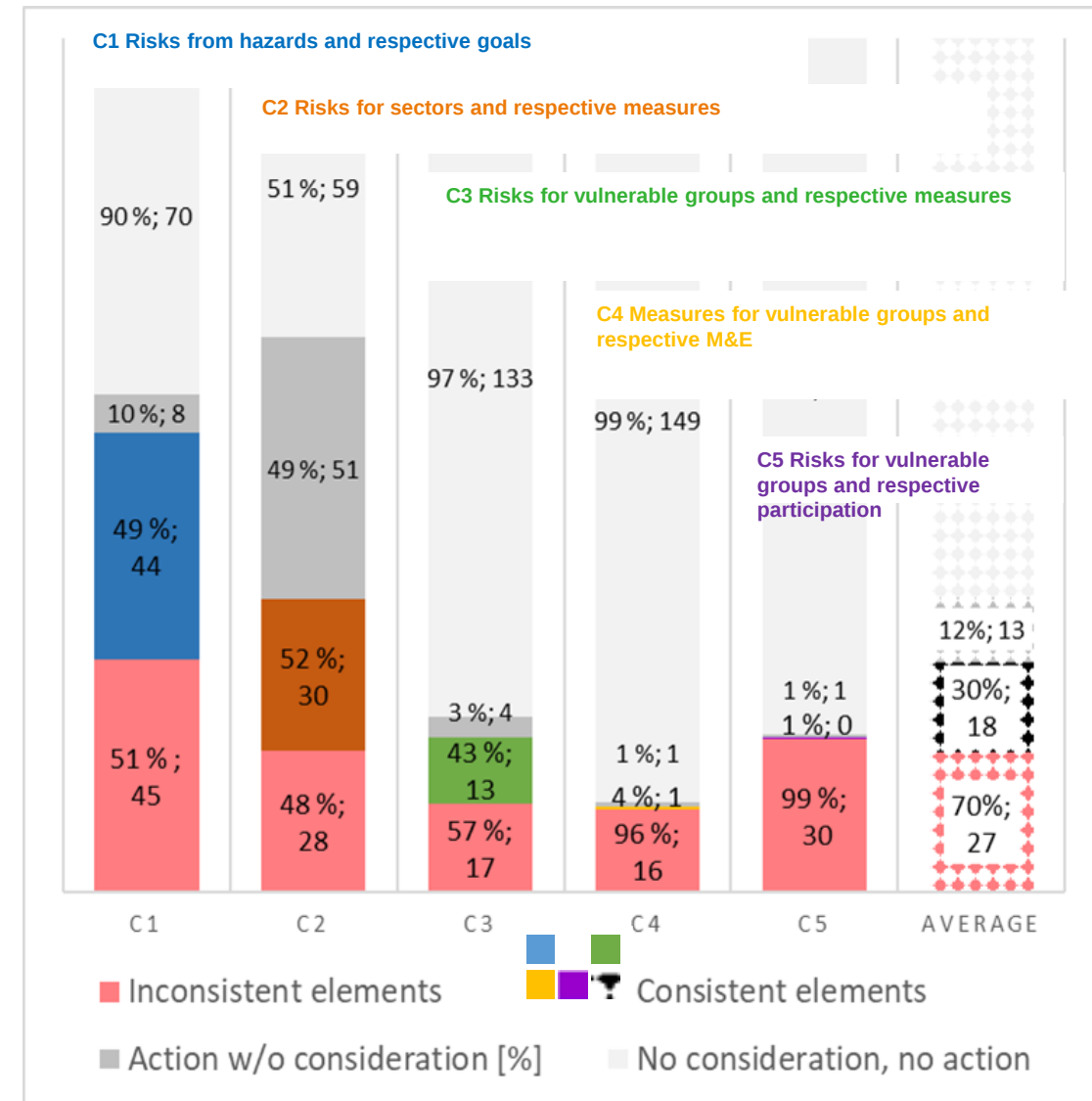
Explaining the adaptation gap

On average:

- 70% of plans are inconsistent
- i.e. if there is an identified risk, there is no related follow-up action

Finding #10:

- 12% of plans have actions w/o an identified risk/need, e.g.:
- Plans “suggest something” w/o prior risk/impact identification

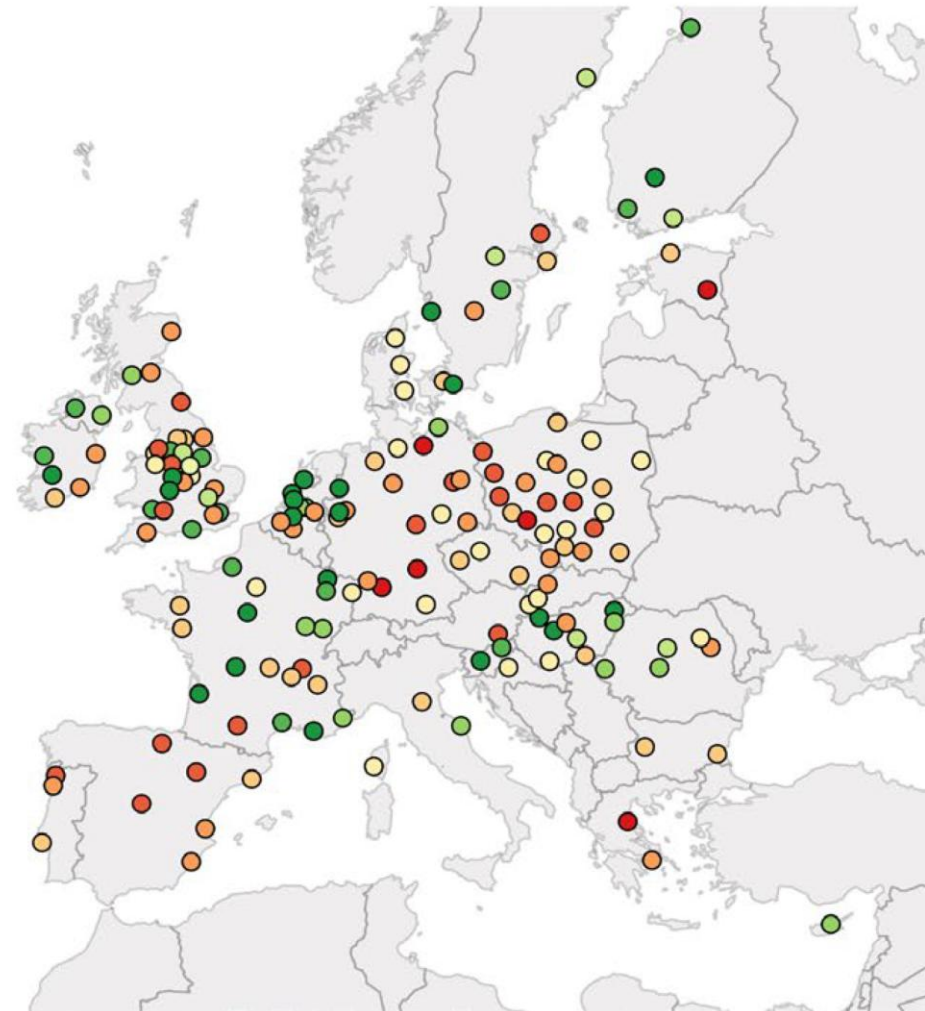
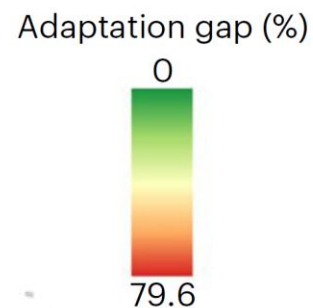


OF TWENTY.

