**Newsletter DECA #1**

**Topic: climate change**

Climate change is accelerating. Moreover, we no longer need to look for extreme examples of this in remote areas. In the past 5-10 years, every city or region can clearly observe the effects of climate change in its own area. The consequences are visible and very close.

These climate related events are costing the EU billions of euros, as well as human lives (heat, floodings,…). Dealing with climate change is a long term process. Cities and regions need to take CO2 emission reductions (mitigation) and adapt its environments to the effects of climate change (adaptation).

**Adaptation actions** (for example, bigger drainage schemes to deal with fiercer rainstorms) are very expensive, and offer less attractive rates of return for the private investor – or even none at all. So public money is more important, certainly during times of economic difficulty across Europe.

**Goals**

Projects such as DECA (Delivering Effective Climate Actions) aim at finding new solutions to dealing with climate change. Cities and regions have drawn up tailor-made climate adaptation plans in recent years. To actually get them implemented, they need to look for new financing instruments and cooperation with local stakeholders. Because public authorities cannot face this challenge alone and current city or regional budgets fall short.

DECA is cofounded by Interreg Europe and will develop innovative financing instruments for adaptation strategies to increase investment, reduce costs and accelerate the effectiveness of climate change adaptation policies in the regions of the partners. In this project, capacity building among local stakeholders of each partner will be essential.

Many partners have experience in European projects and have learned that rethinking our landscapes and green infrastructure has multiple benefits, not only regarding climate change adaptation. It creates attractive recreational areas, increases biodiversity, functions as a healthier environment and makes our cities livable.

**About climate change adaptation**

Broadly speaking, there are three ways of adapting to climate change.

Climate adaptation can be reactive. For example, an extreme weather incident triggers an immediate landscape response. Heavy rainfall quickly drains away via the sewers on to a watercourse, a river and the sea. If something goes wrong insurance may help to cover the damage. In the case of a heat wave, heat survival plans are in place and emergency services are on standby. Reactive adaptation is cheap when the climate is stable and/or when extreme weather events occur occasionally.

The preventative approach goes further. Foreseeable risks are combated up to a certain level with preventative measures. When the river water rises, dykes can be reinforced. If heavier rainfall occurs more frequently, the sewers can be enlarged. These types of plans can be put in place in response to an increase in more extreme incidents to a certain extent. These plans are often sectoral and tend to focus on management and infrastructure that is designed to respond to a longer term of ten years or so.

Both reactive and preventative approaches to adaptation are reaching their limits. As a result of climate change, places are confronted with unprecedented extreme weather conditions that are more varied in nature and happen more frequently. For example, a period of extreme rainfall can be followed by weeks of drought. New solutions are emerging in response to such a wide range of complex problems. It is no longer the case that a technical solution is immediately thought up for each individual problem but rather that the whole, integral system of city and landscape needs to be considered. Standard solutions are no longer sufficient.

Nature-based solutions to climate change adaptation are becoming more common. This ecosystem-based adaptation focuses on ecosystem restoration and enhancement of ecosystem services to protect society against negative impacts of climate change. In order to reduce the impact of heat waves, for example, trees are being planted between buildings to offer shade and coolness in these spaces. In a neighbourhood with small houses, planting trees can help the environment to cool down quickly at night so residents can sleep better. This is known as the transformative approach and requires a radically different approach. This is the approach favoured by this project.

**The methods of DECA**

DECA will use peer review sessions to exchange knowledge on the financing landscape and capacity building and help understand our learning needs and policy changes.

The first was organized in Warsaw in June 2024. Existing solutions, case studies and good practices tackling climate risks were exchanged. The partners also discussed financing options and models with experts from Warsaw.

On site examples such as the Warsaw University Library and its garden with solar panels, a forest patio, vertical gardens and rooftop gardens were very inspirational.

DECA is an Interreg Europe project, co-funded by the European Union. It has 8 partners: Energy and Climate Agency of Podravje (Slovenia), Mazovia Energy Agency (Poland), Tartu Regional Energy Agency (Estonia), County Administration Board of Kronoberg (Sweden), Roermond Municipality (The Netherlands), City of Ostend (Belgium), Lisbon Municipality (Portugal) and Province of Treviso (Italy).

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