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# 83. Deutschen Fürsorgetag: **Shaping ecological change socially. Good practice approaches**

~ Daniel Botha, ICLEI Europe

**17 September 2025**



## Question

*How can local governments specifically increase social justice and inclusivity in climate protection, adding to the efforts from social service providers like Caritas?*

# Agenda

- Background:
  - About ICLEI & the INCLU:DE project
- Examples:
  - (i) funding mechanisms and subsidy programs; and
  - (ii) community / target group outreach
- Good practices:
  - Essen, Ludwigsburg, Bonn, Bristol, Austin.



# Setting the scene

Why do we need to make municipal climate action more socially just?

- **Climate programs often reward high-consumption behaviors** - directing attention and public funds to incentivize sustainable choices for *affluent* populations
- Programs often structured in a way that makes them **difficult to access for low-income households**

Result of unjust municipal climate action?

- **“Change fatigue”** → makes climate action appear like a luxury / privilege
- **Sidelines communities** already struggling with poverty and exclusion (more urgent worries)
- Deepens societal divides and **increases resistance** (undermining political continuity)
- **Obscures co-benefits** for lower-income or disadvantaged communities



# Inclusive climate action advocacy: The Aalborg Conditions

1.

**Shared Governance**

2.

**Integrated Finance**

3.

**Cohesive Transition**



*"The need for cultural and economic adaptation in the transition to sustainability. Transparent communication and more participatory approaches ensure that all societal groups, especially vulnerable communities, benefit from the green and digital transition."*



**Endorse the Aalborg Conditions...**

# About INCLU:DE

INCLU:DE - just & inclusive climate action

- 3 year project (2023 - 2025) funded by Stiftung Mercator
- Supporting five German cities in making their climate actions more socially just & equitable
- INCLU:DE Cities: Dortmund, Bonn, Heidelberg, Ludwigsburg & Essen
- Front-runner peers: Rosario (AR), Almada (PT), Kaohsiung (TW), Malmö (SW), San José (US)

**Municipal climate program  
(e.g. Essen bike subsidies)**

INCLU:DE  
Supporting  
measure #2,

**Analysis & wider  
municipal uptake**

INCLU:DE  
Supporting  
measure #1



## *(i) Funding mechanisms & subsidy programs*

### Avoiding Unjust Distributions in Subsidy Programs

- Subsidy programs often disproportionately benefit affluent households with larger carbon footprints → **Risk of 'deadweight effect'**
- Structural barriers for disadvantaged groups result in unequal distribution of public funds → **Reinforcing existing disparities**
- In response, designing programs with a social equity lens means involving diverse voices in program design → **Goal: Improving accessibility**



# *(i) Funding mechanisms & subsidy programs*

## **Four steps to developing subsidy programs with social justice components**



### **Program outline**



Defining goals and scope

Identifying key target group(s) and actively engaging them in planning

### **Program design**



Establishing target group-specific funding guidelines to address accessibility challenges

### **Program roll-out & communication**



Ensuring effective information sharing, a straightforward application process and engaging outreach measures