Urban climate Adaptation PLANNING

Explaining the adaptation gap through consistency in adaptation planning

- Plans in Eastern & Southern Europe, but also in Germany, are less consistent than in other parts of Europe
- Lack of consideration of **vulnerable groups and those in need**



| C1-C5 average scores

GUEST POSTS | 14 May 2025 © 11:34

Guest post: More than 70% of adaptation plans for European cities are 'inconsistent'



PREMIUM More than 70 percent of European cities, including Enschede, lack logic in tackling climate change: major consequences

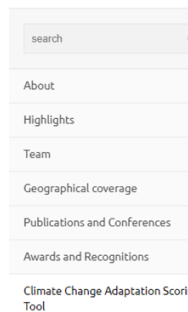
We have to adapt to the changing climate. That is not theory, that is daily practice for municipalities, for example. They therefore make adjustment...

Lokaalbestuur.nl; Nieuwsweek.nl

Enschede May 27, 2025

Urban climate Adaptation PLANNING

- **Online scoring tool** to assess adaptation quality & help decision makers and practitioners



Climate Change Scoring Tool

Welcome back!

Email

Password

☐ Remember me? [Forgot password?](#)

Don't have an account? [Create](#)

www.lcp-initiative.eu/

Access and Documentation

- To use the tool, simply go to [CC Scoring Tool](#)
- Climate Change Scoring Tool has comprehensive support
- Free and accessible to everyone.
- First-time user? Check out the [CC Adaptation Scoring Tool](#)

Introduction

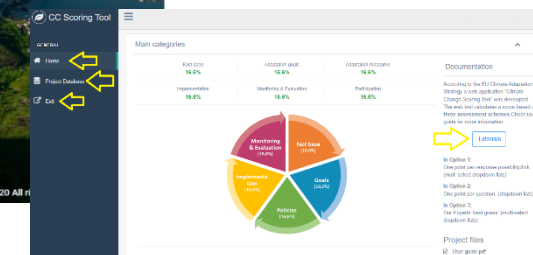
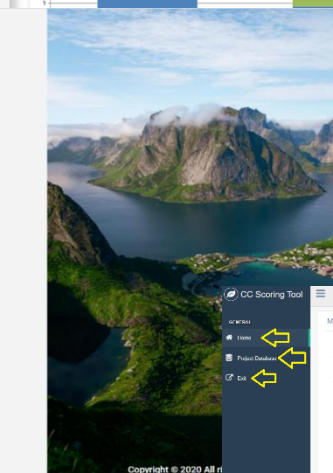
Along a number of steps, you are inputting data on the cor

- To start that process you first need to go to the tab "Project database" on the left-hand side and then press "create new project".
- You will then have to answer a number of questions on the content of the adaptation plan.
- In the end, the tool calculates a numerical value/ a number that shows the quality of your adaptation plan.

That number can be compared to a maximum score achievable in each section, showing you where most efforts for improvement are seen. You will also have the opportunity to compare your score with other plans already analyzed and part of the database.

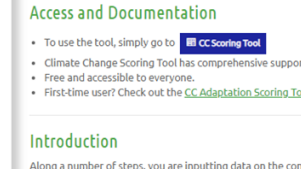


minutes. You have the option to either input real data or you can just use an email address. We will ask you for your email address in order to verify your data and to be stored to your input. In that case, your data is saved. If you just want to be stored.



Urban climate **Adaptation PLANNING**

- EURO-LCP Online scoring tool
- Develop & apply "quality rating" to adaptation plans of cities in the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM) database (collaboration with EU Joint Research Centre (JRC))
- Develop & apply "quality rating" to National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) of developing countries (collaboration with Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI))



Our scoring tool can assess/calculate the adaptation plan quality score of any city by inputting plan content along a questionnaire.

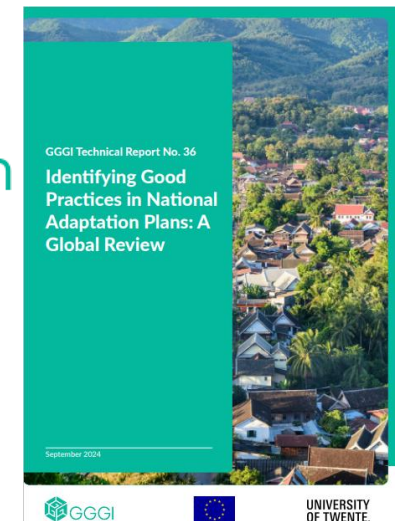


GLOBAL COVENANT
of MAYORS for
CLIMATE & ENERGY



**Global
Green Growth
Institute**

Guidelines and recommendations for developing good quality, robust NAPs.

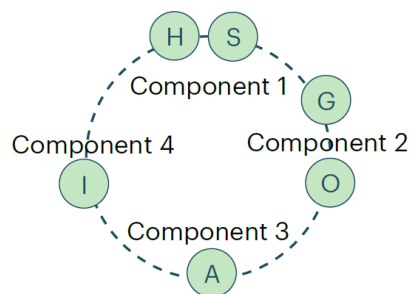


KEY MESSAGES from PLANNING

- Currently, planning does not address adaptation needs in EU cities.
- Adaptation must be (more) **comprehensive, consistent**, and **robust**.

Criterion 1: Coverage

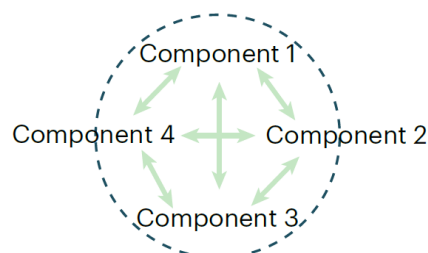
Are key elements of the adaptation policy cycle covered, providing a comprehensive baseline of adaptation intentions at national level?



