CLIMAS

CLIMAte change citizens engagement toolbox for dealing with Societal resilience

Deliverable No. 2.3 – Report presenting the current situation in EU regions and local communities regarding their capacity to engage with end-users

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
NECP	National Energy and Climate Plan
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations

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CLIMAS Project Overview

Climate change is one of the most critical issues to tackle today as it is foreseen to have detrimental social, environmental, and economic impacts in the near future. The last climate change events, such as flooding in Germany and Belgium in both Continental and Atlantic regions, heat waves and lack of water in both Mediterranean and Boreal regions, show that the policymakers, experts, and stakeholders' actions are not enough, and a 360º citizens engagement is urgently needed. Therefore, we need to learn from the good experience in citizens' engagement in climate change action and build up citizens` supporting infrastructure for climate adaptation measures to help the 150 European regions and local communities to resist. Climate assemblies and Living labs are considered as sustainable and reasonable tools to stimulate deliberative democracy in climate policymaking.

The ambition of the CLIMAS project is to support a transformation to climate resilience by offering an innovative problem-oriented climate adoption Toolbox, co-designed together with stakeholders by applying a values-based approach, design thinking methods and citizen science mechanisms. All that will be carried out with a gender and diversity approach. It is expected that the use of the Toolbox will anticipate possible tensions, points of controversy and dilemmas vis-a-vis the adaptation to resilience. Therefore, the Toolbox aims at enabling empowerment and engagement strategies that produce a society "resilient by design". In addition, CLIMAS will include the empirical component for testing this Toolbox and formulating scientific based guidelines for policymakers on how to shift Climate Assemblies from technically based deliberations that belong to climate change experts to multi-stakeholders' deliberations based on solving the dilemmas from a bottom-up, more societal, and value-based perspective. CLIMAS outcomes will positively influence policy development and awareness raising process and offer sustainable strategies to enhance the acceptance of citizens' led decisions by policymakers.

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Executive summary

This document is part of a wider process that CLIMAS project developed in the first of year of existence to understand the conditions, barriers and opportunities in developing Climate Assemblies with the goal of understanding the EU regions and local communities' capacity to engage citizens in deciding climate change actions. The report presents the results of an analysis based on desk research, survey, and a series of interviews with representatives of public authorities in Europe. For clarity, in this document the term public authority refers to local and regional authorities – as major target group for the project, and not to national authorities.

The report organised in several sections presents the methodological approach, the results of the desk research, the results of the analysis of the survey and the interviews, together with a series of insights resulting from the analysis. The report embodies the collective effort of the main authors that have collaborated with different consortium partners to validate the line of the research, questionnaire, and the final results. This validation has been done through on-line and in-person meetings organised in different stages of the process. Moreover, a validation process of the questionnaire involved public authorities involved in the project. The collaborative process allowed to understand public authorities' capacity to engage required to build the interest of the public authorities across Europe to reply and to engage with CLIMAS project. In this regard, more than 400 persons from local and regional authorities across countries across Europe (not only European Union) have been contacted to reply to the questionnaire. Based on this, 65 public authorities replied to the survey, offering a very good base of analysis. Moreover, 11 public authorities out of 65 that have replied to the survey have been invited for a more in-depth interview.

The results of the research suggest that in orchestrating Climate Assemblies, it is pivotal for public authorities to adopt a holistic and participatory strategy to involve citizens. This approach ensures democratic legitimacy, social inclusivity, and policy efficacy, enhancing the quality of public services and fostering a sense of community ownership. However, the success of this engagement lies on the authorities' capacity to plan and execute the process, equipped with the necessary resources, expertise, regulatory guidance, and a conducive organizational culture. From the extensive research and interviews with cities that have conducted Climate Assemblies, key steps emerge: defining clear objectives; crafting an adaptable communication plan to involve citizens and disseminate outcomes; ensuring content accessibility; implementing a transparent and representative participant selection process; providing pre-assembly information sessions; forming a dedicated management team; ensuring effective facilitation during assemblies; and establishing a feedback loop to evaluate and share the Climate Assembly's findings. These measures culminate in a process that not only gathers public trust and interest but also enhances the impact and acceptability of climate policies. The European interest in stakeholder and citizen engagement underscores the necessity for public authorities to actively involve communities in crafting and executing climate strategies, a principle that the CLIMAS project will continue to advocate and refine.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to offer their gratitude and thanks to all those that have spent time to interact and provide their insights, experience and views about engagement of stakeholders and citizens. Their work and time have been greatly appreciated and hopefully, this document, offers them all an overview of how they can relate to their peers across Europe. Moreover, special thanks should be offered to all those that have invested time and effort in reviewing this document – colleagues from CLIMAS consortium.

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1. Introduction

The role of engaging and communicating with stakeholders and citizens in designing and developing local policies increased in the last decades. Moreover, the current climate crisis implies that everybody should be on board while developing solutions impacting the life of every person in the future decades. Therefore, the **public authorities' role as facilitators of the dialogue** between all stakeholders, including citizens and decision/policymakers is crucial. But do they understand this role? Do they have enough capacity in developing meaningful engagement activities? How are they organised to implement these activities? Which are the most preferred methods used in engaging? These are only few questions that CLIMAS project wants to understand in its first year of existence. As part of a wider understanding process developed early in the project of how Climate Assemblies (CA) could contribute to developing new policies, strategies and solutions for climate change, this document presents an overview of engaging capacity of public authorities in Europe.

To collect the relevant information that could address the need to understand the current engagement practice in European public authorities, a series of actions have been developed as described in **Section 2** of this document. Desk research started early in the process and collected relevant knowledge about the current climate policies and recommendations at European and international levels and how engagement could contribute to develop and implement them.

Based on the results of the desk research as presented in **Section 3** and based on the previous experience of the authors in working with public authorities in developing meaningful engagement methods with stakeholders, including citizens, a survey has been developed. This survey has been designed to collect information that will provide an overview of the engagement capacity in public authorities in Europe. Public authorities – either city authorities or regional authorities – have been targeted in this survey. More than **400 persons** have been contacted to contribute and encouraged to discuss the survey with their colleagues. In this regard, the survey became itself an instrument to engage different departments within public authority – they discussed, collected, and provided relevant information. The study is based on the responses received from 65 public authorities. The analysis of the results of the survey are presented in **Section 4**.

To deepen the understanding received through the survey, a series of interviews has been established with 11 representatives of public authorities across Europe. The results of the discussions are presented in **Section 5** in this report. It was a very intensive activity that wouldn't have been possible without the time, interest, and active participation of all those that have been interviewed. Their views, experience, insights, and examples are of immense value to understand the role of engagement in their day-to-day activity.

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This document presents a series of aspects that will be used in the development of co-creation tools that CLIMAS project will develop. A series of interaction with the cities' representatives on many occasions throughout the first year of the project, demonstrates the need to understand of how public authorities may actively contribute to organising and implementing Climate Assemblies. The results of the analysis presented in Section 4 and the conclusions of this document presented in **Section 6** will support their current activities in developing and validating the co-creation tools.

This document will also contribute to providing a good overview of the main barriers and obstacles that public authorities face in developing engagement activities. The main outputs of the project will consider these barriers and will address them, as public authorities are targeted as the main beneficiaries of these outputs. Moreover, the information collected about the preferred channels that public authorities would like to receive further knowledge about the organisation of Climate Assemblies will help shape not only the content, but the form of these final project outputs.

Finally, this document could be also considered an initial building block in creating the policy recommendations foreseen in the last part of the project. The ambition of CLIMAS is to increase the knowledge about Climate Assemblies, of how to design, organise and analyse the results of such an engagement exercise. To familiarise public authorities with the concept of Climate Assemblies, their role in tackling the climate challenges and to provide concrete tools to be used within the engagement activities is at the core of the project.

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2. Understanding the engagement capacity and practice in public authorities across Europe: research questions and approach

To understand the engagement capacity of local authorities, a series of questions have been considered, such as:

- What is the actual capacity of public authorities to engage stakeholders and citizens?
- How do they usually organise the engagement activities? What channels and tools do they use in engaging stakeholders and citizens?
- If a climate strategy/plan is developed, is it co-created with local stakeholders and citizens? Or do public authorities only consult them, as formally requested by local and national rules and regulations in-force?

To collect relevant information that could answer these research questions, a mixed-method approach has been developed drawing upon the proven practices of prior EU-funded projects. In this regard, the assessment of the capacity of local and regional authorities to involve citizens in the development and implementation of climate change policies, the research adopts a three-tiered methodology (see Figure 1).

