

11 AVENUES. 11 PROPOSALS

GREEN, CARBON-FREE EUROPE; CLIMATE CHANGE. THE PARIS AGREEMENT

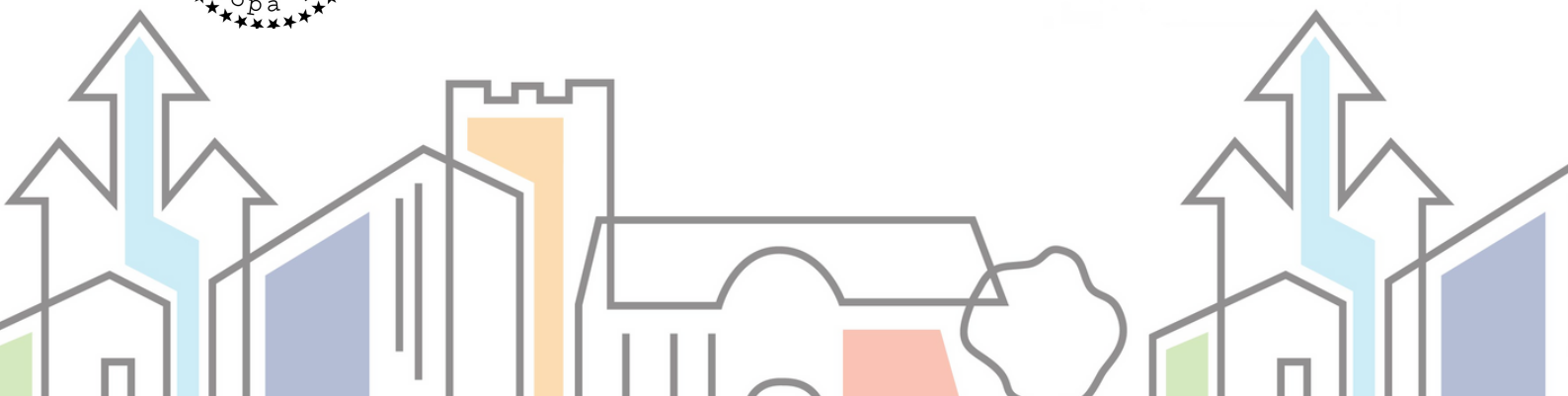
With the adoption of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 accompanied by a unique Recovery Plan conditions have been created to develop a more just, resilient and sustainable Europe. A robust and new cohesion policy is one of the cornerstones of this ambitious endeavour.

The 'Meet the Citizen 2.0' project of the European House covers 5 countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CZ, HU, HR, RO and SK); all of them are massive beneficiaries of the EU Cohesion Fund. Our 11 working papers indicate possible avenues how to use effectively these financial instruments in remote, less developed areas of these countries highlighting not only the importance of EU assistance in daily life of citizens but simultaneously contributing to reducing the still significant gap between the citizens and the EU institutions.

Each paper of ours offers not only a brief analyses of an important aspect of cohesion policy in Central and Eastern Europe but proposes also practical solutions for the involvement of citizens, their organisations and other stakeholders in practising partnership for making cohesion policy a success.



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Climate change poses a major challenge to Europe. Global warming will not stop at national boundaries and therefore the Union, its citizens and member states, regions, cities, rural and local communities need to act together. The European Union ensures the necessary sources for reaching this aim but there are other important steps to take. Societies in Central Europe need to adopt new approaches to handling the serious effects of climate change. Citizens and their organizations need to work on a dynamic contribution to making the central European region more resilient to climate change.

Consequences of climate change which Central Europe is also facing are well-known; they include extremely hot and cold seasons, heavy rainfalls, and river flooding. Due to global competition, available agricultural land is declining sharply which has led among others to higher food prices that are felt in everyday life. On the other hand, climate change has also revealed positive trends over the past. Changing attitudes of societies, mobilization of youth, increased media attention, grassroots movements and educational campaigns show only a small number of topics to mention here. All these make it clear that a more dynamic civil contribution to managing climate change needs to deal simultaneously with cross-cutting issues. Moreover, a civil contribution has to be

made at different levels e.g., local, regional etc. and in different domains and sectors. Therefore, civil actions on climate change issues need to be prepared in a single, comprehensive framework.

What does “Green and carbon-free Europe” mean exactly? What is the meaning of being “climate-neutral”? Why is the Paris Agreement important to civil actions? What are the concrete fields for civil actions for reaching a green, carbon-free Europe? Green Europe helps to improve people’s well-being and to secure a healthy planet for generations to come. Carbon-free means when energy sources are labelled as carbon-free and the energy is produced by a resource that generates no carbon emissions. Becoming “climate-neutral” refers to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible but, at the same time, there must be a compensation for any emissions that remain after the reduction. This is how “a net-zero emissions balance” can be reached. Countries, societies, and regions can be also carbon-free and climate-neutral. A carbon-free state would, for example, produce all of its electricity from renewable or clean sources like solar or wind energy.

