

Bonn

Inclusive Climate Neighbourhoods to promote climate-friendly lifestyles

Bonn in context

Bonn is situated along the banks of the Rhine river in the southernmost part of the Rhine-Ruhr region. Having served as Germany's capital from 1949 to 1990, it has since evolved into a significant political and economic centre. The city is notable for its dedication to sustainability, as exemplified by its ambitious Sustainability Strategy and climate agenda, which guide its development in various sectors, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Divided into four administrative districts, Bonn enjoys a robust economy with a notable presence of academics and skilled professionals, making it an attractive destination for IT-related businesses. It is also home to the University of Bonn, and hosts numerous international institutions, firmly establishing itself as a hub for research, innovation and international diplomacy in Germany.

Climate protection in Bonn

Bonn has been proactive in climate protection. The city has developed a climate neutrality strategy through political decisions and subsequent discussions within the city council. In recent years, the city has amplified its [focus on climate protection](#), leading to the creation of a dedicated program office in the mayor's department in 2021 and the adoption of the [Climate Plan 2035](#) in March 2023, which aims for carbon neutrality by 2035. This Climate Plan was accompanied by "Bonn4future", a unique co-creation process among the city administration, local initiatives and randomly selected citizens. Bonn4future yielded an ambitious vision and tangible goals towards climate neutrality, ultimately feeding into the city's Climate Plan 2035.

This plan spans seven key action areas and aligns with Bonn's commitment to sustainable development and biodiversity conservation. Bonn has also been a [Fair Trade Town](#) since 2010 and an [Organic City](#) since 2019. The city sets its climate agenda independently, with membership in the [Climate Alliance](#) since 1995. A sustainable culture strategy is currently in development, further embedding sustainability into Bonn's cultural initiatives.

Bonn's demographic profile and social equity challenges

- **Vulnerable groups:** Nearly one in four Bonn residents (24.9%) live below the poverty line when adjusted for regional price levels. This is attributed to significant income disparities within the city and a high cost of living. A concerning 20% of Bonn's children and young people live in poverty. This issue is linked to shifts in the labour market and a lack of all-day childcare options. Vulnerable groups, such as the ill, elderly, low-wage workers, unemployed individuals, large families and single parents, are particularly affected by these disparities. The city's ageing population has increased slightly.
- **Migration:** The relative share of the foreign population increased by 0.2 percentage points in 2020 to a total of 17.5%. (As is likely the case in many other cities), prejudices against certain groups hinder neighbourhood-related projects and social cohesion. Integrating vulnerable target groups into relevant assistance systems remains a fundamental problem. Many residents are unaware of their legal rights to income compensation, or eligibility for transfer benefits.
- **Unemployment:** The unemployment rate in Bonn averaged 6.9% in 2022, slightly above the average unemployment rate in Germany of 5.7%. The job centre in Bonn has introduced qualification measures for long-term unemployed individuals¹. However, these measures face challenges in reaching and assisting vulnerable groups effectively.

Overview of the chosen climate measures for INCLU:DE

The city's 'Climate Plan 2035,' emphasises the need for a collective effort, encompassing not only municipal emissions reduction but also active contributions from individuals and businesses to achieve climate neutrality by 2035. Among the many individual measures of the climate plan, Bonn pilots three climate and transformation neighbourhoods across the city. These spaces are conceptualised as places designed for innovation, networking, consultation and education. They aim to inspire and facilitate climate-friendly lifestyle changes as well as aspiring to ensure easy and inclusive access for all residents. Leveraging existing structures and collaborating with civil society initiatives the city is committed to ensuring the initiative's social equity and inclusivity. The Climate Neighbourhoods initiative was selected as the focus for the INCLU:DE project.

¹ As per national SGB II national long-term unemployment benefits guidelines.



Bonn goals on INCLU:DE

- ✓ Establish “Climate Neighbourhoods” across different districts, including both high and low-income areas, to ensure equitable access while reducing emissions where they are highest.
- ✓ Conceptualise and design climate spaces with inclusive wording, framing and infrastructure to cater to all residents.
- ✓ Develop effective communication strategies, leveraging diverse channels and partnerships, to engage marginalised communities in these climate spaces.

