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ADAPTNOW

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Topic Brief

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Short description: ADAPTNOW: ADAPTation Capacity Strengthening for Highly Affected and Exposed Territories in the Alps NOW will work on strengthening the adaptive capacity of HAET by implementing and evaluating the available climate adaptation and risk mitigation management tools and practices, assessing the Climate Adaptation Plans and developing Climate Services to support the territories and their local public authorities. Ultimately, ADAPTNOW aims at making risk and adaptation planning more integrated, collaborative and inclusive. This will be reached through a more dynamic, agile and participatory planning process in which all local stakeholders need to be involved.

Project website: <https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/adaptnow/>

## Introduction to the Topic Briefs

Climate Change Adaptation must not stop at isolated actions carried out by municipalities and technical or infrastructure stakeholders, it must be integrated across the targeted community to maximize its impact. Climate Change Adaptation relies on awareness and knowledge of Climate Hazards, collective resilience and collaboration. Thus, a series of Community Engagement and Communication methods are shared in this topic brief to include alongside any adaptation measure adopted by local municipalities.

This series of **topic briefs** has been developed to support municipalities, policymakers, and other stakeholders in integrating Nature Based Solutions, Integrated Planning and Financing Tools, Community Engagement and Communication Methods, and Extreme, Compound and Cascading events solutions into local planning and risk management strategies. Each brief provides concise, evidence-based insights, highlighting their relevance, benefits, and practical applications in different contexts. The objective is to bridge the gap between scientific research and real-world implementation, ensuring that decision-makers have access to actionable knowledge.

The topic briefs can be used in multiple ways:

- **Strategic Planning** – Municipalities can leverage these resources to inform urban planning, infrastructure development, and climate adaptation strategies.
- **Policy Development** – Policymakers can integrate these principles into local and regional policies to enhance ecosystem resilience and reduce disaster risks.
- **Stakeholder Engagement** – The briefs serve as a tool for raising awareness and fostering collaboration among government agencies, private sector actors, and local communities.
- **Project Design & Funding** – Practitioners can use the insights to design projects that align with funding opportunities and international sustainability frameworks.

By providing concrete examples, case studies, and key recommendations, these topic briefs empower local actors to take informed action, ultimately contributing to more resilient and sustainable territories.

You may find the other Topic Briefs in the EUSALP [CAPA Platform](#).

## 2.THEMATIC WORKSHOP 2 - INTEGRATED PLANNING AND FINANCING TOOLS

### 1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE CONCEPT:

The second workshop began with an introduction to the topic, highlighting the importance of active citizen participation in the planning, implementation and promotion of climate adaptation measures. The motivation for the workshop topic stems primarily from the understanding that people are generally not inherently opposed to climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. However, a major problem is the prevalence of disinformation, fake news and the distortion of scientific facts, especially on climate adaptation themes.

Nowadays, effective countermeasures to the effects of climate change and the resulting natural hazards must be based on ecologically sound, nature-based solutions. It is also essential to promote self-sufficiency and communicate the residual risks that remain despite comprehensive measures. Overall, there's a drive to establish a culture of risk awareness, using targeted multimodal risk communication. This includes communication techniques such as storytelling to illustrate how society can cope with natural hazards based on collective experience.

Early education of children, adolescents and young adults about natural hazards, their potential damage and associated risks is essential. This education should include schools, action days and training courses to promote awareness and preparedness. However, the same issue, in particular raising awareness, is crucial for all stakeholders and decision-makers.

The public needs to be made aware of the residual risks of natural hazards, but this should be done without instilling fear. Instead, the focus should be on empowering individuals and communities to understand and effectively mitigate risks.

The project group first discussed disinformation, barriers, obstacles and excuses. This was done through group work aimed at making an inventory of typical arguments used by climate change deniers, common excuses for not acknowledging climate change impacts or implementing adaptation/mitigation measures, as well as barriers and obstacles encountered in the respective territories. These points were discussed in depth within the group, allowing for an exchange of experiences. The group then wrote down the inventory points on moderation cards. The results were then presented to the project group using these moderation cards.

Part 2 focused on strategies and convincing in relation to the barriers, obstacles and excuses discussed earlier. The project group broke into smaller groups to brainstorm solutions to the barriers, obstacles and excuses listed on the moderation cards. This process resulted in an inventory of approved ideas for constructive reactions, actions and possible responses to counterarguments from deniers. It also identified strategies for convincing people, examples of effective methods and best practice. This enabled the group to overcome disinformation, obstacles, barriers and excuses, leading to a final discussion with the project group. Through this process, the project group increased its collective understanding and knowledge. Each project partner

was then able to take this experience back to their respective territories, facilitating further progress and action.

In part 3 of the workshop, the project group had the opportunity to explore and test different models, tools, games and simulators for communicating and activating community engagement. The aim was to evaluate their effectiveness, usefulness and potential applications in the context of the project. The focus was on understanding how the pilots could benefit from these tools. Through practical experimentation and evaluation, the project partners were able to gain insights into the practical implications of using these resources in their respective initiatives, such as regional events, round tables, and action days.