Our analysis shows:
Coverage of plans: ~34%

Criterion 2: Consistency

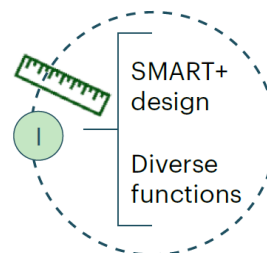
Are adaptation cycle components consistently linked to one another, providing the basis for a context-fit adaptation tracking?



Consistency of plans: 30% of plans are consistent

Criterion 3: Robustness

Are there sets of indicators that meet SMART+ criteria and serve diverse monitoring functions, providing a robust basis for operational tracking?



Robustness

Bold visions, numerous plans and limited implementation?

Gaps and challenges in climate planning and practice

PhD cand. Gerard Martínez Görbig, MSc. Arch., University of Twente



Outline

1. The Planning – Implementation Gap.

- *Have Our Climate Plans Moved Beyond Paper?*

2. Implementation in Europe.

- *Which Climate Actions Are Actually Being Implemented In Europe?*

3. The Importance Of The Context.

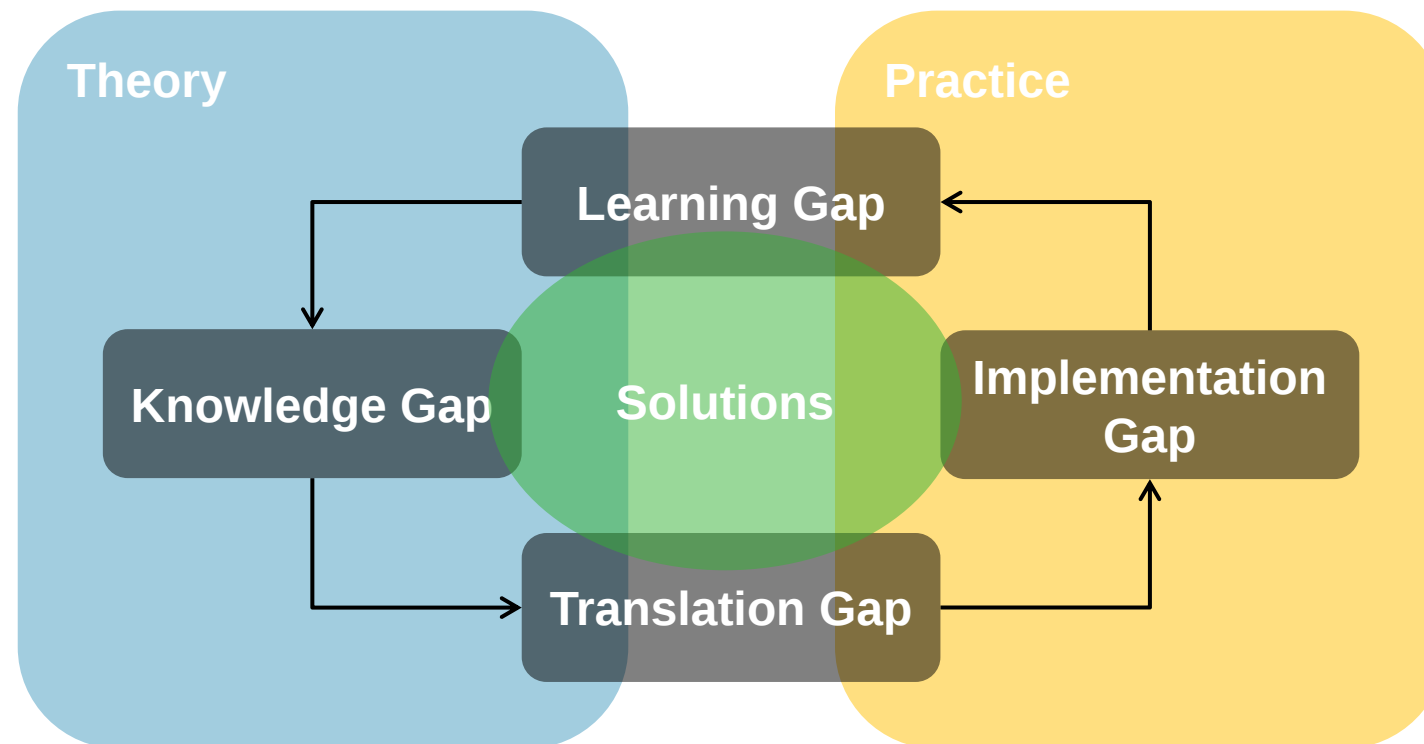
- *What Constrains Or Enables Adaptation Implementation In Europe?*

4. Synergies and Trade-Offs.

- *How To Use Climate Measures' Side Effects as Enablers to Implementation?*

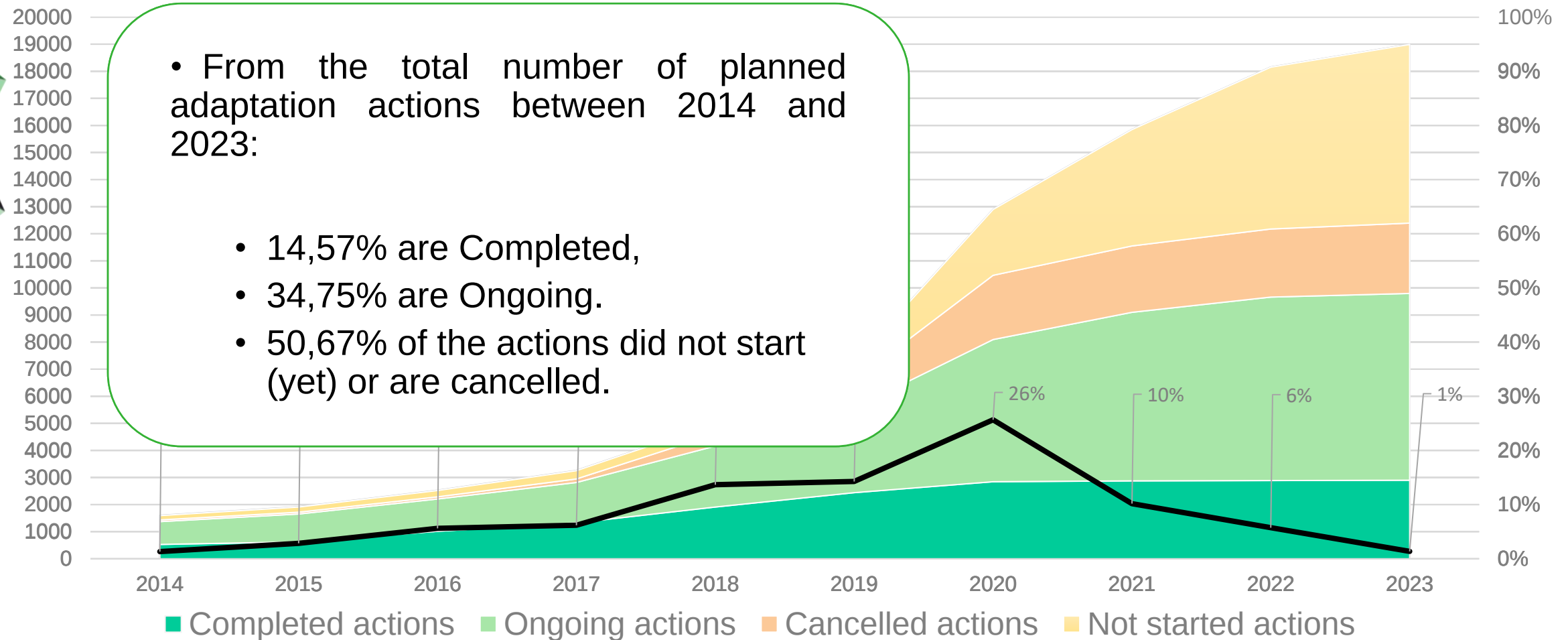
1. The Planning – Implementation Gap: Have Our Climate Plans Moved Beyond Paper?