The Paris Agreement is an international treaty that was adopted by 196 states in Paris in 2015 and entered into force on 4th November 2016. The Agreement



set up a new global framework to avert dangerous climate change and its ambitious goal is to reduce global warming to below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

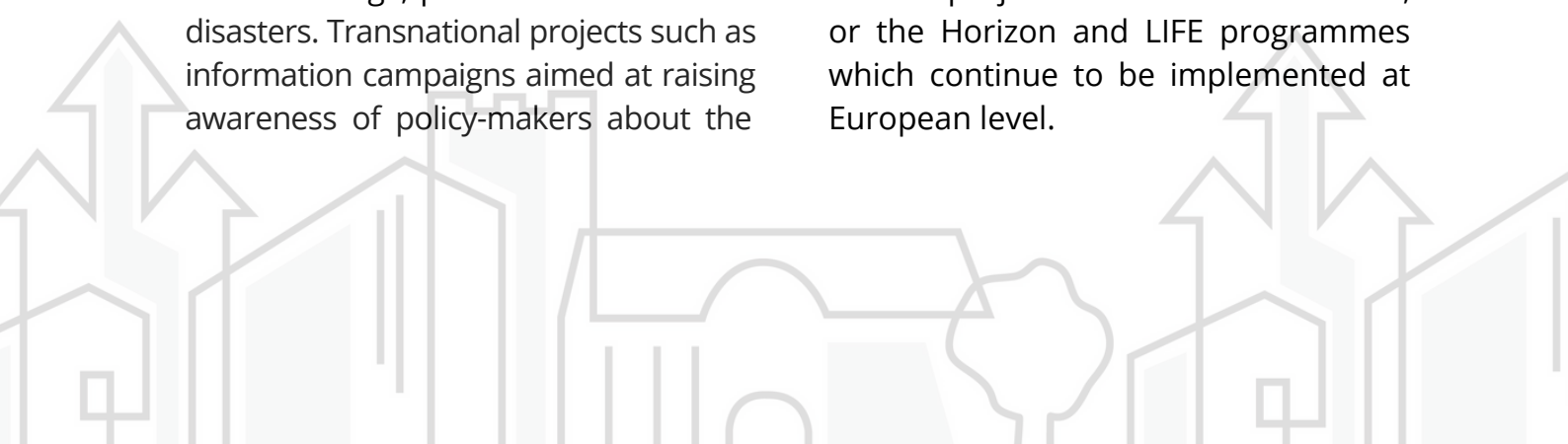
The explanation of basic terms mentioned above helps civil actors to obtain a comprehensive overview and start to prepare their actions. Cross-border cooperation programmes for the regions have already set up the framework for launching civil actions on climate change issues. The new Interreg programme for 2021-2027 includes activities that can win EU-funding for achieving a “greener” and “climate-neutral” Central Europe. These activities need to be carried out in transnational cooperation. In this line, civil contribution to climate change issues in the region can be made among others in the following fields:

- Increase of energy efficiency and the sustainable use of renewable energies. Transnational projects can be supported such as exchange of knowledge and good practices on reducing harmful effects of climate change on local and regional levels, e.g., activities such as carrying out analysis and studies on the transition towards a climate-neutral economy and society in Central Europe can be also supported
- Strengthening of adaptation skills in climate change, prevention of risks and disasters. Transnational projects such as information campaigns aimed at raising awareness of policy-makers about the

local and regional effects of climate change can be financed. Furthermore, projects which focus on pilot actions, exchange of knowledge and good practices in adapting climate change with regard to restoration of the ecosystems, e.g., rivers and wetlands, agro-forestry, biodiversity, landscapes etc. can be supported.

The topics mentioned above clearly show that citizens and civil society organizations in Central Europe have many opportunities for making a dynamic and added-value contribution. However, their projects need to rely on broad partnerships with stakeholders in industry, agriculture, education, and several other fields. Partnerships and new forms of cooperation with key actors can ensure the viability of solutions for supporting social resilience and counteracting socio-economic impacts of climate change in the region.

A further important aspect is that efficient civil actions should not use only the funding source of the new Interreg programme. The actions must be linked more effectively to other available EU funds for 2021-2027 which also cover socio-economic aspects of climate change, such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Social Fund and the Regional Fund which finance projects in the Member States, or the Horizon and LIFE programmes which continue to be implemented at European level.



Follow-up, proposals

cross-cutting issues; a single and comprehensive framework for developing new approaches; project generation in broad partnerships at transnational level; and synergy with other EU-funded programmes; all these topics need to be attached to a more dynamic civil and added-value contribution to managing challenges of climate change in the Central European region. Best practices in communication campaigns for raising awareness among citizens (with a focus on individual responsibility in the context of climate resilience); developing new approaches to local and regional response to climate risks and prevention of disasters; transnational planning for implementation of a single education programme on climate change issues in the poor rural areas. These items should also be put on the agenda of workshops, seminars connected with educational and training courses to be organised for civil actors.

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