The introduced tools are the following:

Interactive Natural Hazard Model:

With the assistance of an Alpine model landscape, various natural hazards and the effect of protection and prevention measures can be discovered in an entertaining way. The natural hazard model shows a fictitious, populated, pre-alpine landscape with a river flowing through it. Within the village, a torrent from the mountain region flows into the river and the effects of protection and prevention measures are visualised. The model is suitable for visualising the possible effects of climate change on an alpine community and thus creating risk awareness. Furthermore, practical measures in the event of an alpine natural disaster and the correct behaviour in an emergency can be discussed.

Flash flood model:

This model is used to safely and enjoyingly experience the effects of heavy rainfall and the resulting flash floods in urban areas. It raises important issues of self-preparedness of infrastructure and general adaptation to climate change.

Infiltration model:

The model shows the disadvantages of sealed surfaces and the advantages of permeable solutions. It helps to experimentally visualise the benefits of nature-based solutions for groundwater recharge, landscape water balance and climatic well-being in inhabited areas.

ClimaStory:

ClimaSTORY is a pedagogical support for collective reflection. Designed to be used by all types of territorial actors, ClimaSTORY proposes to look at a fictitious territory from the perspective of climate change and adaptation solutions for 5 themes of economic activities: Agriculture and forestry; Industry; Tourism, trade and crafts; Health and safety; Planning, resource management and biodiversity. Given the situation, the participants choose together the most relevant solutions with regard to the specificities of this territory.

### Murgame:

MurGame is a playful debris flow simulation in which players defend a picturesque alpine village against huge debris flows.

The browser-based game is aimed at players with a preference for realistic data and behaviour, which is achieved in the game through the implementation of real debris flow modelling. MurGame is also used for educational purposes to raise awareness of the dangers and damage caused by debris flows and to show what protective measures can be taken.

### StopDisaster!

With this serious browser-based game, the UN aims to build risk knowledge and strengthen disaster preparedness. This online game teaches children how to build safer villages and towns. Through play, children learn how the location and materials of houses make a difference when disasters strike, and how early warning systems, evacuation plans and education can save lives. Because children and young people tend to play games, such serious games have a strong target group appeal. Therefore, children and youth can easily be trained for more inclusive disaster risk reduction and resilience building strategies, which will lead to better prepared households, healthier children and youth, and safer communities in the future.

### Crancy Uncle

The Cranky Uncle game uses cartoons and critical thinking to combat misinformation. Cranky Uncle uses cartoons, humour and critical thinking to expose the misleading techniques of science denial and build public resilience to misinformation. To explain why and how some people reject scientific evidence, the character of Cranky Uncle was created, the family member we all have who thinks he knows better than the world's scientists.

### Discord Midjourney

Discord Midjourney is an emerging text-to-image AI that turns imagination into reality. By simply entering a text prompt, the AI bot creates an image in less than 60 seconds. Midjourney can be used to address the concerns and fears of people in the area by allowing them to create a prompt and then discuss the outcome of the image together. It is a tried and tested method for starting intensive discussions with individuals or in the community. The latter can be done by initiating an exhibition in the community.

## 2.1 WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORKSHOP?

The group has identified that typical barriers, obstacles and excuses to addressing climate risks and the implementation of adaptations measures. Some of these result from the boundary conditions in the territories, while others have their origins in people's perceptions.

### Barriers, obstacles due to boundary conditions in the territories:

- Lack of public awareness and knowledge about the impacts of climate risks hinders effective engagement and action

- Educational backwardness in majority of society: lack of trust in science, mixing climatology and meteorology; Educational system is teaching mainly theories but lacks practical realization methods
- Insufficient human resources for conducting awareness campaigns and implementing mitigation measures.
- Political obstacles, such as reluctance to allocate necessary funding for climate-related actions
- Limited financial resources in municipalities
- Identifying suitable experts with practical knowledge on specific climate-related topics can be challenging, impeding effective decision-making and response efforts.
- Inconsequent regulations for different sectors
- Difficulty in capturing citizens' attention amid competing priorities such as COVID-19, conflicts, inflation, energy prices, and refugee crises.
- Challenges in fostering cooperation among various institutions involved in climate resilience efforts.
- Often, infrastructure is not well-equipped to handle the impacts of severe weather events, exacerbating vulnerabilities.
- The presence of multiple hazards simultaneously affecting various sectors, such as storms, heatwaves, floods, gravitational events, and health crises, poses complex challenges.
- Problem of disinformation, fake news, distortion of scientific facts, fake experts
- technological backwardness even in industrialized countries.

#### Excuses and misleading people`s perception:

- perception of not being affected by extreme events or that they are not directly responsible for implementing measures
- Common mindset of “Not in my backyard!”
- Climate mitigation actions harm businesses, promoting weak countermeasures (“radical change is not necessary”)
- Emphasizing the disadvantages “change will hurt us”, e.g., shading the city is great but the falling leaves dirty the cars.
- The financial burden is too heavy for the population. People feel that the wealthy section of the population should bear the main burden for the financially costly measures. “Climate protection is only for rich people” (climate change effect split)
- There is a prevailing opinion (in some cases already substantiated) that there is climate change hysteria, and that climate change is the result of natural cycles: “It used to be warmer!”.
- Redirecting responsibility to other polluters: People feel that their actions as individuals are not required or that the local impact is irrelevant if global players do not take action. (blame-shifting)
- People would participate in individual measures if a critical mass of active people were already acting (follower principle).