- The overall gap between Science and Practice is a **combination of other gaps**.
- Solutions appear **in between**.
- Data is crucial for an **iterative process**.



- E. Arteaga, J. Nalau, R. Biesbroek, M. Howes,
- **Unpacking the theory-practice gap in climate adaptation**, *Clim. Risk Manag.* 42 (2023) 100567. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crm.2023.100567>:

1. The Planning – Implementation Gap: Have Our Climate Plans Moved Beyond Paper?



G. Martínez Görbig, J. Flacke, A. Treville, R. Sliuzas, D. Reckien, Empirical insights on adaptation implementation from the Global Covenant of Mayors European signatories; Under Review.

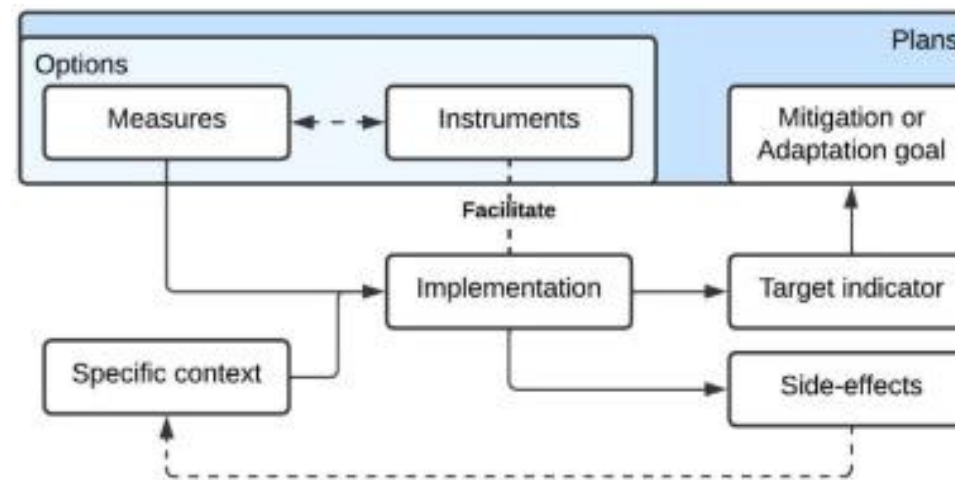
Data: Baldi, Marta; Franco de Los Rios, Camilo; Melica, Giulia; Treville, Aldo; Bertoldi, Paolo (2023): GCoM - MyCovenant, 4th Release - March 2023. European Commission,

Joint Research Centre (JRC) [Dataset] PID: <http://data.europa.eu/89h/b425918f-53a1-495c-8619-cd370c302eb0>

1. The Planning – Implementation Gap: Have Our Climate Plans Moved Beyond Paper?

Solutions

- Role of the action in implementation.
- Climate actions are categorised between **measures and instruments**.
- **Large Language Models:** Categorisation of the GCoM-MyCovenant (more than 220.000 climate actions).



The different role of climate actions.

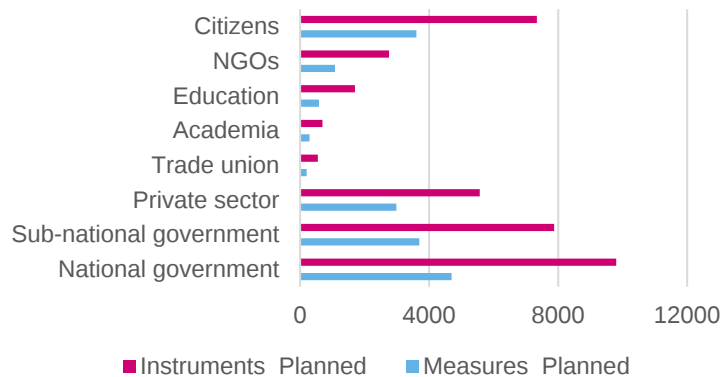


2. Implementation in Europe: Which Climate Actions Are Actually Being Implemented In Europe?

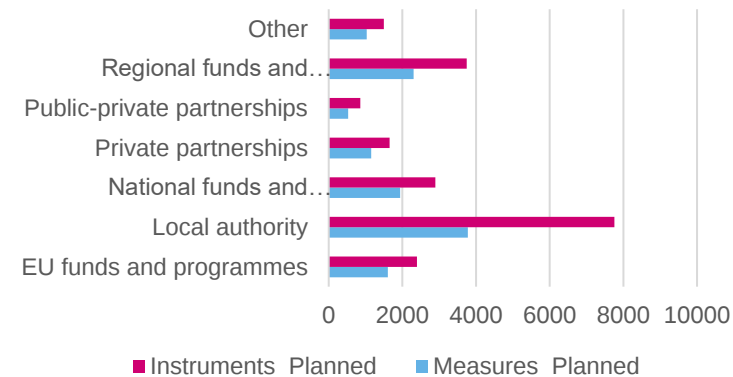
Chances of implementation **increase** when stakeholders **other than public** administrations are actively involved.

Single measures | instruments.