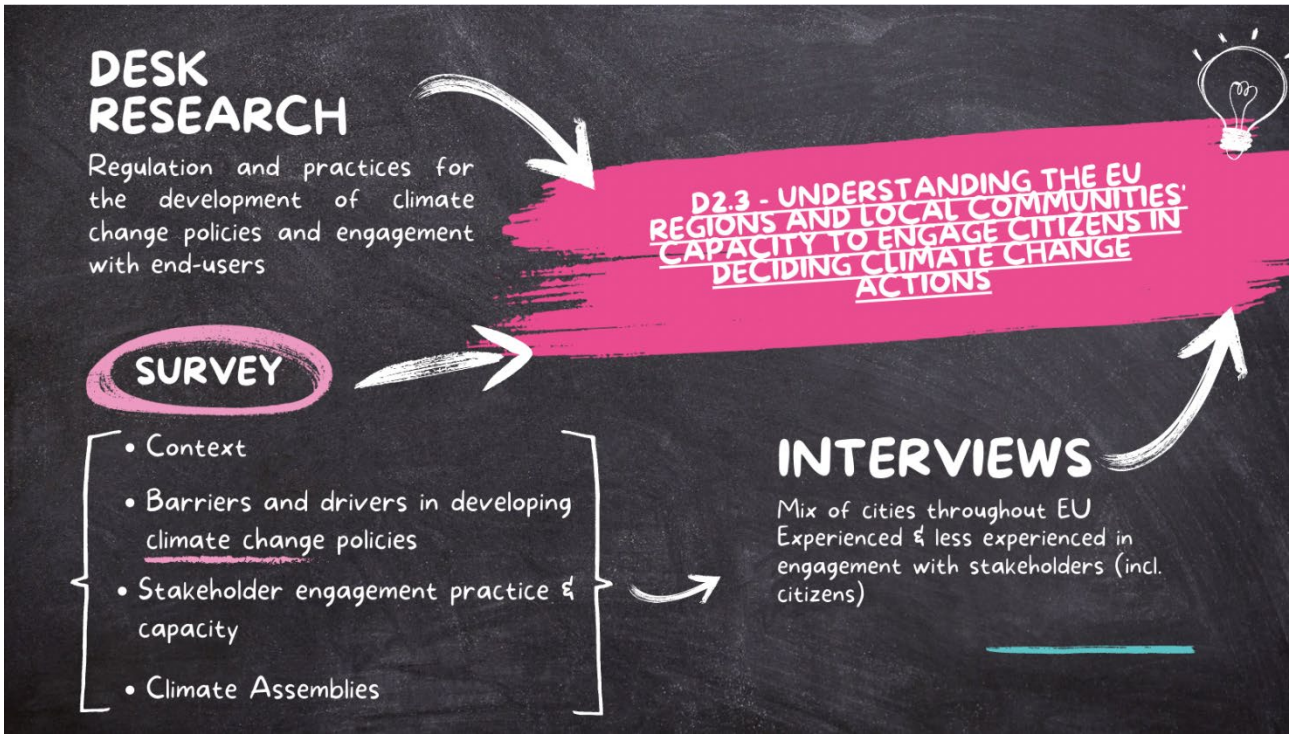

Figure 1 - Methodology for collecting information on current situation EU regions and local communities regarding their capacities to develop climate change policies and to engage with end-users (source: EIP own design)

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The techniques used are well-established in the field of research and offer a multi-faceted perspective. More specifically:

1. **Desk research** on EU and international regulatory frameworks that regulate public participation in the decision-making process related to climate change and the methodological recommendations of these institutions for conducting participatory process. As a result, a detailed account of the current landscape of climate policies—outlining objectives, identifying policy creators, and pinpointing key policy recommendations for local authorities. It also sheds light on the imperative role of public authorities, detailing when and how they should engage with stakeholders and citizens during the policy development lifecycle;
2. **Survey** conducted at the European level to collect data on the general context and the specific capacities of authorities to engage stakeholders, including citizens, in the policy- and decision-making process on climate change. The survey results complement the findings of the desk research and provides a broad-spectrum analysis of how public authorities perceive and implement engagement activities, offering valuable data on existing practices across various regions; and
3. **Qualitative interviews** conducted with selected representatives of local authorities to gain insights about their public participatory practices for developing climate change policies. The interviews provide a deeper layer of understanding, enhancing the preliminary findings of the survey with nuanced, qualitative insights.

The research started in early March 2023 and was finalised in December 2023. The diagram below (Figure 2) offers an overview of when the major research activities have been deployed.

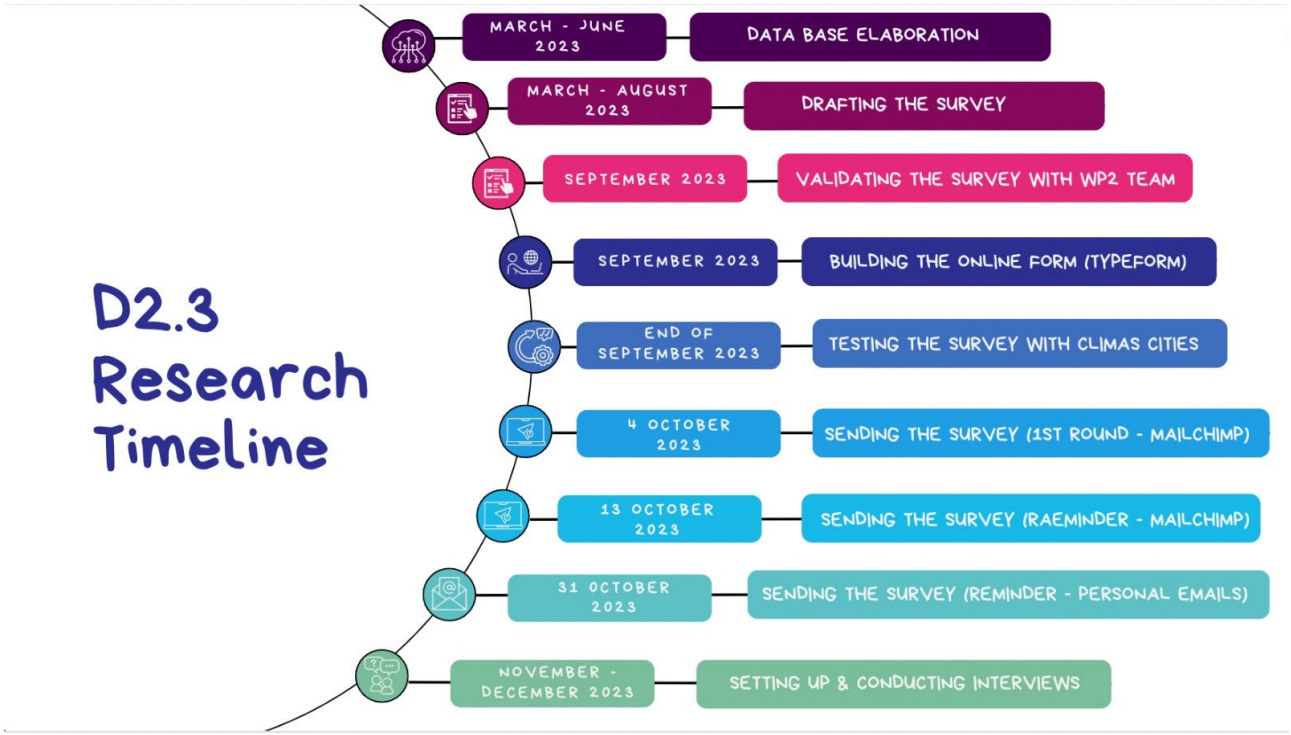

Figure 2 Research timeline

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The methodology embodies the collective effort of the main authors that have collaborated with different consortium partners to validate the research questions, questionnaires and the final results. This validation has been done through online and in-person meetings organised at different stages of the deliverable preparation process.

The results and conclusions presented in this document complements the results presented in other important CLIMAS documents, such as Deliverables D2.1 - Map of citizen climate participation strategies adapted to different cultural, social, political and environmental contexts and D2.2 - Report on bottlenecks, barriers and drivers, reaching deliberation by solving value-based problems and they also will support the activities in other WPs, mainly in shaping tools for engagement to be used in citizen assembly (WPs 3 and 4 results), but also such as Policy Recommendations (Deliverable D5.3 - Recommendations for policy makers to support climate resilient society).

2.1 Desk research on the existing regulation and practices for development of climate change policies and engagement with end-users

The development of climate change policies at local and regional levels, both for adaptation and mitigation, requires a sound methodology that considers the existing regulation and recommendations from the EU and other international organisms. Moreover, the engagement of stakeholders, including citizens, in the policy-making process is highly recommended.

The desk research initially intends to provide an overview of the existing regulations and recommendations set on by the European Union and other international organisations concerning the development and implementation of climate change policies in collaboration with stakeholders, including citizens in general. The objective of this aspect is to identify the relevant regulations and recommendations that influence climate action across various sectors and levels of governance, and to examine the extent to which they demand stakeholder participation and empowerment in the policy-making process. At various levels of governance, the objective is to identify the primary goals, guiding principles, and criteria for designing and implementing effective and consistent climate change policies.

Next, this investigation examines the methodologies and initiatives provided by international organisations and the European Union to promote stakeholder engagement, including citizen participation, in the formulation of climate change policies. Because it can improve the quality, acceptance, and implementation of policies, in addition to promoting social learning and innovation, stakeholder engagement is recognised in the literature as a crucial component of legitimate and effective governance related to climate change (Conde et al., 2005; Fiack & Kamieniecki, 2017; Furman, Bartels & Bolson, 2018; Guerra, 2023; Jetoo, 2019; Leitch et al., 2019).

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Furthermore, an examination is conducted on the present approaches taken by public authorities in involving stakeholders in policy development in the context of climate change. As administrators of numerous sectors are directly or indirectly impacted by climate change - including energy, transportation, land use, waste management, water management, health, and social services - public authorities play an essential role in tackling the issue. Therefore, in order to ensure the efficacy, efficiency, equity, and sustainability of their climate actions, they must involve their stakeholders in their planning, execution, and assessment.