### **Program assessment & review**



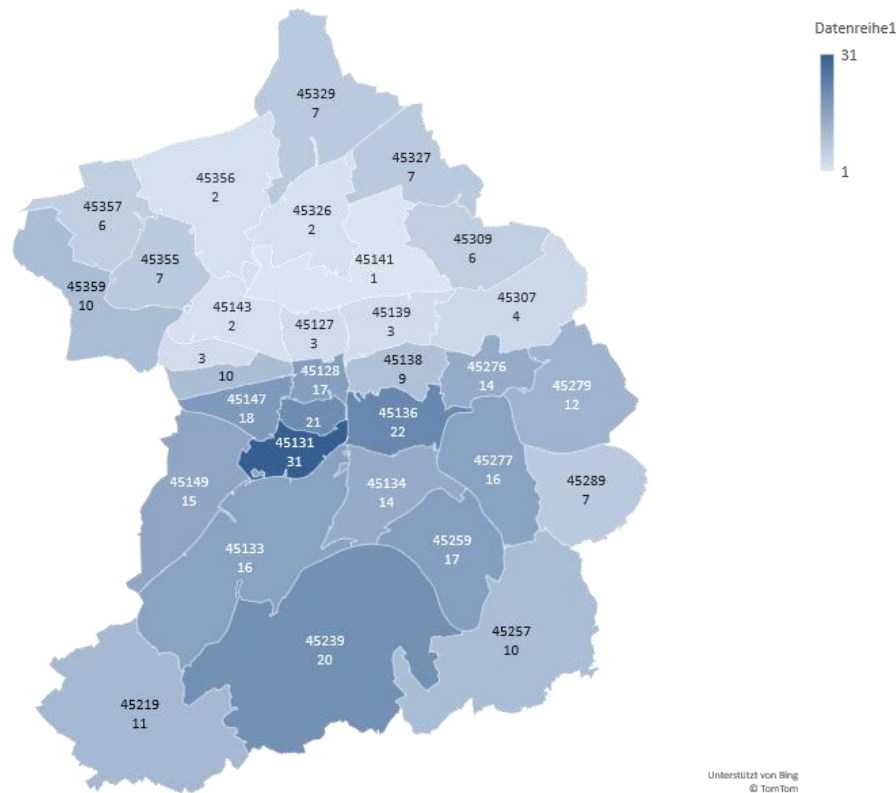
Monitoring indicators, consolidating learnings and transparently communicating results

## Good practice: Essen

### Municipal Cargo Bikes & Bike Trailer subsidies

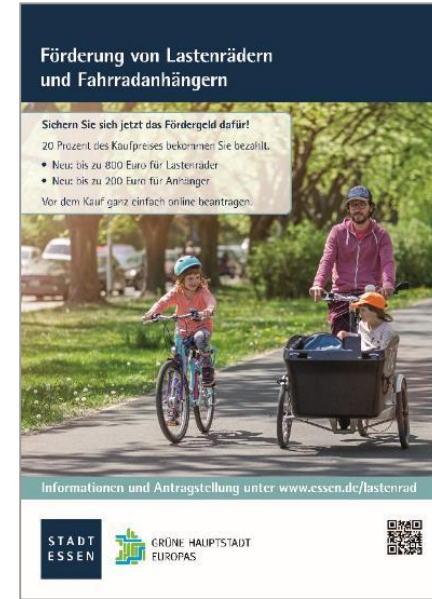
– subsidized bikes by postal code

- The problem before:  
**clear North-South divide...**



## Good practice: Essen Cargo Bikes & Bike Trailers

- **Revision of funding guidelines** bicycle subsidy program:  
Strengthened focus on social justice
  - Increased maximum funding (% of purchase prize)
  - Added bonus for target groups
  - Rate payments / leasing possible
  - Digital application
- Work in progress:  
**Study to evaluate the cargo bike subsidy program** and improve integration of socio-economically disadvantaged households  
  
→ *What are target group mobility needs & barriers?*



# New Cargo Bike Subsidy Guideline 2025

- Private citizens living in the city of Essen
    - Focus on families & low-income-households
  - Increased support rate: 30% of purchase prize
    - Max. €800 for cargo bikes / €200 for bike trailers
  - Plus new:
    - Family Bonus: up to 100% (staggered by household income); or
    - Social Bonus: (up to 100%)
- proof of income via Kita

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## Good practice: Ludwigsburg (DE)



- **Subsidies: plug-in solar devices**  
→ **'Carefree package'** (rundum sorglos paket)  
for social welfare recipients (LB Card)
  - Applicants indicate interest online
  - City directly coordinates purchase + installation
  - Entire cost covered by city → invoiced directly
  - No payment required from applicants.
- Outcome:
  - Eliminates financial barriers & admin complexities preventing vulnerable households from applying