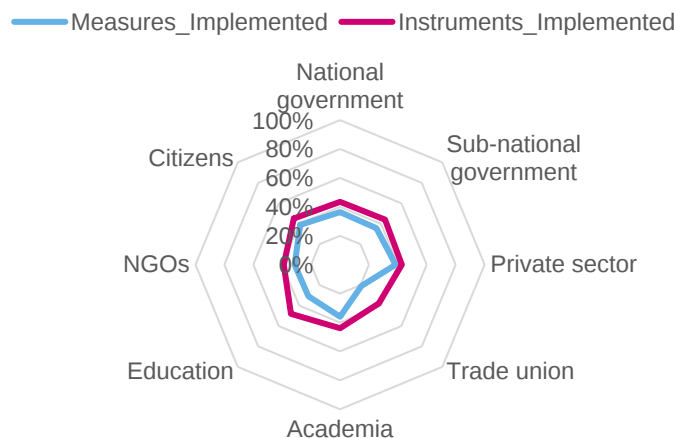
Implementation Stakeholders



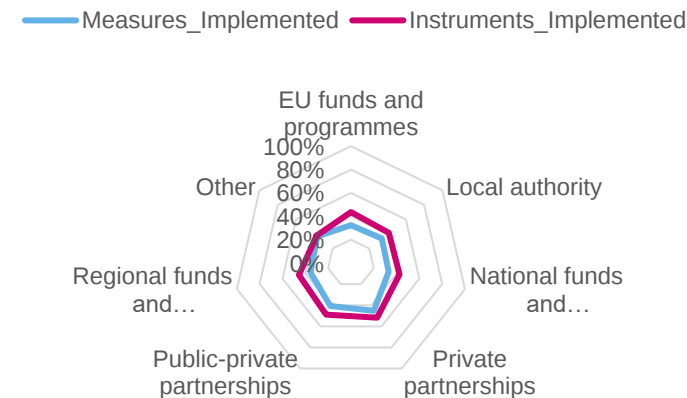
Funding Sources



Implementation Stakeholders



Funding Sources



Share of implemented measures/instruments per each stakeholder.

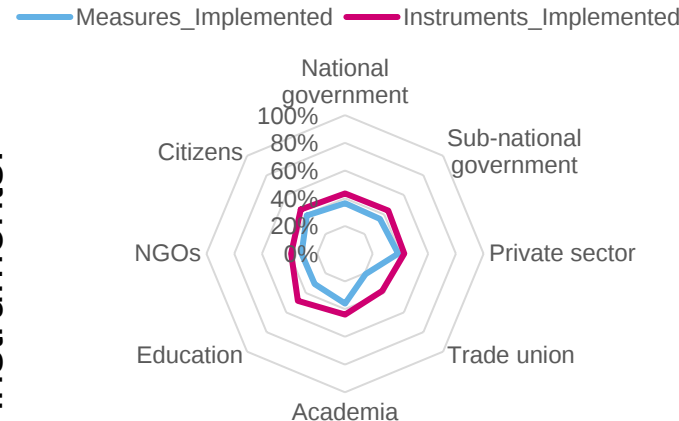
2. Implementation in Europe: Which Climate Actions Are Actually Being Implemented In Europe?

Chances of implementation **increase** when measures and instruments **combined**.

Combination measures | instruments.

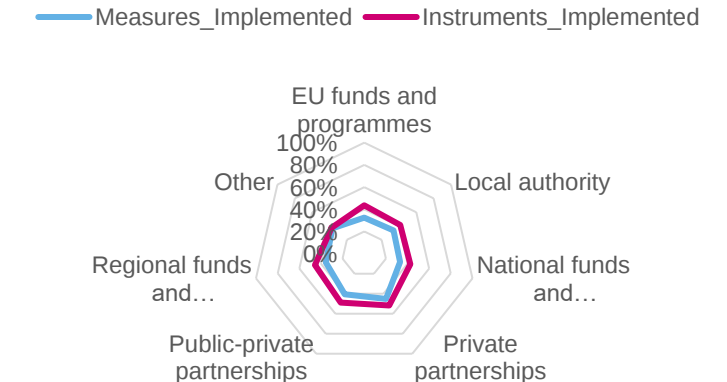
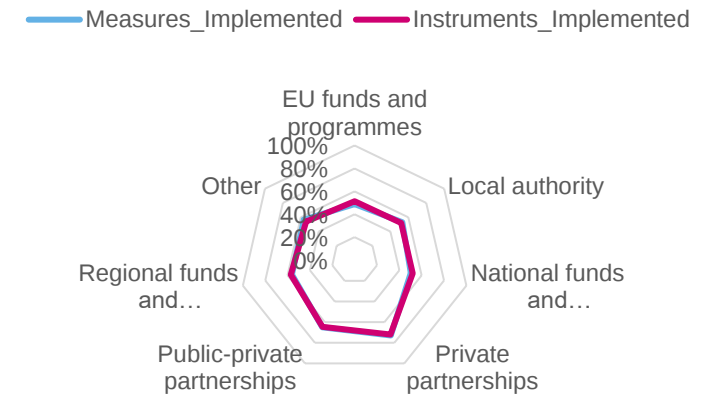


Share of implemented combined actions per each stakeholder.

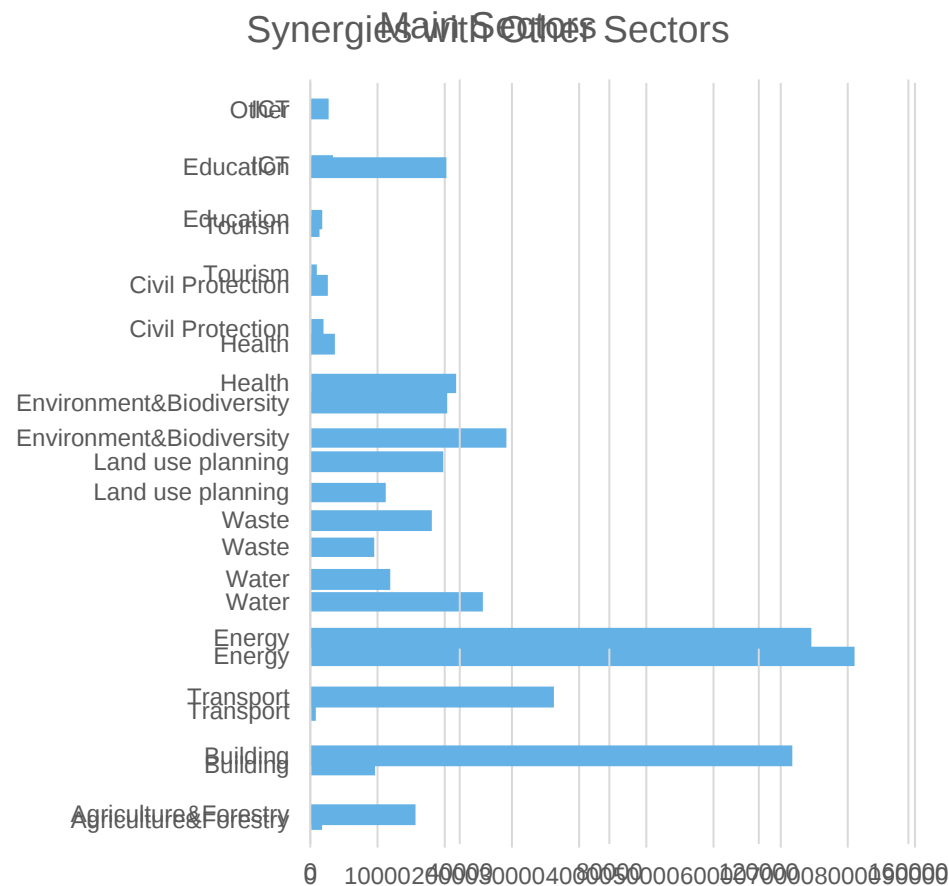


Share of implemented measures/instruments per each stakeholder.