In order to develop a participatory approach to climate change policy making that is tailored to the needs and expectations of various stakeholder groups, including citizens, the desk research analysis seeks to provide an evidence-based foundation on the public authorities' capacities, challenges and drivers for engagement of various actors for developing and implementation of climate change policies. The findings of this investigation are described in detail in Chapter 3.

2.2 Survey design, sample selection and administration

The survey aimed to collect information and insights from the public authorities who are in charge of designing and implementing policies related to climate change. In this regard, the survey aims to answer to the following questions:

- Are the cities/regions already developed/implementing climate change policies and how these policies were developed?
- What are the barriers and drivers that cities/regions faced or facilitate the development/implementation of climate change policies?
- What is the actual capacity and practices of public authorities to engage with stakeholders, including citizens?
- Are there any Climate Assemblies organised by the public authorities as a response to the development/implementation of climate change policies and, if not, what are the reasons behind?

Answering to these questions will help to identify the main challenges and opportunities for public authorities in addressing climate change, as well as developed tailored approaches for supporting public authorities for developing their capacity to engage with citizens and to share best practices and lessons learned across different contexts and regions.

The survey was elaborate by EIP, tested and validated with partners from CLIMAS consortium. The survey has been implemented on-line, using a web-based questionnaire (refer to Annex 1). The survey has been developed and implemented in English to facilitate the answers of the targeted audience. The questionnaire has been implemented on the Typeform platform ("Typeform," n.d.) and consists of four sections that addressed to the above mentioned questions:

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1. **The first section** included nine questions focusing on background information, such as geographical representation, population in the city/region, organisation and role of the respondent within organisation and general information about the existence of climate change policy/action plan and the way of these policies are developed;
2. **The second section** included three questions focusing on barriers and drivers that region/city faced in developing climate change policy;
3. **The third section** is focused on authority's stakeholder engagement practice and capacity. It included 13 questions that covers aspects related to the organisation of stakeholder engagement activities, type of stakeholders addressed, challenges and barriers in engagement.
4. **The fourth section** consisted of nine questions and focused on the investigation of Climate Assemblies that are organised (or not) in the respective region/city.

The questions were developed based on the previous findings of scientific literature (Fowler & Biekart, 2017; Howden, 2021; Pinto, 2023) and European research projects (Andrei et al., 2023; Cristea & Dumitrescu, 2020; Cristea & Zagan, 2020a) that analyse the issues that authorities faced in relation to the stakeholder engagement for development and implementation of diverse policies and strategies.

We acknowledge that the online survey method has some limitations which may introduce some biases in the data collection and analysis. Certain demographics or groups of authorities may be underrepresented or overrepresented. Moreover, authorities who choose to participate in the survey may have distinct characteristics compared to those who do not participate, and the survey may not reach authorities in all geographic locations, leading to uneven representation. Additionally, cities and regions have diverse characteristics, and not capturing the entire range may miss important nuances. However, this method was the most suitable for the CLIMAS research and the responsible team took counteracting measure to limit these drawbacks, based on previous experience and involving early in the process the views of the CLIMAS partners.

The major goal of implementing the survey was to reach as many public authorities across Europe as possible. In this regard, an initial list of contacts has been developed based on overlapping different databases of public authorities, such as: Mission Cities, 150 Climate Cities etc. Moreover, all partners in CLIMAS have been actively supporting the research promoting and sending the information about the survey to relevant public authorities from their contact databases.

The survey was distributed on 4th of October, 2023 using Mailchimp marketing automation and email marketing platform - Figure 3, to 450 contacts to 140 cities and regions - Figure 4, out of which 57 are Mission Cities, in more than 35 countries. For many cities/regions the survey was sent to several representatives in order to obtain at least one response per city/ region.

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Would you like to contribute to understanding the current engagement status in Europe? On behalf of the ***CLIMAS consortium***, we are contacting you with a kind request to participate in our survey and help us better understand the EU regions and local communities' capacity to engage stakeholders and citizens in deciding climate change actions.

Public authorities engage with stakeholders and citizens every day, but how do they do it? What tools do they use, and how will they include the results of the engagement sessions in their activities?

The survey we prepared helps us gather insights into these practices in order to design an innovative problem-oriented **climate adoption toolbox**. Through the research conducted and the materials that will be developed, the CLIMAS project aims to **support the take-up of the citizens' climate assemblies in EU regions/cities**.

Can we count on you to be part of promoting climate assemblies? **Your participation is very valuable** for the consortium and it will contribute to a better understanding of how cities are responding to the challenges of climate change.

Fill in the SURVEY

Figure 3 Mailchimp sent to the cities/regions as invitation for participating in CLIMAS survey

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Figure 4 Countries, regions and cities targeted through the survey (source: EIP own design, based on ("NUTS - GISCO - Eurostat," n.d.; "OpenStreetMap," 2021; "QGIS," 2021)

To increase the interest to reply to the survey, a reminder was sent on 13th of October, 2023 to those that have not responded. Moreover, a wide range of city/regional/central authorities have been directly contacted via personal emails as a follow up action to ensure a higher response rate. Moreover, the survey was disseminated during the Urban Mobility Days 2023 in Sevilla, Spain and during the Smart City Expo World Congress 2023 in Barcelona, Spain in order to reach a wider audience.

The survey has also been promoted on the CLIMAS project website and social media channels of the project, EIP's social media channels, partner's channels as well as the channels of other networks and initiatives (e.g., CIVINET Romania, REMARKABLE project, etc.) (Figure 5). CLIMAS project partners have also been requested to share this survey with their own contacts.

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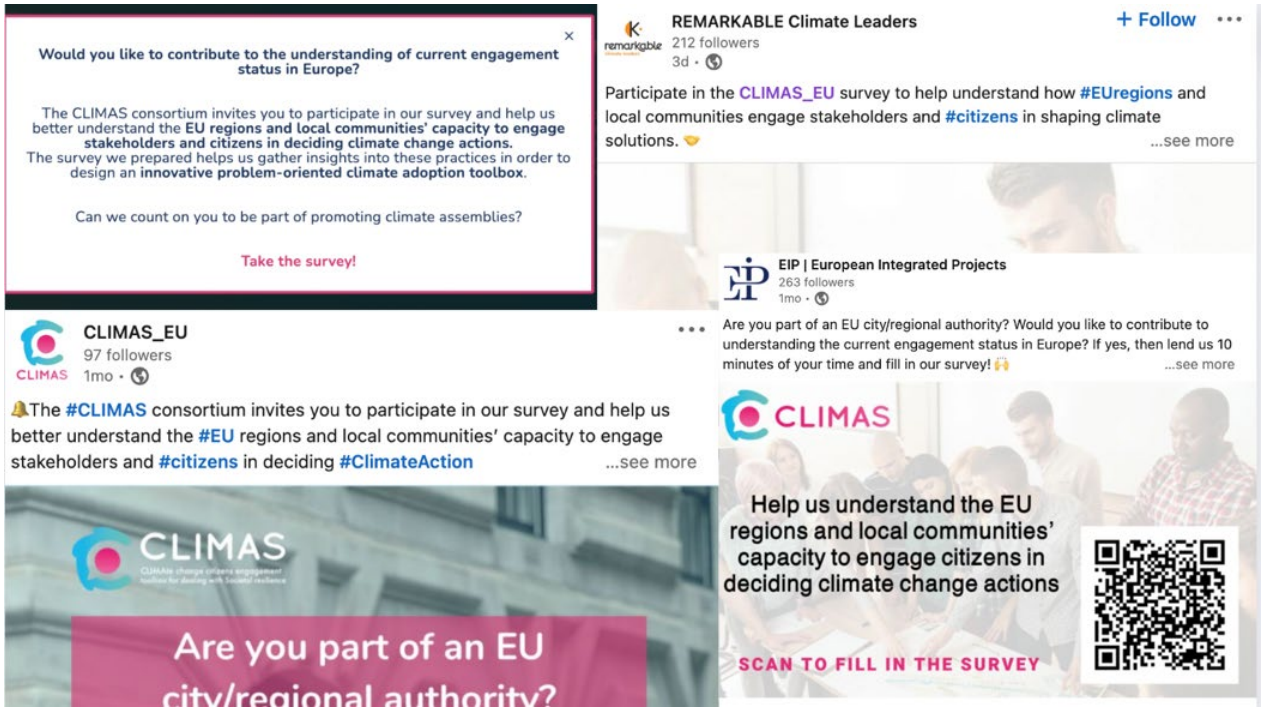

Figure 5 Website and social media promotion of the survey

Survey analysis involved in the first phase a data cleaning process (i.e., eliminating those responses that are incomplete). Secondly, the analysis of the frequencies of responses was carried out. This examination was followed by an inferential statistics analysis based on the correlation between the features of the sample (e.g., size of the population) and the responses received in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th part of the questionnaire. Such approach provided information about various patterns and characteristics of the sample. The results of the survey are presented in Chapter 4.