## *(ii) Community / target group outreach:*

### *Building strong partnerships:*

- Overcoming **language barriers**
- Tangible, **hands-on offers** (speak to lived realities)
- **Personal**, direct approach
- **Long-term** relationship building

### *Empowering communities:*

- Offering funding and **resources for community projects**
- **Sharing decision-making power**
- Working with trusted '**multipliers**'



## (ii) Community / target group outreach examples

### Bonn



### Bristol

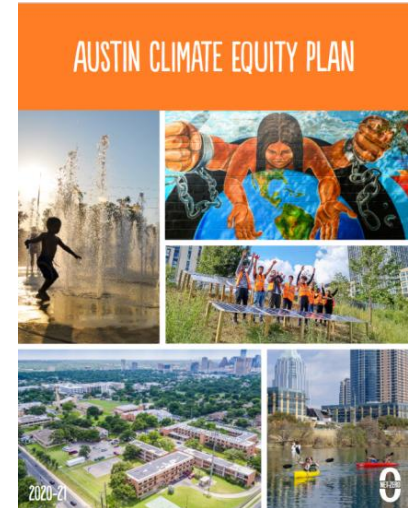
## BRISTOL'S NEW COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PLANS LAUNCHED

Learn the priorities for Bristol's communities and get involved in bringing the plans to life

Read the plans:  
[bit.ly/CCApans2](https://bit.ly/CCApans2)  
#CommunityClimateAction



### Austin



# Good practice: Bonn Climate Districts (4x)

## Diversifying public engagement in neighborhood climate action



Klimaviertel.  
Klimaviertel Beuel Mitte



Klimaviertel.  
Klimaviertel Godesberg Nord



Klimaviertel.  
Klimaviertel Medinghoven



Klimaviertel.  
Klimaviertel Bezirk Bonn



Klimaviertel.  
Konzept der Klimaviertel

- Physical premises each:
  - Led by trusted **local CSO**
  - Building on **existing social structures**
  - Design, activities, etc. based on **neighbourhood profile**
  - Loose structures → **communities can shape outcomes**

# Good practice: Bristol

## 17x Community Climate Action Plans

### BRISTOL'S NEW COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PLANS LAUNCHED

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[bristolccaplan2](#)  
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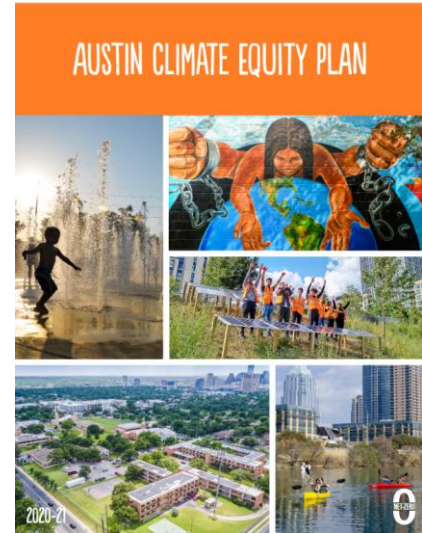
Community  
Climate Action  
by  
COMMUNITY  
FUND



- Co-created with community organizations representing different historically marginalised groups
  - Climate & social priorities across 7x themes
  - (Transport, Homes and Buildings, Energy, Food, Waste, Nature and Business, Economy, & Education).
- Outcomes:
  - Give agency to representative groups → **amplify voices**
  - Provide **evidence of diverse needs**
  - Inclusive policy development → **address blind spots**
  - **Reduce risk of citizen backlash**

# Good practice: Austin Climate Equity Plan

- Developed by engaging a network of community ambassadors/multipliers
  - Trusted local figures
  - Help identify concerns, conduct research, and support community-led initiatives
  - Strengthen geographic, demographic, and economic access to climate programs.
- Outcomes
  - Strengthens community ownership
  - Builds on community strengths
  - **Aligning climate action with equity principles**



# Thank you for your attention!