Funding sources



2. Implementation in Europe: Which Climate Actions Are Actually Being Implemented In Europe?

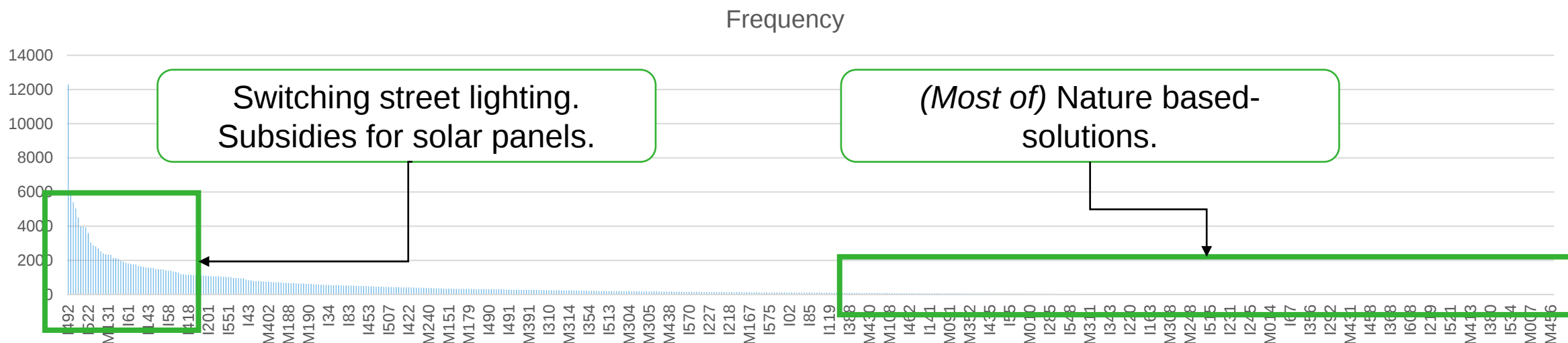


Number of actions per sector.

- Energy is the most indirectly addressed sector.
- Climate action **can provide several co-benefits and trade-offs** that might be unexplored.
- **Around 30% of actions with detected synergies and trade-offs are implemented – Action without stays at 23%.**
- **Importance of inter-sectoral planning.**

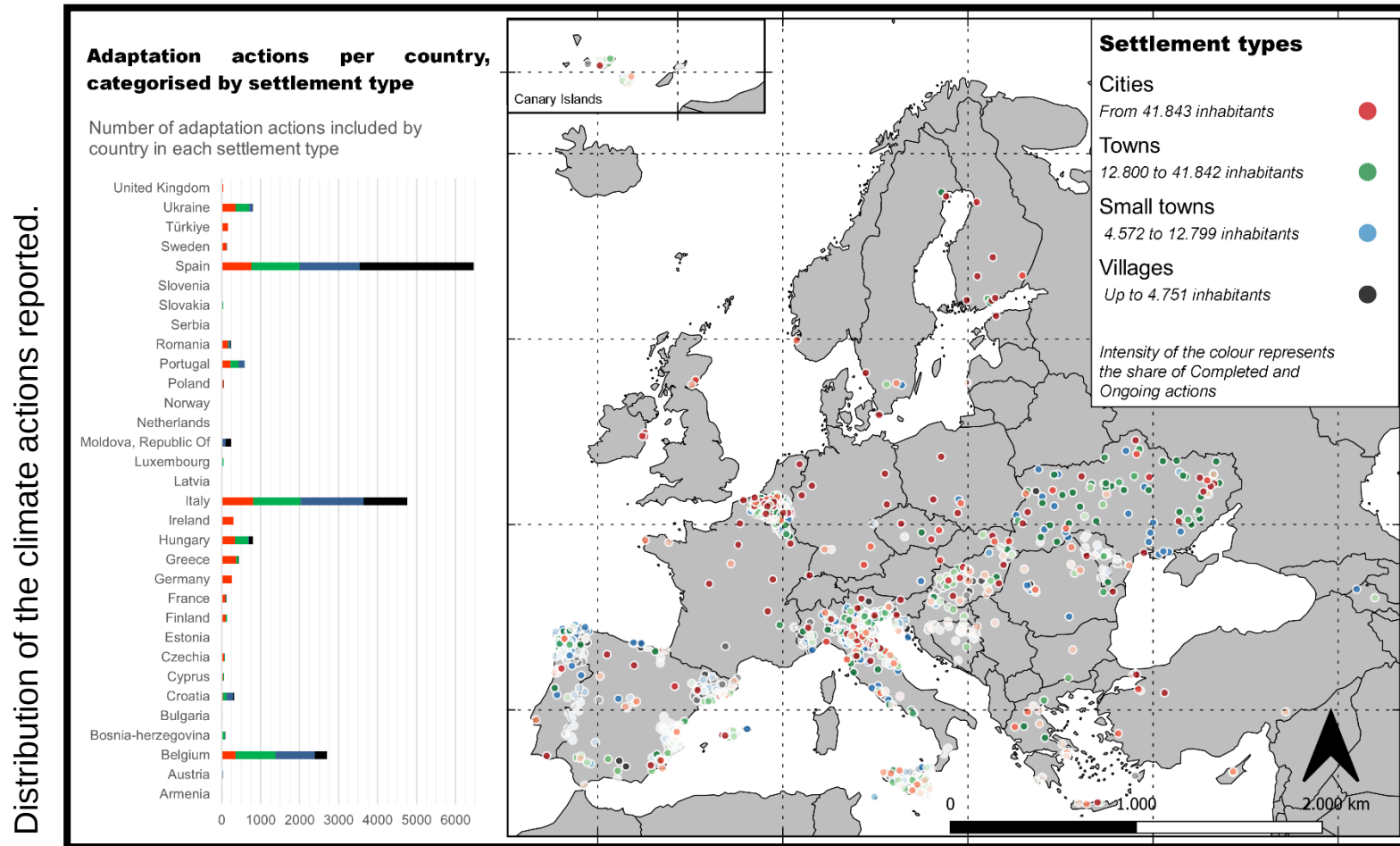
2. Implementation in Europe: Which Climate Actions Are Actually Being Implemented In Europe?

- While there are (*at least*) **more than 400 measures** and **600 instruments** available, not even **50% of those** are being implemented.
- 60% of the implemented measures and instruments are the similar, **easy-to-implement**.



Histogram. Number of times the same action appears.