2.3 Interviews with local authorities' representatives

In addition to the survey, a qualitative study was carried out using interviews with representatives of public authorities from eleven European countries. The aim of the interviews was to further explore and confirm the survey findings, to identify any other gaps or challenges that needed to be addressed in developing and implementing climate change policies and stakeholder engagement. The interviews targeted the awareness related to climate change policy development, capacity to engage with the stakeholders (including citizens) and specific climate assemblies related issues (Ray Biswas & Rahman, 2023). A **topic guide** for the interview has been developed with a focus on:

- The existence and the implementation of local/regional/national policies and strategies on climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- The legal and institutional frameworks for climate change action at the local level;
- The level of readiness and resilience of the public authorities and communities to cope with the impacts of climate change;

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- The challenges and opportunities for engaging and collaborating with the community stakeholders on climate change issues;
- The mechanisms and methods for incorporating the feedback and input of the community into the policy-making process on climate change.

In order to capture a range of perspectives on engagement practices across Europe, the selection of interview participants was conducted based on principles of a high European geographical coverage and the diversity of the participants (see Figure 6). Furthermore, the selection was also based on the previous understanding of their capacity to engage from public authorities with a long-standing practice in engagement, to public authorities with low experience or to those authorities that are facing important issues (such as war – Lviv). The selected interview participants were contacted by the EIP team through direct emails.

Figure 6 Region/cities selected for the interview (source: EIP own design, based on ("NUTS - GISCO - Eurostat," n.d.; "OpenStreetMap," 2021; "QGIS," 2021)

2.4 Data management and ethics provisions during research

During the data collection tasks, the participants were informed that all personal data is collected only upon receiving their informed consent for data collection, processing, and usage, and any participant providing personal data can withdraw their participation and related data from the

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survey or interview at any time. The collection and access to personal data were restricted to the exclusive use of the project team. Whenever possible, interviews were recorded, and transcripts were produced, but access rights are confined to the exclusive use of the EIP project team for confidentiality reasons. All the qualitative and quantitative data collected within WP2, Task 2.3 were analysed according to international academic standards. The written products related to WP2, Task 2.3 will be made available on open-access platforms (such as CLIMAS websites) and on the EIP's institutional repository, which allows free access to the public.

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3. Climate change - International and EU regulatory framework and public participation process

Climate change is widely recognised as a paramount issue in today's society, necessitating concerted and efficient efforts from administrations at various levels, alongside active participation from the private sector and civil society. In order to formulate effective and resilient climate change policies, it is imperative to have an in-depth understanding of the origins and implications of climate change, together with the prospective solutions and associated agreements. The successful resolution of the matter demands the adoption of a multidisciplinary framework that integrates scientific, economic and social approaches. Additionally, a participatory approach that actively involves all relevant stakeholders (including governments, businesses, and civil society organisations) and secures public endorsement is imperative.

3.1 EU and International regulatory framework related to climate change policies and their recommendations for engagement with stakeholders, including citizens

The first treaty that empowered the stakeholders, including citizens engagement in environmental decision making process is represented by the **UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters** ("Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters," 1999a), ("Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters," 1999b). Also known as the **Aarhus Convention,** this international environmental agreement grants the general public specific rights related to the access to information, involvement in public decision-making processes, and a right for justice in matters concerning the environment. The Article 6 of this Convention emphasizes the importance of public participation in the climate change decision-making and calls for a collaborative, country-driven, interdisciplinary, and culturally sensitive action that strengthens the role of traditional, intergenerational, and gender-sensitive knowledge and people's participation in decision-making.

The **Paris Agreement** ("The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC," n.d.), which was ratified in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, emphasises the commitments taken up by countries to address the issue of climate change. Nevertheless, it acknowledges the significance of public involvement and the participation of non-governmental entities, including citizens, in addressing the climate change.

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** ("Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs," n.d.) as the worldwide action plan to be implemented. 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 169 sub-targets have been established with the

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objective of bringing an end to poverty, protecting the earth, and ensuring peace and prosperity for all people by the year 2030. A number of SDG's address issues of climate change:

- **SDG13: Climate Action** focuses on taking immediate action to prevent climate change and the implications it has. The 13th Sustainable Development Goal acknowledges that climate change is an issue shared by all people and that it calls for the highest possible level of collaboration and participation from all international stakeholders and countries. Consequently, SDG13 asks for increasing public knowledge, education, and capacity-building regarding climate change. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of boosting the resilience and adaptive capacity of people and ecosystems to disasters and hazards associated with climate change. As an additional point of interest, SDG13 encourages industrialized nations to offer financial, technological, and technical assistance to developing nations in order to facilitate the implementation of their nationally defined commitments under the Paris Agreement and to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. The goal of SDG13 is to enable citizens to take ownership of their own development and to contribute to the global efforts taken to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is intended to be achieved by encouraging public participation in climate action (Guerra, 2023).SDG11 aspires to make cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable and to improve the capacity for participative, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning and management in every country. In view of this, it is essential that local communities be involved in the process of formulating and putting into action adaption strategies and measures that are aimed at addressing the particular vulnerabilities and dangers that urban areas face in relation to climate change. In addition to fostering social cohesiveness, empowerment, and ownership, participatory approaches can be helpful in ensuring that local knowledge, preferences, and requirements are taken into consideration.

- The **SDG5 Gender Equality** aims to achieve gender equality women participation for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. It acknowledges the fact that women are frequently disproportionately affected by issues such as poverty, inequality, violence, and environmental degradation, and that they have an important part to play in the process of achieving sustainable development. This includes ensuring that their rights, interests, and needs are effectively reflected and addressed in climate policies, plans, and programmes, as well as boosting the voice of women in climate action.

The European Union has implemented a range of climate change regulations that place significant emphasis on the involvement and engagement of the stakeholders, including citizens. These regulations are a component of the wider initiatives aimed at engaging citizens, stakeholders, and communities in the decision-making procedures related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The European Union has established several pivotal regulations that advocate for the incorporation of public participation in climate action efforts.

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Among all the EU regulations, at the moment, the **European Green Deal** (Union, 2019) takes an important place . The European Green Deal encompasses a comprehensive strategic framework that defines the European Union's consistent commitment to achieving climate neutrality by the year 2050. It highlights the significance of involving citizens, stakeholders, and communities in the process of transitioning towards a green and sustainable economy as well.

Through the **European Climate Law**, the objective that was outlined in the European Green Deal, which is for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by the year 2050, has been formalized (Union, 2021a). It emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders, including the public, in the planning and decision-making processes related to climate policies. In order to facilitate the exchange of best practises and to identify actions that will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of this Regulation, the Commission has a responsibility to facilitate a process that is both inclusive and accessible at all levels, including the national, regional, and local levels, as well as with social partners, academic institutions, the business community, citizens, and civil society. It is the responsibility of the Commission to make use of all relevant mechanisms, including the **European Climate Pact** (Directorate-General for Climate Action (European Commission), 2020), in order to encourage participation from citizens, social partners, and stakeholders, as well as to promote dialogue and the dissemination of information based on scientific research regarding climate change and its social and gender equality implications.

The *Climate Pact*, which is an integral component of the European Green Deal, aims to actively promote and facilitate the engagement of citizens in various climate-related initiatives. Its objective is to engage citizens and communities, enabling their active involvement in the process of transitioning towards a future that is both sustainable and resilient to climate change.

The *European Climate Pact* encompasses several crucial elements related to the active involvement of citizens. It promotes participation by encouraging the individuals, communities, businesses, organisations, and local authorities to actively engage in concrete efforts aimed at addressing the issue of climate change. The document acknowledges the significance of collaborative efforts across various levels of society in order to achieve climate objectives. The objective is to create a collective effort aimed at addressing climate change, with a particular focus on fostering social cohesion through community-driven initiatives. These efforts seek to enhance both our overall well-being and the quality of our immediate environment. It provides a Platform to facilitate the connection, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among individuals and organisations involved in climate initiatives. This platform functions as an important hub for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of best practices. Through an inclusive approach, the European Climate Pact seeks to engage individuals from diverse demographic backgrounds and geographical locations, acknowledging the significance of diversity and inclusivity in tackling climate challenges. It fosters the active participation of individuals in local initiatives aimed at advancing climate-related goals, by promoting Local Action through the recognition of communities' essential role in fostering sustainable practices. Moreover, The Pact aims to promote awareness regarding climate change

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and emphasizing the necessity for collaborative efforts. through dissemination of information to the general public and enhance their understanding of the various consequences of climate change, as well as to highlight potential paths for making positive steps towards addressing this global issue.

Although the European Climate Pact does not have legal effectiveness, it functions as a forum for fostering participation, cooperation, and a collective sense of responsibility among citizens. The objective of the Pact is to encourage a societal movement that aligns with and enhances government-led initiatives for fighting climate change, by promoting active engagement of individuals and communities in climate-related initiatives.

The *New EU Adaptation Strategy* (Union, 2021b), adopted in February 2021, establishes a long-term vision for the European Union to achieve climate resilience by 2050, that it is entirely adapted to the inevitable impacts of climate change ("EU Adaptation Strategy—English," n.d.). This strategy seeks to strengthen the EU's and the world's adaptive capacity while reducing vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change. places a strong emphasis on public private partnerships. While the strategy itself doesn't include specific legal mandates for citizen engagement, it highlights the importance of involving a broad range of stakeholders in the development, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation measures.

