

**ERP Mid-Term Event 2021 - Breakout Group 1 Report****Breakout Group Name:****Climate change - communities as instruments of transition****Names of Leader, Reporter, Speaker:****Leader:** Michael Dower - Dorset Climate Action Network, England**Speaker:** Davie Philip - ECOLISE**Reporter:** Ema Križanová - Slovak Rural Youth Parliament**Main issues and lessons identified in presentations and discussion:****How do we involve people, include different groups in a way that is inclusive, enables individual action but also collective action?**

Before any action is taken, it is important to consider that every community is different (even within one state or region) and has different motivations to participate. Communities do not have the same playing field; therefore, it is crucial to find tailored approaches.

There is a significant difference between, for example, countries in Scandinavia, where populations have been used to being collectively self-dependent and ex-communist countries, where people were not used to and were not encouraged to think for themselves. So these countries firstly need to find the courage to do something by themselves and then start believing that they can do it.

It would, perhaps, be beneficial to identify and specify what climate action in local communities means and what it looks like- what difference it would make to the community and what individuals can do to help the environment and secure long-term sustainability.

It is crucial to realize that community energy is possible at all levels, on an island, in a village, etc. by going away from the centralized level and trying to work locally. We can get people involved in taking responsibility for their energy consumption and production and being conscious about fossil fuels usage. This is especially important when it comes to public transport, since people in rural areas are dependent on transportation, and several clean alternatives such as green hydrogen, can be put into use. Land use partnerships to provide motivation.

The way of communication is important- bringing awareness to local communities needs a change in a language. It needs to be palatable to local people and easy to follow in order for some people to understand how big of an issue climate change is, what measures can be taken in rural areas and how they can help. They also need to be informed about the tangible impacts of climate change on their community and how it affects them specifically. It is particularly challenging to involve people who still do not believe that there is a crisis or those who do not see any need for change or any ability to change. In this case, the language is even more critical and needs to be even more precise. When people are familiar with the issues, active participation can be increased as well.

**What are the opportunities for community action?**

FOOD

a) Community supported agriculture

b) Open Food Network, which is user-owned and controlled digitalization. It helps with ensuring food security and also enhances the local economy

c) We can build on what is already taking place, for example, in France and Spain, there are territorial food networks- partnerships to rebuild food processing capabilities, based on regions

It is an excellent opportunity for local food networks to be strengthened, community woodlands and local biochar production and restoration of soil health away from intensive agriculture: more regenerative agriculture!

d) In Iceland, geothermal water is used to heat greenhouses in order to motivate locals to grow their vegetables instead of having them imported from other parts of the country or from abroad.

#### ENERGY

Community-based energy -in Scotland, big companies that are working on renewable projects HAVE to contribute a certain percentage of their profits to community funds.

#### MOTIVATION

Show local communities that they can benefit from taking the initiative and making a change - the positive impact it will have on them. For instance, in Scotland, Retrofit programs are trying to find ways to turn inefficient-energy buildings into efficient ones. Money saved on energy motivates people to work on the project.

#### **What support is needed from government and institutions?**

Here, again, it is essential to recognize that not all countries are the same. The political system plays a role- in some countries, the mayor has power in their hands, in other communities have to take more initiative, and then there are countries with the high voluntary sector. This also influences the first question- how do we engage people.

Not a level playing field - it will be different in different places.

#### SUPPORT NEEDS TO BE DIRECT

Funds tend to get stuck at local authority bureaucracy, disabling people from taking action.

Community benefit funds can be a challenge in themselves to manage both in how this is negotiated and how they can be used. There are often conflicts within a community about what these funds should be used for, and it is a real challenge to look further ahead than just a couple of years and gain support for that. This area is perhaps ready for a transformation in how it works at the community level- there is a need for a cohesive approach.

#### LEADER

Firstly, it is necessary to reclaim LEADER from the Local Authorities. It should be more accessible to community needs. More people need to be involved, not only national and local authorities.

Nowadays, also bureaucracy of leader funding is overwhelming for most communities. Because of the complicated decision-making and approval processes, getting funding down to the actual local actors and communities might be very difficult. It takes a very long time, and they need to fulfil so many conditions to benefit from the funding.

Another issue is that a lot of money allocated for environment-related problems are not being drawn down because the public does not know what to apply for. So apart from making the process less bureaucratic, it is also necessary to explain to citizens what projects and opportunities are available and how they would benefit from them.

There is a need for a more holistic approach at the community level.

**Any ideas and case-study examples relating to the theme (including a name and email for the person proposing if possible)**

- a. **Community Ownership** - examples from Scotland around energy and land (Sheena Boyd)
- b. **Community Supported Agriculture** (Ireland, Davie Philip, [davie@cultivate.ie](mailto:davie@cultivate.ie))
- c. **Community Gardens and Orchards** (Ireland, Davie Philip, [davie@cultivate.ie](mailto:davie@cultivate.ie))  
Both enable community work and community ownership.
- d. Examples of potential community activities in field of energy production and consumption - **Islands and clean energy, smart village movement** (Camille Dressler)
- e. **Community Transport** - Local Link example from Ireland (Camille Dressler)
- f. **Open Food Network** - User-owned digital platform for local food economies (Davie Philip, [davie@cultivate.ie](mailto:davie@cultivate.ie))
- g. **Territorialized Food System**- system that tries to have an integrated approach to food networks (Marina Guedon)
- h. The use of **geothermal water to heat greenhouses** and motivate people to grow their own vegetables (Vigfús Ingvar Ingvarsson)
- i. **SECAPs** - Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Planning- The effect of climate change on the land, such as flood defences, coastal erosion and droughts, should all be problems that can be tackled by local authorities and communities together to identify the solutions that can then be included in planning. This wait could be possible. (Camille Dressler)
- j. **Metrics**: a good way forward to approach the issue is to look at the habitability factors defined in the work by Geoffrey Baldacchino of the university of Malta and the Aland islands:  
<https://europeansmallislands.com/2021/03/18/habitability-the-concept-and-practicalities/>  
(Camille Dressler)
- k. **From the H2020 SIMRA project on a guide to help work through planning and monitoring actions** [http://www.simra-h2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SIMRA\\_SI\\_Practice\\_Guide\\_interactive.pdf](http://www.simra-h2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SIMRA_SI_Practice_Guide_interactive.pdf) (David Miller)
- l. **Collection of examples of social innovation from around Europe, on different topics**. Some of those may be of interest. <http://www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/resources/collection-of-examples/> (David Miller)
- m. **What is climate action at a community level** - recommendations from Scotland Rural Parliament has some ideas <https://www.sra.scot/sites/default/files/document-library/2021-07/0.%20vSRP2021%20Session%20Recommendations%20-%20Climate%20Change.pdf>  
<https://www.sra.scot/sites/default/files/document-library/2021-07/0.%20vSRP2021%20Session%20Recommendations%20-%20Climate%20Change.pdf>

### **Messages for the 5th ERP 2022**

Essentially, community-led local development with a systemic approach is a key for achieving improvements in climate action. In order for communities to be motivated to take initiative, they need to have a clear image of why they should do it in the first place. For this to happen we need to be very precise when it comes to communication with communities and local people. Moreover, communities also need to be provided with information about options they have and how they will benefit from pursuing the project. Finally, the current system of getting access to funds for projects also needs to improve in a way that it will be less bureaucratic, and therefore more easily accessible by local leader