3. The Importance Of The Context: What Constrains Or Enables Adaptation Implementation In Europe?



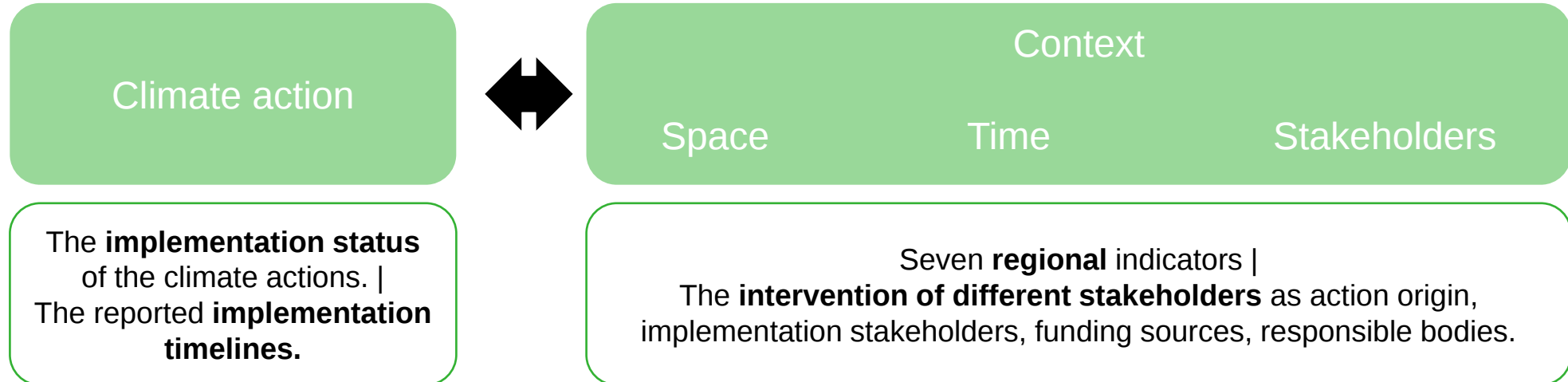
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3. The Importance Of The Context: What Constrains Or Enables Adaptation Implementation In Europe?

- Implementation comes from the **interaction between a Climate Action and its Context.**
- The context is a sum of **space (settlement types), time, and the stakeholders involved.**



3. The Importance Of The Context: What Constrains Or Enables Adaptation Implementation In Europe?

Cities



Social
inequity



Climate
Awareness



Institutional
quality



Education

Towns



Financial
capacity



Citizens'
intervention



Partnership



NGOs
intervention

Small towns



Education



Trust in the
government



Citizens'
intervention

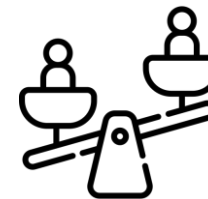


Institutional
quality

Villages



Transboundary
collaboration



Social
inequity



Citizens'
intervention



Trust in the
government

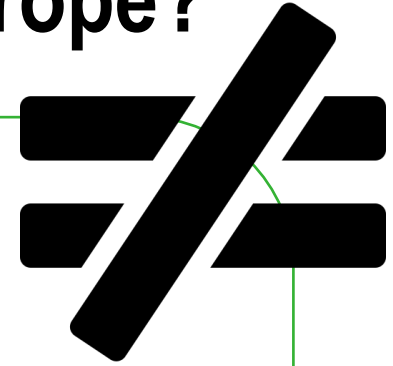
3. The Importance Of The Context: What Constrains Or Enables Adaptation Implementation In Europe?

- Some factors are common across settlement types:
 - **Educational level of the inhabitants** relates to high implementation odds.
 - **Participatory processes** are crucial. The intervention of citizens proved extremely relevant (for good or for bad) for the odds of implementation.
 - **Involving private organisations** is positive. **Particularly in financing**, their intervention increases the implementation rate.
 - The **regional scale and transboundary collaborations** are crucial. However, they lack executive to implement.



3. The Importance Of The Context: What Constrains Or Enables Adaptation Implementation In Europe?

- Some factors behave substantially **different depending on the settlement type**.
- Enablers:
 - **Higher climate awareness, faster implementation.**
 - **Exacerbated levels of climate awareness** relate to lower implementation in big cities.
 - **A greater institutional quality is important for big cities** (due to complex networks), but small signatories shall prioritise their network and social fabric.
 - In the bigger signatories, it is important to focus on **having common goals and aligned interests** between private institutions, public administrations, and citizens.
 - **External funding is much more relevant in smaller signatories.**
 - It is not only on the signatories. The results proved that **every stakeholder has an influence**. Signatories can do the plans, but implementation **relies on the intervention of a complex network**.



4. Synergies and Trade-Offs: How To Use Climate Measures' Side Effects as Enablers to Implementation?

- Implementation can have **side effects**.
- Side effects **impact on population**.
- Addressing **Justice** concerns is crucial.



Social
inequity



Climate
Awareness



Citizens'
intervention



Trust in the
government

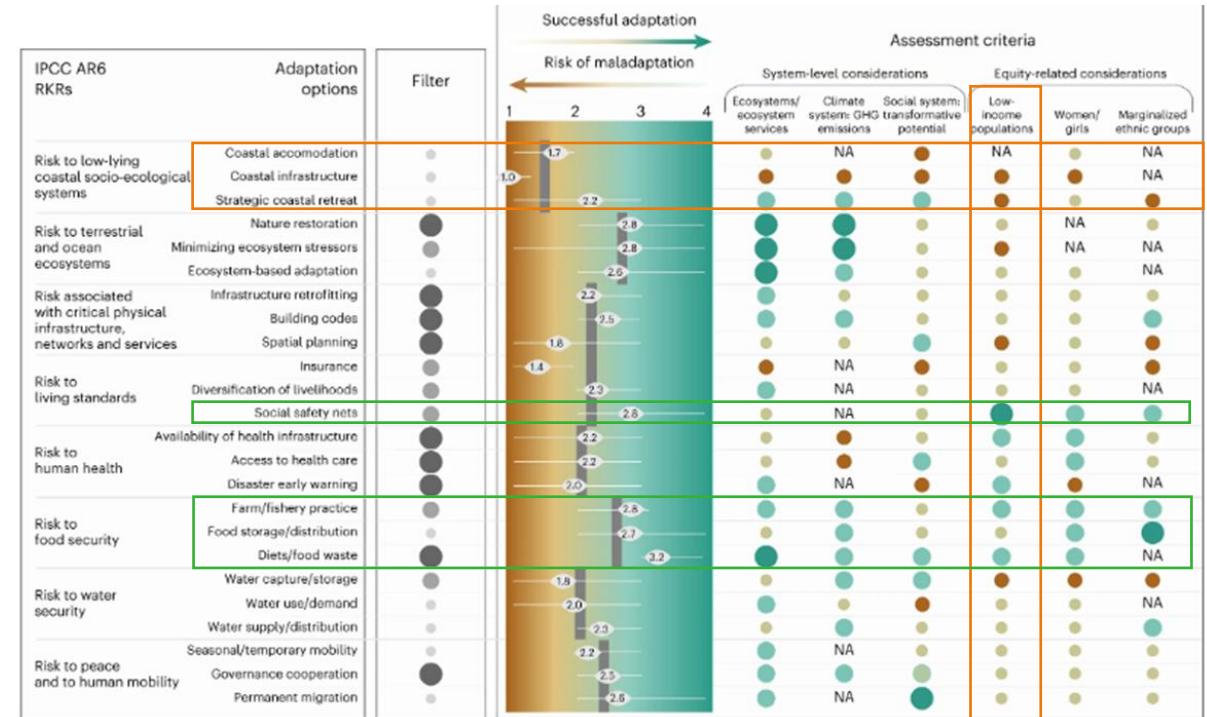
OPPORTUNITY



Baseline values for implementation factors such as
**Education, Climate awareness, Trust in the
government, or Social equity.**