The *Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation (EU) 2018/1999* (Union, 2023a), establishes a framework for the governance of the Energy Union and climate action. It includes provisions for Member States to develop national energy and climate plans, that establish their objectives, policies, and strategies in order to meet the European Union's climate and energy goals for 2030. It is expected that Member States will be responsible for ensuring that the formulation of NECPs incorporates engagement and dialogue with stakeholders across various levels. The formulation of these strategies shall be facilitated by the promotion of active involvement with stakeholders, including the general public. The objective is to guarantee a comprehensive and diverse contribution to the overarching goal for a low-carbon future, while highlighting the significance of transparency and inclusivity in the governance procedure. Furthermore, this regulation calls for the implementation of a multi-level governance framework, acknowledging the significance of various layers of government (national, regional, local) and the active participation of stakeholders at these levels in the achievement of energy and climate goals. The public participation is also emphasised through the *Directive (EU) 2023/2413* (Union, 2023b) that amended this Regulation.

At the European level there are several Directives and Regulations related to the greenhouse gas emissions or that deals with environmental impact of diverse projects that encourages Member states to involve stakeholders, including citizens in the process development and implementation of diverse policies and measures. Is worth mentioning here the *Regulation (EU) 2023/857* (Union, 2023c) on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions, *Directive (EU) 2018/410* (Union, 2018) on emissions trading, that encourages Member States to engage the public and stakeholders in the development of national allocation plans and in monitoring and reporting processes, and

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Directive (EU) 2014/52/EU – EIA Directive (Union, 2022), that requires public participation in the EIA process, ensuring that the public has the opportunity to express its views on projects that may significantly affect the environment. It is worth mentioning the *Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making* (Committee of Ministers, 2017) which are intended to facilitate and strengthen the involvement of citizens, NGOs, and the civil society in political decision-making.

In conclusion, it has been observed that one of the primary goals of the European Union is to increase the engagement of the general public in the process of developing and implementing policies that are related to climate change and its consequences. The EU recognises that climate change is a complex and urgent matter that requires the collaboration and participation of all relevant parties, including, but not limited to, citizens, civil society organisations, businesses, and public authorities. In its efforts to combat climate change, the EU is working to establish a culture of dialogue and engagement that will ensure the legitimacy, transparency, and accountability of its actions. In addition to this, the EU acts to empower and encourage the general population to act and support the transition towards a society that is resilient, low-carbon, and sustainable.

The public participation into decision-making process is not defined by the above-mentioned regulations, but rather left to the discretion of each country. However, at national level consultation of public on any policy decision or action is legally required in many countries. Public authorities need to organise public consultation to adopt new policies and strategies to be implemented locally. Therefore, different methods and tools can be used to involve stakeholders, including citizens, in the policy-making process. For example, one method is to organise public consultations where citizens can express their opinions and preferences on a specific policy issue. Another method is to create participatory platforms where citizens can interact with policy makers and experts and provide feedback and suggestions. Some of these methods and tools that have been developed by international organisations and EU institutions and are presented in the following subchapter.

3.2 Recommendations from EU and international organisation for the participatory policy-making development process

The practise of participatory governance in the formulation of climate change policies requires the active involvement of diverse stakeholders, citizens' engagement and deliberative democracy in the process of decision-making. Both the European Union (EU) and international organisations advocate for the use of many instruments and approaches to enhance participatory governance in the formulation of climate change policies.

The European Commission provides several guides to citizen engagement, offering practical insights into engaging citizens in policymaking and decision processes:

- *Citizen engagement Manual* ("DIY manual_v1_September2023.pdf | Powered by Box," n.d.) - this manual provides guidance and best practices for regional and local authorities who want to involve citizens in the design and implementation of climate adaptation actions. It

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is based on the experience and lessons learned from the EU Mission Implementation Platform for Adaptation to Climate Change (MIP4Adapt), a network of cities and regions that are committed to enhancing their resilience and sustainability in the face of climate change.

- The manual is intended to be a practical and flexible resource that can be adapted to different contexts and needs. It also includes examples and case studies from the MIP4Adapt partners and other relevant initiatives. The manual aims to inspire and support regional and local authorities to foster a culture of participation and collaboration among their citizens, stakeholders and partners, and to co-create innovative and effective solutions for climate adaptation. The *Civil participation in decision- making toolkit* (Centre of Expertise for Good Governance & ISIG, 2020) provides a comprehensive framework for guiding local authorities and practitioners in the development, design and implementation of context-specific strategies in a systematic approach, with an enhanced citizen engagement process.
- *EU Participatory Democracy Toolbox* (Oleksii, Volodymyr, Aurika, & Daryna, 2020) provides practical resources for implementing participatory democracy. It includes guides, case studies, and tools for engaging citizens at different levels of governance.

Besides the EU, other international organisation, such as the OECD and the UN have also developed various guidelines to assist national and local authorities in improving the public involvement in the decision-making process. These guidelines provide principles, standards and best practices for designing and implementing participatory mechanisms that can enhance the quality, legitimacy and accountability of public policies. They also address the challenges and opportunities of engaging with diverse and often marginalized stakeholders in complex and dynamic contexts.

- The *OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation, and Public Participation in Policy-Making* (OECD, 2001) serves as a comprehensive guide aimed at government officials in both OECD Member and non-member nations. Its purpose is to provide practical advice and guidance to practitioners in the field. The guidebook provides practical guidance for enhancing the relationship between government and citizens. It includes a concise overview of fundamental concepts and principles, together with tangible instances of successful implementation, tools (including emerging information and communication technologies), and practical insights. The methodology and activities delineated in this guidebook serve to bolster and enhance the established structures of democracy, reinforcing the democratic process.
- The *OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes* ("OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes | en | OECD," n.d.) serve as an extensive handbook intended for governments or institutions seeking to develop citizen participation processes. The guidelines outline a comprehensive framework consisting of ten steps in order that cover the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of a citizen participation process. Additionally, the guidelines explore eight distinct methodologies that can be employed to engage citizens in the process, including information and data dissemination, open meetings, public consultations, open innovation, citizen science, civic monitoring,

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participatory budgeting, and representative deliberative processes. The guidelines are exemplified with examples, along with relevant guidance based on information gathered by the OECD. In the end, a set of nine guiding principles is provided to ensure the reliability and effectiveness of these processes.

- The *UN Handbook on Effective National to Local Governance for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation* (UN DESA/DPIDG/UNPOG, 2023) is a comprehensive manual designed specifically for the use by policymakers representing OECD Member and non-member countries. The handbook provides practical guidance on enhancing government-citizen relations through a concise overview of fundamental principles, practical examples of effective implementation, tools (including emerging information and communication technologies), and practical advice. The approach and activities outlined in this manual strengthen the democratic process and enhance formal democratic institutions.

The documents mentioned above highlight the need for engaging citizens in governance processes. They offer insights and guidance on how to involve the public in policy-making activities. They present guidelines, principles, and strategies to improve citizen participation and engagement. Their aim is to provide a framework for governments, organizations, and practitioners to effectively engage citizens. The methodologies described are adaptable to different contexts, providing general principles that can be tailored based on specific governance structures, policy areas, and levels of government. Inclusivity is a key theme, encouraging the involvement of diverse stakeholders in governance processes. This inclusivity may include various demographics, social groups, and perspectives.

However, notable differences exist relating geographical focus or level of detail. The EU Participatory Democracy Toolbox is designed specifically for the European Union, considering the distinct environment and structures of the EU governance. The other documents, such as the Citizen Engagement Manual, OECD Handbook, OECD Guidelines and UN Handbook, have a broader scope and may be implemented on a worldwide scale. The OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation procedures provide more comprehensive guidance especially tailored to citizen participation methods, elaborating on the general concepts presented in the OECD Handbook. The Civil Participation in Decision-Making Toolkit shows a practical emphasis on providing specific tools and procedures for citizen involvement in decision-making process. The UN Handbook on Effective National to Local Governance for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation is the only document that addresses on climate change governance, including guidance on the coordination of initiatives across all levels of government, from the national to the local level.

3.3 Public authorities' central role in engaging stakeholders and common practices for public participation in addressing climate changes issues

European cities have been at the forefront of efforts to combat climate change. Many cities have established ambitious climate action plans and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. These policies often align with national and international

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goals, such as the Paris Agreement ("The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC," n.d.). A recent study (Herold et al., 2019) conducted by the European Parliament highlights the need for the EU to accelerate greenhouse gas mitigation, increase climate adaptation, mobilize new financial resources, and create inclusive, climate resilient societies.

A common challenge for many public authorities is ensuring effective stakeholder engagement. These must oversee a large area, comprehend how stakeholder relationships are changing, and manage stakeholders who may be working towards the same objective but may not be using the same tools or procedures.

The COVID-19 pandemic made these difficulties much more severe. Since then, more challenges have surfaced, including the extreme demand on health services, persistent inflationary pressures, the accelerated energy transition due to the conflict in Ukraine, and so forth. Even while this conversation is crucial for directing local activity and preserving social cohesion, public authorities may not have as much time or resources to devote to interacting with stakeholders as they once did.

