

OUTCOMES

WORKSHOP ON MUNICIPAL COOPERATION
7 OCT 2016 | CLIMATE ALLIANCE CONFERENCE | KREMS (AT)



Climate Alliance

Cooperating on climate action within municipalities and beyond - Lessons Learned

International Climate Alliance Conference
7 October 2016 | Krems, Austria

The workshop

Local climate action requires the involvement of many different actors, both inside and outside municipal administrations as well as with residents. Those responsible for climate action often find it challenging to motivate colleagues from different departments and to coordinate with them in implementing mitigation and adaptation strategies. At the same time, a commitment to ambitious climate targets can foster increased cooperation within a municipality, and also with other local authorities working together towards a common goal. At its best, such commitment motivates residents to get on board with mitigation and adaptation agendas as well. This workshop offered participants the opportunity to exchange with colleagues and explore the success factors and barriers to improving various forms of cooperation on climate action. Via examples taken from both Climate Alliance members and signatories of the Covenant of Mayors, it demonstrated how local authorities are rethinking and redesigning the work of their administrations, their work with one another, and their work with their residents and local stakeholders to more effectively pursue climate action strategies.

The set up

Examples and input were given by three main speakers who shared their own experiences on cooperation in different areas, the challenges they encounter and the strategies they have developed to address them:

- **Hannah-Sophie Stabel**, climate protection manager at the city of Kaiserslautern (DE), gave an introduction to the cooperation between different departments of the city on climate action. ([Presentation](#))
- **Karl Kofler**, model region manager at the climate and energy model region Terra amicitiae, explained what works in the cooperation between three municipalities in the south of Austria and what still needs to be improved. (Presentation [DE](#) | [EN](#))
- **Joost Venken**, deputy mayor of the city of Hasselt (BE), shared his strategy on how to involve citizens and other stakeholders in local climate action. ([Presentation](#))

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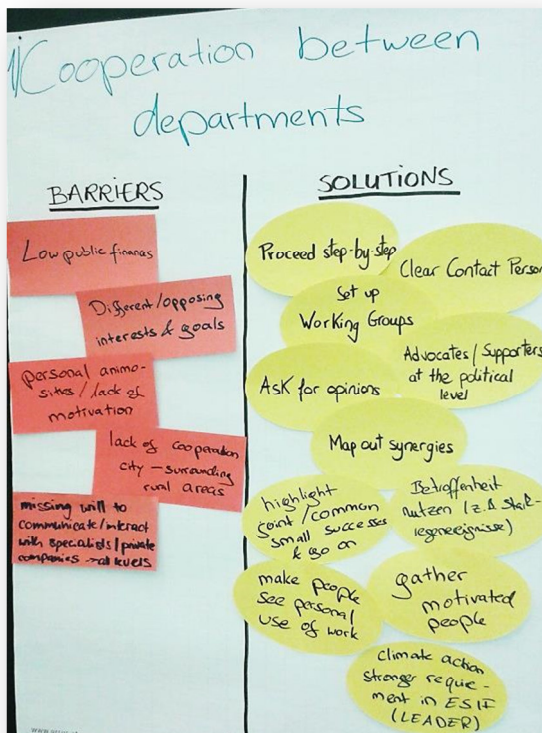
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After the input statements, the participants split up into three groups in order to discuss barriers and solutions within and between municipalities and with other stakeholders, before reconvening in the plenary and presenting each group's key outcomes.

Key insights – Barriers and solutions

1. Cooperation between different departments in a city



In her **input statement**, Hannah-Sophie Stabel from Kaiserslautern identified as the main barriers to successful cooperation between departments the issue of **low public finances and different or even opposing interests and goals between the departments and municipal companies**. As solutions which have proven to work in Kaiserslautern, she recommended to set up **internal working groups** in order to identify **synergies** between the tasks of the different departments and where a **face-to-face contact** can take place. She also advised to **ask for opinions of staff of other departments and convince with good arguments**, designate one **clear contact person**, and organise **joint campaigns** (e.g. **City Cycling**) and jointly develop climate concepts.

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In the discussion, a **lack of motivation and personal difficulties of certain people to work together** were identified.