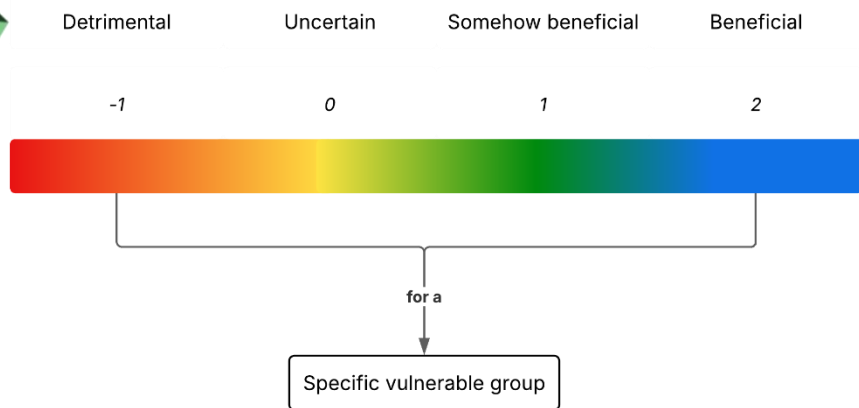
4. Synergies and Trade-Offs: How To Use Climate Measures' Side Effects as Enablers to Implementation?

- Largest synergies when adaptation relates to **change of diets/ reduction of food waste, social safety nets**, and some ecosystem-based options such as **nature restoration**.
- Adaptation that address risks to low-lying coasts are often conflicting
- Side effects most often occur **on low-income groups & women**
- Few adaptations have transformative potential for systemic change (most continuation of the status-quo)



4. Synergies and Trade-Offs: How To Use Climate Measures' Side Effects as Enablers to Implementation?

- Nine groups are identified, and 53 mitigation options assessed.
- They **do not impact** everyone **equally**.
- Side effects can be either **positive or negative**. Some groups, like women and girls, are mostly having negative impacts. Other groups, like rural populations, can mostly benefit.
- While most effects are related to the **economic impacts of the actions**, other side-effects relate to **health and well-being**, highlighting the importance of inter-sectoral planning.



Vuln. Groups	Negative	Uncertain	Somehow beneficial	Beneficial
Women and Girls	4	2	1	1
Economically vulnerable people	5	4	3	3
Seniors	3	1	3	1
Household structures with children	2	1	1	0
People with migration status	2	2	0	0
Tenants	3	1	0	0
Rural population	1	1	0	2
Population with chronic diseases	1	1	1	1
Educational deprived population	2	2	0	0

Assessment for mitigation measures' social impacts.

4. Synergies and Trade-Offs: How To Use Climate Measures' Side Effects as Enablers to Implementation?

- When implemented, side effects **have direct implications on the region**.
- Population groups are the ones experiencing those impacts.
- Depending on their experiences, side effects can enhance **enablers**, like education; or exacerbate **some barriers** like social inequity.



4. Synergies and Trade-Offs: How To Use Climate Measures' Side Effects as Enablers to Implementation?

Further Research:

Language: English - English

Change the language

How does climate action impact your personal life?

This questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is organised into six short sections. Its aim is to explore how climate action can enhance well-being and to support municipalities in considering the needs of people like you (as well as other households) when planning climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

This survey is anonymous.

The record of your survey responses does not contain any identifying information about you, unless a specific survey question explicitly asked for it.

If you used an identifying access code to access this survey, please rest assured that this code will not be stored together with your responses. It is managed in a separate database and will only be updated to indicate whether you did (or did not) complete this survey. There is no way of matching identification access codes with survey responses.

Next



KEY MESSAGES

- Climate **PLANNING** paves the way towards implementation when being **comprehensive, consistent, robust**.
 - Cater for vulnerable groups.
 - Dare to plan bolder, more ambitious climate responses.
- **IMPLEMENTATION: mostly "low-hanging" fruits** are currently implemented.
- **Enablers --> education, participatory processes, and collaboration, even though** each settlement operates under unique conditions.
- Recognize interlinkages --> Implementation must account for synergies, trade-offs, and co-benefits across sectors. **Inter-sectoral planning is critical** and can be used to engage with third-party actors.
- **Successful implementation depends not only on municipalities but also on:**
 - Regional conditions, including institutional and legislative frameworks, and
 - Active engagement of all stakeholders, from public institutions to the private sector.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Diana Reckien
d.reckien@utwente.nl

Gerard Martinez-Görbig
g.martinezgorbig@utwente.nl



 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-diana-reckien-96608827/>

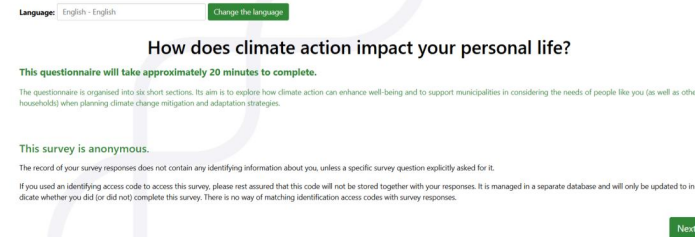
 @Reckien_Diana

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1145-9509>



www.lcp-initiative.eu

EURO-LCP Initiative
Local Climate Plans



 Gerard Martínez Görbig

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1430-6801>

 g.martinezgorbig@utwente.nl



Coming **UP** next

10:45 – 11:30

UP2030 and the 5UP Approach

How we tested a systemic framework to implementing integrated climate action with our pilot cities

Plenary Room

11:40 – 12:25

Urban Planning for Climate Impact

Perspectives of EU funded projects Climaborough and Re-Value on innovative procurement and waterfront cities

Perspective 1:

Procurement as a catalyst for Urban Innovation

Perspective 2:

Re-thinking the waterfront: City Stories of Climate Action

Plenary Room



UP2030



Ajuntament de
Barcelona