Based on their daily experiences, citizens and businesses can offer insightful feedback on the viability and real-world ramifications of laws and regulations. Therefore, it's critical to provide the public with the means to influence, contest, and modify regulations in order to improve their formulation and application. It reinforces democratic principles and increases public confidence in the administration.

Public authorities ought to explain interested parties how they have influenced the creation of regulations. A crucial component of active stakeholder involvement is replying to comments that are made. Higher levels of compliance are the consequence of such feedback since it fosters a sense of shared ownership and confidence in any resulting regulations. The way in which policy makers handle the input provided by stakeholders can have a positive or negative effect on their decision to take part in future consultations.

The overall objective of stakeholder engagement is to gather, in a holistic way, input from multiple perspectives and experiences, identify the needs and expectations of target groups, analyze the possible implications and risks of the policy, empowering well-informed and collaborative decision-making processes. Additionally, engaging with stakeholders helps in the early identification of issues, enabling early innovative solution finding and risk mitigation. Stakeholder engagement outputs are critical in steering policy development since they provide significant insights and evidence to develop objectives, targets, and approaches. They must be systematically and transparently incorporated into the policy cycle. Fostering open and transparent engagement with stakeholders, while actively involving them in the decision-making process, is instrumental in cultivating trust and credibility. This trust and credibility are paramount for the success of governance and public policies initiatives.

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The selection of appropriate method(s) relies on several factors, including the objectives of the engagement, the characteristics of the stakeholders, the resources at hand, and the intended level of participation. Frequently, a mix of approaches is used to ensure a thorough involvement of stakeholders. Furthermore, constant and recurrent involvement is essential for building and maintaining effective relationships with stakeholders. Table 1 presents the most frequently used methods for stakeholder engagement.

Table 1 Common methods for stakeholder engagement

Method	Explanation	Level of involvement of citizens
Interviews	Used to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individuals on specific matters. Interviews as a qualitative method are believed to provide a more in-depth understanding of a certain topic than would be obtained from purely quantitative methods.	Consult
Collaborative research	Approach to research that integrates stakeholders in stages in order to enhance the relevance of the work to the end users.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate
Public Meetings	Engage a wide audience in information sharing and discussion. They can be used to increase awareness of an issue or proposal, and can be a starting point for, or an ongoing means of engaging, further public involvement.	Consult, Involve
Advisory Forums	Mechanism for exchanging information, pooling knowledge and advancing decision-making processes. The Forum can discuss challenges, review progress, debate on new practices, launch of new initiatives and the development of partnerships.	Consult, Involve, Collaborate
Workshops	Shorter, smaller educational training-type event that is designed to enhance the skills of attendees from a particular industry or area of interest. The purpose of a workshop is to create a space in which a group of people can meet to discuss questions, brainstorm ideas, identify problems, make decisions and develop solutions.	Involve, Collaborate
Focus Group	Research technique used to collect data through group interaction. The group comprises a small number of carefully selected people who discuss a given topic. Focus groups are a type of qualitative research.	Involve, Collaborate, Integrate
World Cafes	Simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. World Café can be modified to meet a wide variety of needs. Specifics of context, numbers, purpose, location, and other circumstances are factored into each event's unique invitation, design, and question choice.	Involve, Collaborate
Conference	Formal meetings gathering people with shared interests. They usually involve presentations, exhibitions, featured speakers, problem-solving sessions, and consultation sessions. A conference theme will usually be broader than the topic of a workshop, which tends to focus on a more specific and hands-on topic.	Consult, Involve

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Method	Explanation	Level of involvement of citizens
Public Presentation	The process of communicating with a large group of audience with an intention of informing them about something. Public presentations help you communicate directly with your target audience at a single time.	Consult
Digital engagement	An online format where participants communicate, share ideas, and work together. Members are a subset of stakeholders that have voluntarily joined the community, making them more likely to be interested in the topic.	Consult, Involve

While there is no singular universal definition, public participation is primarily viewed as an umbrella term incorporating various forms of interaction with people, from informing and listening through dialogue, debate, and analysis, to implementing jointly agreed solutions. Research in land-use planning forms the foundation for much contemporary attention to such participation in public policy. Table 2 presents various levels of participation, particularly in terms of the intensity of engagement with publics.

Table 2 Common methods used for public participation

Method	Explanation	Example of tools	Level of involvement of citizens (consult, involve, collaborate, integrate)
Deliberative events (Climate Assemblies)	Demonstrates the active role that citizens can play in decision making and developing a consensus-based approach to tackling difficult issues, such as climate change.	deliberative polls,	consult & involve
Participatory budgeting	Members of a community deliberate on the allocation and distribution of public resources.		involve, collaborate & integrate
Constructive dialogue	Empowering citizens and giving them the agency to effectuate change.	citizen panels, citizen juries, citizen advisory committees,	consult & involve
Citizen's science	Citizens can be empowered to recognize that their voice can make a difference		involve, collaborate & integrate
Digital engagement	Show what climate action means to communities and help local governments strategize and direct policy interventions to ensure robust and citizen-centric urban planning, solid waste management, transportation and energy consumption.	crowdsourcing, social media, deliberative polls, digital storytelling,	consult, involve & collaborate

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Public participation can play an important part in efforts to achieve climate neutrality. However, in order to achieve the desired effects, engagement needs to be carried out in a way that is meaningful—both for the citizens and the authorities involved. There is general agreement in academic literature of the benefits of public participation in environmental decision making (Chilvers, Pallett, Hargreaves, Stephanides, & Waller, 2022; Hügel & Davies, 2020; Kiss et al., 2022; Mititelu, 2019; Wagner & Lima, 2023). This entails increased community acceptance and support for climate measures, surfacing new insights based on local knowledge and expertise, or inducing social learning. Moreover, it has been determined that effective and meaningful participation is crucial to ensuring that policies are designed in a socially just manner that respects the rights of communities and builds resilience.

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4. Insights from EU cities and regions on engagement practices focusing on climate change policies

4.1 General overview of the survey sample

A total of 65 responses were received to the survey and 64 were validated for the present analysis. The cities/regions that responded to the questionnaire are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Cities/Region responses to the survey (source: EIP own design, based on ("NUTS - GISCO - Eurostat," n.d.; "OpenStreetMap," 2021; "QGIS," 2021)

The general features of the sample are presented in Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11. As shown in Figure 8, 75,0% of the respondents represents city authority, while 25,0% represents region. The data in Figure 9 provides a distribution of respondents based on the population size of the cities they represent. The lowest represented are cities, regions with less than 50.000 inhabitants and the highest representation are from cities with a population between 100.001 and 500.000 with 26,6%. Nevertheless, cities/regions with populations between 50.001 and 1.000.000 have relatively balanced distribution.

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The sample is mainly composed of respondents with project management roles (53,1%), suggesting a strong presence of individuals involved in project management-related activities (Figure 11). Executive staff and Policy makers are well-represented, with 21,9% and respectively 12,5%, indicating a diverse group with influence and decision-making responsibilities. Decision-makers are a minority, with only 3,1%. "Others" category is represented by CEO, Head of division or officers in charge – 9,4%.

In terms of "Gender" (Figure 10), it is observed a balanced representation of both male and female respondents – 45,3% females and 54,7% males, with slightly more males than female.

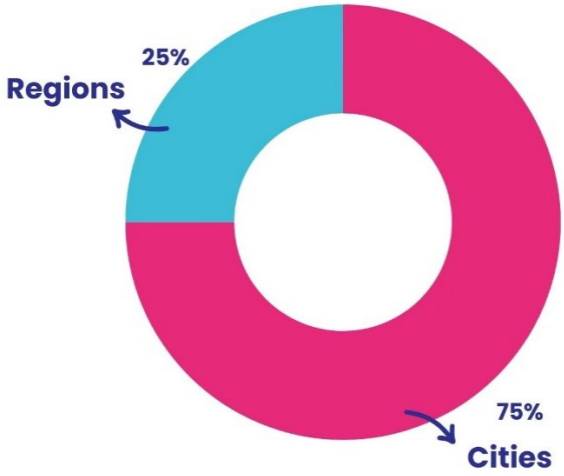

Figure 8 Type of authorities responded to the survey

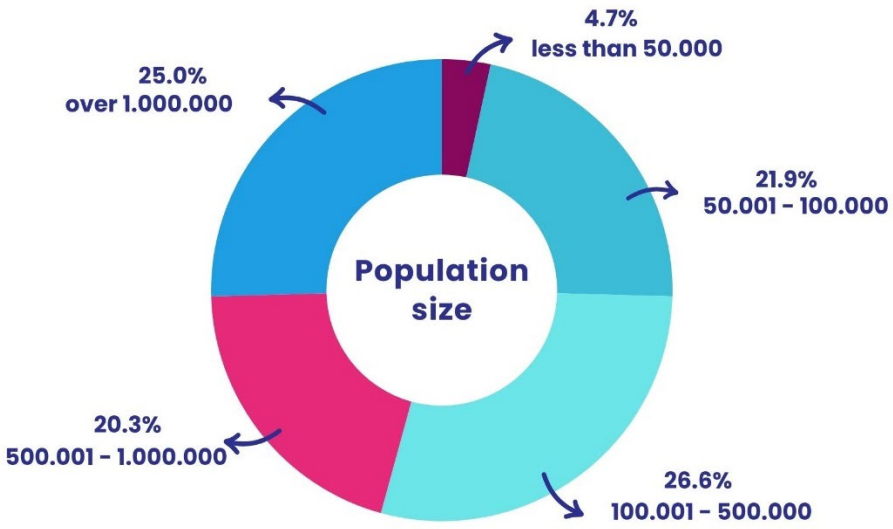

Figure 9 Population of the city/regions surveyed

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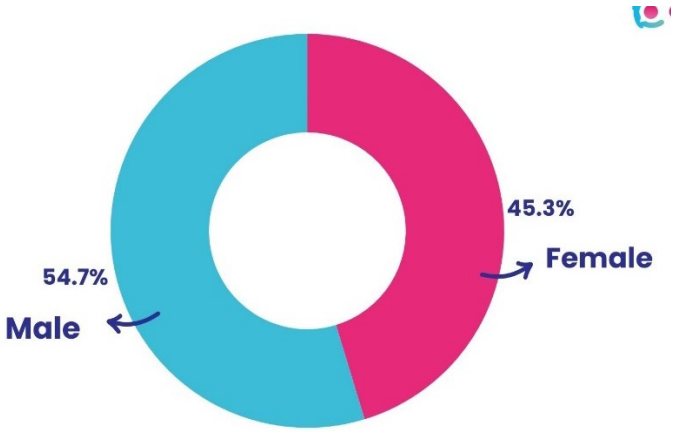