As additional **solutions** were found:

- **Using pressures from outside to starting cooperation processes** and keep them going. Examples can be legal requirements from a higher political level (which prompted coordination to install renewable energy in Geldermalsen, NL) or extreme weather events to start cooperation on adaptation to climate change (as has happened in Kaiserslautern, DE).
- In order to increase the motivation rate, it was suggested to gather a group of people who are motivated in the first place, **make people see the personal use of the cooperation for their work, and highlight even small successes of joint work and build further on these success stories.**

2. Cooperation between different local authorities

Karl Kofler brought his experiences as the manager of the climate and energy model region “Terra amicitiae” of three small municipalities in the south of Austria to Krems. Especially for small municipalities, it is becoming increasingly important to work together, use effects of scale, join forces, get access to specific funds and -for less advanced municipalities- learn from colleagues with more experience. The **barriers** to this collaboration which were identified by Karl Kofler ranged from a tendency of **mayors to want to implement their “own” project without coordinating with others because it provides visibility, low priority put on climate action, and language barriers** between experts and non-experts. **Solutions** which have proven successful in the model region are **taking into account the personal vanities of the decision-makers, a clear definition of responsibilities and processes as well as a high degree of patience.**



During the discussion, it was also pointed out that while cooperation between the climate departments of different municipalities might work well, once a higher level needs to be involved, the **cooperation is often slowed down or stopped due to bureaucracy and hierarchies.** Moreover, it was pointed out that there is a **high potential to increase cooperation on climate action between larger towns and cities and their surrounding rural areas.**

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Additional solutions identified:

- **Mutual learning approaches**, e.g. joint excursions between staff from different municipalities
- **Offering different spaces and opportunities** for different levels of the administration to meet, discuss, brainstorm and create new ideas
- Creating a shared vision of climate action in the region, leading to the development of a **joint action plan** with detailed actions to implement
- **Sharing personal resources** and sharing responsibilities
- **Developing a culture of climate action** – the way in which administrative staff works and interacts with one another in reaching climate goals.
- Hierarchies can be convinced by pointing out that **cooperation can lead to joint procurement benefits**
- For the cooperation between a city and its rural surroundings, it was suggested that if rural areas want to **receive external funding**, e.g. **LEADER** funds from the European Union, **climate action should be part of the required areas to work on.**

3. Cooperation with citizens and other stakeholders

Joost Venken, deputy mayor of the Belgian city of Hasselt, introduced successful strategies of the city to engage citizens and other stakeholders in the ambitious climate actions of the city.

A discourse that **taking actions by individuals doesn't have any effect, or that it is too difficult or not realistic while others are not acting impedes many to take action** has prompted Hasselt to start with an interesting assumption: You don't have to convince everyone straight away, but instead **convince the "early adopters", who will then convince others for you ("domino effect")**. By showing the successes of their changed approach (e.g. a move towards energy efficient construction), others will see that it works. It was also emphasised how the city of Hasselt were working on creating the best possible environment for change in order for good ideas to have the best possible circumstances to grow.

In addition, Joost Venken also recommends to implement actions that **create a feeling of being part of a climate community and being proud of it, as well as to make individual engagement easy**. Therefore, Hasselt has started an initiative which helps citizens to buy renewable,

local electricity.



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Joost also invited other municipalities to make their territory a “**laboratory space**”, e.g. through demonstrating projects (involving universities, architects...).

In the discussion, the question was raised on **how to identify the early adopters**.

Additional solutions discussed:

- Provide the **right platforms and incentives for the early adopters**
- **Make it fun to make a change**, with simple messages and tools
- **Use the carrots instead of the sticks** to push for action
- **Tell stories**, create emotions



Conclusions:

“Keep going” was probably the most frequently shared recommendation between the workshop participants. Involving colleagues, citizens and other stakeholders requires a step by step approach, celebrating the small successes, and listening to everybody. Nevertheless, and especially since it is a long process, participants also stressed the importance of having fun along the way! In relation to having fun, activities and workshop (like this one), where likeminded people meet, is helpful to keep up the momentum and trust in the climate and energy activities for the individuals to bring back to their work within the respective municipalities.