

# Heidelberg

*Just retrofitting subsidies for an energy-efficient neighborhood*

## Heidelberg in context

Heidelberg, a city with a rich history tracing back to the 12th century AD, is located in the state of Baden-Württemberg in southwestern Germany. This city has a diverse economic landscape, anchored to prominent sectors including education, research, healthcare and tourism. Notably, Heidelberg is home to Heidelberg University, an esteemed institution with a long-standing legacy in Europe. The city's commitment to cutting-edge healthcare and medical innovation, with top-tier hospitals and advanced medical research facilities, has earned it a reputation as a hub for health-related expertise and research.

## Climate protection in Heidelberg

Heidelberg has consistently prioritized sustainability in its urban development plans since 1997. Heidelberg was Germany's first city to publish a climate protection concept in 1992, continually refining it since then. In 2014, the city achieved a significant milestone with the 100% Climate Protection Master Plan, a product of extensive community participation. The subsequent 2019 update and the 2020 climate protection action plan introduced measures to accelerate climate protection efforts. Since 2022, Heidelberg is a so-called "mission city" as part of the EU's mission for 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030. Sustainability transcends political cycles in Heidelberg, is supported across party lines, and holds increasing significance.

## Heidelberg's demographic profile and social equity challenges

- **Migration:** Heidelberg's international reputation as a prominent science city attracts a diverse and dynamic population. Around 10 percent of residents move in and out of the city annually, highlighting the need for integration efforts. The city is committed to nurturing an open and cosmopolitan society where newcomers are welcomed.
- **Unemployment:** Heidelberg holds an unemployment rate of 4.9% (2022) compared to the average national rate of 5.7%. Despite Heidelberg's overall prosperity compared to other regions in Germany, the city confronts unemployment and income disparities on a citywide scale. Low-income

households often encounter difficulties in securing affordable housing, accessing education and maintaining reliable transportation. In the Hasenleiser neighborhood, where unemployment rates of 7% (2022)<sup>1</sup> are disproportionately high, a tailored approach to addressing long-term unemployment is essential.

- **Other demographic challenges:** Heidelberg faces social equity challenges related to vulnerable groups, including low-income households, people with disabilities, individuals with language difficulties, and the elderly. The city acknowledges the need to support those receiving social benefits and is actively working to assist people with language barriers, ensuring they have access to essential services.
- **Hasenleiser district (INCLU:DE project focus area):** The Hasenleiser neighborhood, in particular, experiences a higher-than-average unemployment rate and has a significant aging population in comparison with the rest of the city, with a substantial proportion of migrants. Income levels in this area also fall below the citywide average. Thanks to the neighborhood management established in the Hasenleiser district, the project has a good point of contact with the low-income groups.

## Overview of the chosen climate measures for INCLU:DE

The city of Heidelberg's subsidy program 'rational use of energy' was selected as the climate measure for the INCLU:DE project. In general, the program is available for all residents of Heidelberg with advantageous conditions for HeidelbergPass holders (people with low income). However, the city is now exploring ways to enhance the program's social equity aspects.

This project will investigate the impacts and opportunities of the subsidy program, particularly concerning solar balcony modules for low-income groups in the Hasenleiser district. One of the primary objectives is to reduce energy consumption and promote renewable energy sources in the neighborhood. This initiative aims to encourage tenants to lower their energy usage to save money while simultaneously contributing to the reduction of CO2 emissions. The main challenge is to engage tenants, especially those from vulnerable communities. The project will concentrate on the most effective methods for reaching out to them, communicating with them, and supporting them throughout the application process for the subsidy program.

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## Heidelberg goals on INCLU:DE

- ✓ Refinement of the subsidy program to ensure it reaches and supports low-income residents.
- ✓ Development of an inclusive communications strategy to successfully reach and encourage low-income communities to apply for the subsidies.