Figure 10 Respondents characteristics: gender

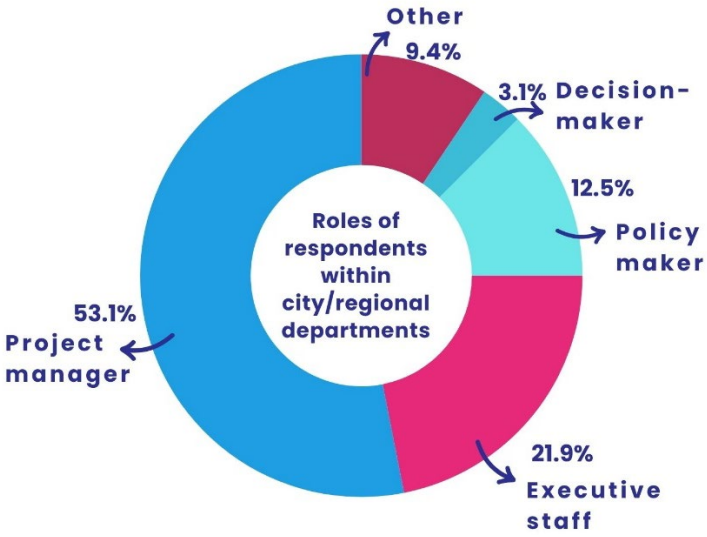

Figure 11 Respondents characteristics: roles

However, given the small number of region representatives responses (Figure 12), the analysis will focus on the population size groups. The percentages represent the proportion of responses in each category of city/region population size, indicating the frequency of appearance of responses.

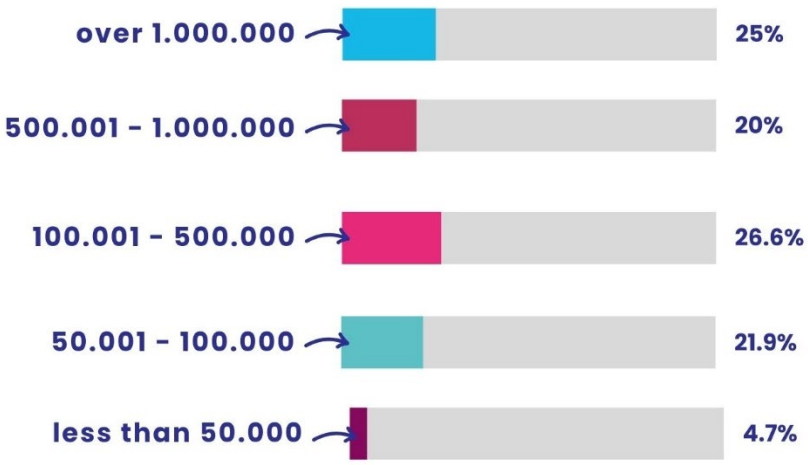

Figure 12 Distribution of responses by cities/regions and population size

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4.2 Climate change policy related aspects

The adoption of a climate change strategy represents an anticipatory and strategic approach that not only tackles environmental challenges but also contributes to social, economic, and public health objectives. It means a commitment to a long-term development and an understanding of the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic systems.

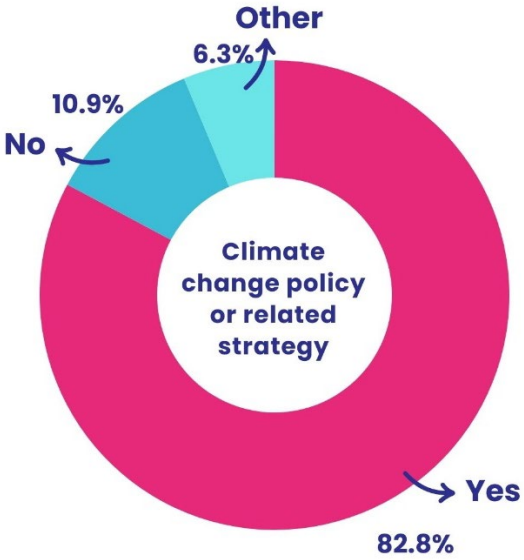

Figure 13 Existence of climate change policy (or other related strategies) in the cities/regions involved in survey

A significant percentage (82.8%) of the survey participants declared having a climate change policy or other related strategies in place (Figure 13). This indicates that the significance of addressing climate change at the city/regional level is widely recognised. Only 10,9% respondents said no, suggesting that they do not have any climate change policy or strategy in place. Several cities/regions (6,3%) mentioned that climate change related issues are incorporated into other policies (mobility strategy) or sectorial strategies, that may suggest a cross-cutting approach to climate action, involving multiple sectors and levels of governance. Moreover, one city mentioned that it has a Climate City Contract.

Looking at the size of the city/region (Figure 14) and the existence of climate or other related policies we can observe some interesting patterns and trends. Firstly, larger cities/regions are more likely to have a climate change policy (or related) than smaller ones. All cities/regions with more than 50.000 inhabitants reported that have a climate policy, while only 33,3% of the cities with less than 50.000 inhabitants did so. Secondly, there is some variation within the larger cities/regions category, as the percentage of cities/regions with climate policy decreases slightly as the population size increases. This suggests that there may be some factors other than population size that influence the adoption of climate change policies by cities and that smaller cities may face more challenges or barriers in developing and implementing climate change policies than larger ones.

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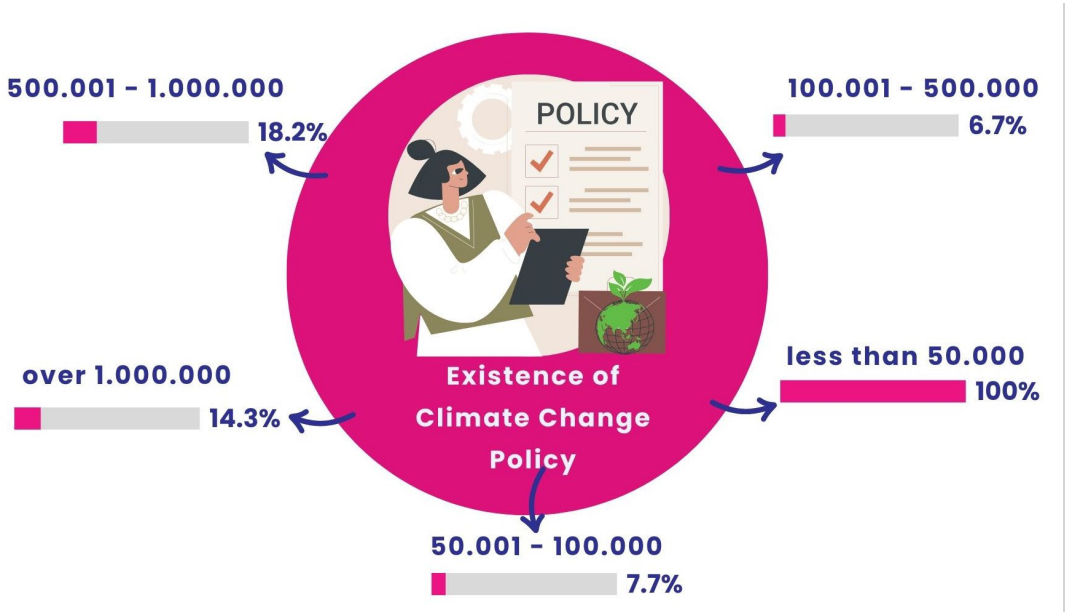

Figure 14 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and the existence of Climate change or other relates policies

Cities/regions consider various approaches to developing climate change policies, involving in-house efforts, input from experts, and engagement with stakeholders, including citizens (Figure 15). The majority of the responses (50,0%) indicated that the policy was developed by city officials with input from experts, stakeholders and citizens. This suggests that there is a high level of participation and collaboration in the policy-making process and commitment to inclusive and well-informed policy development. Moreover, it highlights a balanced and comprehensive approach to policy development, involving city officials, experts, and stakeholders.