- Fear of the unknown, fear of changing lifestyles and declining standards of living. It is difficult to imagine what climate change and its practical effects on everyday life mean. Difference between climate - weather - weather conditions largely unknown. (Climate Monster)
- The feeling that one is already doing a lot, or that one is at the limit of what is possible for their own household. "Why is recycling not enough?"
- Feeling of technosolutionism: The focus on the increasing use of technology to mitigate the consequences of climate change runs counter to the desire to reactivate natural resilience.
- prematurely capitulating, a feeling of "It's too late already!", "There is nothing more we can do anyway" (missed opportunity syndrome)
- Solving the climate crisis is a luxury problem for humanity. First of all, we must succeed in defeating war, hunger and poverty. Only when society has realised that challenging tasks can be tackled collectively can this be transferred to even more difficult problems such as climate change.
- The effects of climate change will not be drastic in our own lifetime. We can come to terms with the effects. Individual climate protection measures and personal investment in adaptation measures will only pay off for future generations. Personal improvements in the future through climate adaptation measures are not seen as necessary. However, a certain compulsion is felt to raise the financial resources today. Short-term financing vs. long-term improvement (egosimus barrier)
- People feel that measures are too closely linked to electoral cycles and that political decision-makers put their own political campaign intentions before the common good. Procrastination in the implementation of measures, decision-makers prioritise supposedly more urgent problems with a more positive external impact. In general, measures to reduce the impact of climate change are seen as a leftist issue, which leads to political polarisation in the way society and the community deal with the consequences of climate change.
- The measures required to adapt to climate change are only seen by industry from the perspective of financial gain. Many people feel at the mercy of the end consumer. Lobbying for a not-change manipulating adaptations strategies.
- The effects of climate change, in particular the rise in temperature, are sometimes welcomed. The associated effects (extreme weather fluctuations, extreme events) are suppressed or underestimated. (Tropical Paradox)

#### Strategies for overcoming barriers, obstacles and excuses:

Although communicating risks and realizing climate adaptation can be challenging, the ADAPTNOW project consortium has compiled recommendations from workshops, stakeholder meetings, and roundtables. These recommendations have proven helpful in discussing climate change issues and related hazards, and in motivating the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures:

- Avoid downplaying or exaggerating the effects of climate change.
- Back up viewpoints with scientific evidence and facts to establish a trustworthy and reliable basis for discussion. Research results can explain that ongoing climate changes are too rapid as been reliable by natural fluctuations.
- Encourage the sharing of all concerns and ideas without judgement.

- Create an open and innovative environment that encourages productive discussions.
- Foster creativity, collaboration, and team building.
- Build societal resilience and promote collaboration among regional stakeholders.
- Focus on delivering outcomes that benefit the group, rather than highlighting individual opinions or concerns.
- Ensure decision-making processes are more participatory.
- Improve communication between institutions and citizens and share the benefits of success with all stakeholders.
- Start mitigation and dissemination locally. Start by influencing friends and family.
- Do not compare your actions with global players. Start at a personal level. Start with a single seed if you want to plant a forest. Then start to scale up your actions at local, regional and national levels.
- Acting together will also affect global issues.
- Adaptation is for you, self-sufficiency and individual climate adaptation will bring health benefits.
- Reach others with emotional arguments. The impacts of climate change are already here.
- Adaptation is not an ego trip, but a responsibility for the next generation.
- Although climate change may have some short-term positive effects (warm temperatures), the side effects (tropical cyclones) will be worse.
- Use carbon footprint calculators: [footprint calculator](#).
- Make more use of the positive carbon handprint
- Financial resources are important, but dealing with the consequences will be much more expensive than acting now.

### 3.1 HOW CAN MUNICIPALITIES USE THIS INFORMATION TO INCREASE/IMPROVE/DEPLOY THE SHOWCASE ACTIONS/TOOLS/METHODOLOGIES IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE WORKSHOP?

- Communities should be aware that the issue of climate change is increasingly overwhelming people. The issue is omnipresent and is already overburdening many people emotionally and financially. In some cases, people are already reacting with fear reactions (fight-flight-freeze).
- Use of multimodal media and physical models for raising awareness, sectorial view, trigger attention and as a starting point for further discussions.
- The ClimaStory tool in particular can be used for cross-sectoral work
- AI-based text to image software can be used to show visions and to develop and visualise a picture of the future together with people
- Physical models can be used at campaign days and open days to provide an easy introduction to the topic through interactivity and games.

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#### 4.1 WHAT FORMAT SHOULD BE USED TO PRESENT CONCLUSIONS TO MUNICIPALITIES (AT REGIONAL EVENTS)?

The advantages of the tools, simulator and planning tools should first be demonstrated under guidance at regional events, action days, etc. The municipalities should first be empowered so that they can then use the tools, simulator and planning tools independently.

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