

INCLU:DE case studies

City of Bonn: Climate districts as inclusive community hubs

In March 2023, Bonn's 'Climate Plan 2035' was approved, emphasizing collective effort from municipal, individual, and business actors to achieve climate neutrality by 2035. A key innovation is the development of four climate neighborhoods designed to inspire climate-friendly lifestyle changes through opportunities for innovation, networking, consultation, and education. Each climate district features a physical space as a central contact point while connecting with existing structures and collaborating with civil society initiatives. The first district (Beuel) partners with a consortium around the 'Brotfabrik' cultural center, while the second (Unter der Godesburg) leverages district management synergies. The climate district in Medinghoven and a mobile concept in central Bonn received approval in November 2024 and June 2025, respectively. The active and expanding program represents Bonn's commitment to socially equitable climate action, ensuring initiatives are accessible to diverse population groups. Each serves as a catalyst for community-driven climate action while addressing specific local needs. The approach creates networks between existing community structures, civil society organizations, and residents, democratizing climate action regardless of socioeconomic background or previous environmental engagement. A dedicated steering group established in mid-2024 provides strategic guidance and facilitates knowledge transfer between neighborhoods, ensuring successful approaches can be adapted citywide.

In the context of INCLU:DE, the Medinghoven climate district stands out for its explicitly youth- and participation-oriented approach, shaped by a distinct socio-economic profile. The civil society organization [Bonner Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelles Lernen \(BIM\) e.V.](#) coordinates the district, including its central platform, the participation center [MEDING:HOME](#). MEDING:HOME builds community through low-threshold activities, fostering connection, inclusion, and neighborhood resilience. Climate action is integrated gently, being mindful of the rather low carbon footprint of the local population. The emphasis is not on prescribing behavior change, but on opening up accessible ways to participate in climate action and experience its benefits in daily life.

Supportive measures

Through the INCLU:DE project, Bonn has implemented several measures to ensure social equity considerations are integrated into the climate neighborhoods' design and implementation:

- **Expert input on pilot concepts:** ICLEI provided input through a 'social equity lens' on pilot project concepts, based on the established Equity Framework. This technical assistance resulted in concrete improvements, with two out of three commented profiles already having been implemented. They incorporate the recommended modifications, demonstrating the practical value of external expertise in enhancing program accessibility.
- **Workshop on social justice:** A comprehensive workshop on social justice was conducted with the aforementioned steering group responsible for coordinating the climate neighborhoods, building internal capacity for equity-centered decision-making and program design.
- **Balcony solar lab Medinghoven:** Building on the successful balcony solar scouts initiative, this project helps 36 low-income households in Medinghoven to access free balcony solar installations, reducing energy costs and raising climate awareness. Embedded in MEDING:HOME structures and implemented in collaboration with the Bürgerverein Vilich-Müldorf, the project offers full support covering advice, application, and hands-on installation - requirements for participation are a [Bonn ID card](#) and liability insurance. The project strengthens social inclusion and empowers residents with access to renewables, fostering familiarity and direct experience of their benefits.

Municipal uptake measures

Bonn has established systematic approaches to integrate social justice considerations into its broader climate governance framework. However, following the election of new city leadership in September 2025, the strategic direction for both climate planning and the climate districts initiative is currently being defined.

- **Increased awareness:** The climate district initiative, especially the successful work in Medinghoven, has raised awareness of the benefits of socially just climate action among both the city administration and the public, starting to shift the focus from CO₂ indicators alone to stronger recognition of broader co-benefits. In this sense, the social benefits are increasingly a driving factor for perpetuating climate action across the city administration.



- **Climate districts initiative:** Bonn is working to sustain the climate districts, including the MEDING:HOME structures, stakeholders, and facilities, within budget constraints. In the second half of the year, a workshop will be conducted to explore how the climate district's core ideas, such as urban societal transformation and community participation, can be continued without additional personnel but with the involvement of volunteers and civil society actors. Additionally, Bonn is pursuing external funding to support project activities across the districts.
- **Climate plan update:** Climate Plan Update: Bonn had submitted a Steckbrief for the climate plan update, prioritizing social justice. This included a planned capacity-building **workshop series** to strengthen internal expertise on socially just climate action for municipal staff, as well as the development of a **social justice checklist** to systematically integrate equity into every climate plan action area. With the transition to new political leadership, Bonn is currently reviewing how best to continue these efforts, with the aim of integrating them into [Steckbrief 1.1.3 \("Qualifizierungsprogramm Klimaschutz"\)](#), which focuses on building expertise for climate plan implementation - such as energy transition, technical/legal know-how, transformation knowledge, urban development, and social justice.
- **Bottom-up participation:** The citizen participation office plans to expand community engagement approaches and bottom-up decision-making on climate interventions, building on the successful experiences from the Medinghoven climate district process.