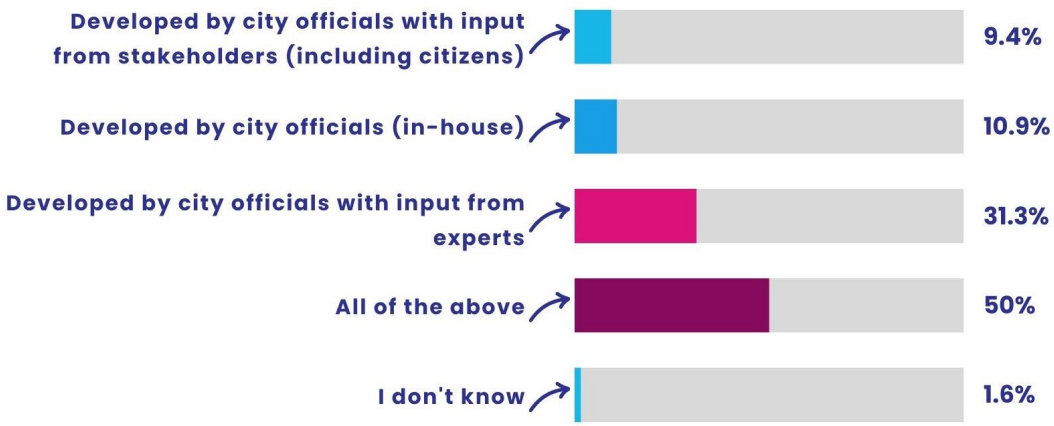

Figure 15 Development of the Climate Change Policies (multiple answers)

The second most common answer (31,3%) was that the policy was developed by city officials with input from experts. This implies that the policy is based on scientific evidence and expertise but may lack the perspectives and interests of other stakeholders' groups, including citizens. Only 10,9% of the respondents said that the policy was developed by city officials, in-house. These answers may emphasize the role of internal expertise and capacity to formulate strategies based on in-house knowledge, but it may also suggest a low degree of transparency and accountability in the policy-

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making process. Unfortunately, just a small percentage of the respondents declared that the climate change policies were developed with input from stakeholders only (9,4%), which indicate that just a few authorities acknowledge the significance of involving a broader category of stakeholders, including general public, in the development of climate change policies.

Only 1,6% of respondents said that they did not know who developed the policy which may indicate a lack of clarity or awareness about the specific processes or governance at local level. One city/region reported that there is no policy regarding climate change, and projects are developed spontaneously. This suggests an ad-hoc approach to climate-related initiatives and adaptive strategies based on local contexts and priorities. Another city/region mentioned that climate change strategies are integrated into other policies. This suggests a comprehensive strategy in which climate considerations are integrated into wider policy frameworks.

Interesting information could be obtained when analysing the different approaches for developing climate policies considering the size of the city/region (Figure 16). It is observed that most cities/regions (except for those with less than 50.000 inhabitants) have involved some external actors in their policy development process, either experts or stakeholders or both. This suggests that cities/regions recognize the need for collaboration and consultation when dealing with complex issues related to climate change. Moreover, the larger the city/region population, the more likely it is that the city/region has adopted a comprehensive and inclusive approach to climate policy development. This may reflect that the greater diversity and complexity of larger cities/regions require more input and feedback from different perspectives and interests. The percentage of cities/regions that have developed their climate change policy by city officials (in-house) without any external input is very low (less than 20% for all cases), except for the smallest one (less than 50.000 inhabitants). This may imply that smaller cities/regions have more autonomy and flexibility to design their own policies, or that they lack the resources and capacity to consult with experts and stakeholders.

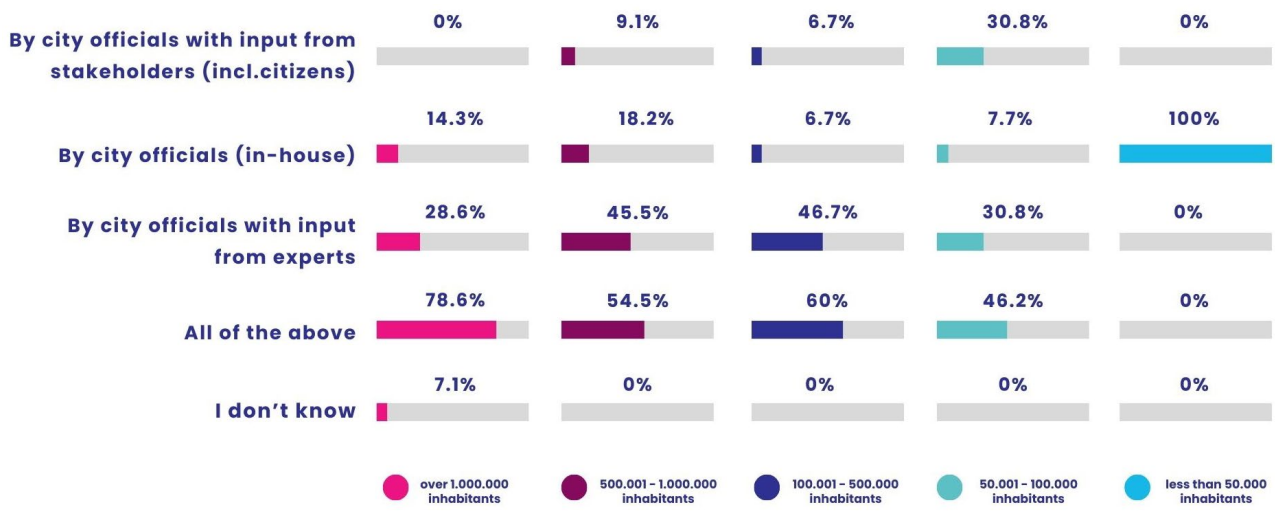

Figure 16 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and the procedures applied for developing climate change policies

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As indicated in Figure 17 the currently used approach for developing climate change policies is formulating plans and strategies for achieving objectives and targets (82,8%) related to the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and the improvement of climate adaptation resilience. This indicates that public authorities and stakeholders are highly committed and aware of the need to address climate change and align their policies with the objectives of the EU Green Deal (Union, 2019).

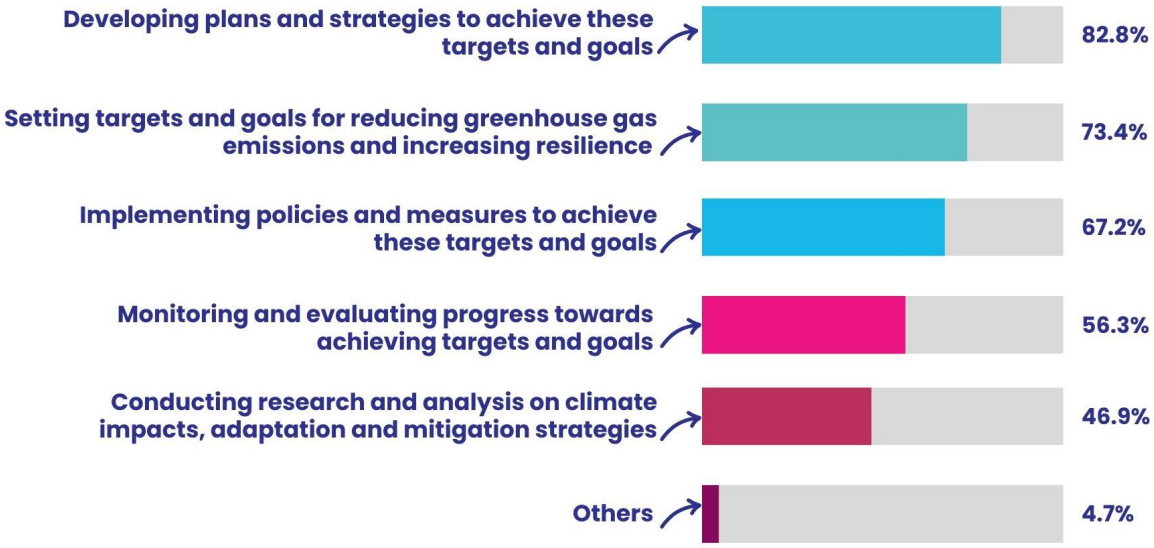

Figure 17 The current approach to developing climate change policies (multiple answers)

For 73,4% of cases, the second most frequent approach for developing climate change policies is to set goals and targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as improving climate adaptation resilience. 67,2 % of responses indicate that implementing policies and measures for developing climate change policies is the third preferred strategy. This shows the ability and willingness of local actors to effectively implement their strategies and plans into tangible interventions and actions that improve the environment and for the benefit of the general public.

Monitoring and evaluating progress in the direction of developing climate change policies comes as the fourth most prevalent approach, accounting for 56,3% of the total number of responses. This demonstrates that local actors are interested in learning from their successes and failures and evaluating how effective and efficient their policies and measures are.

46,9 % of the total amount of responses indicates that the research and analysis are used for developing climate change policies, this being the fifth most prevalent method. This indicates that local actors have the capacity and motivation to produce and disseminate evidence and knowledge regarding the present and forthcoming barriers and benefits associated with climate change in order to guide their decision-making.

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"Other" is the least frequent approach, as indicated by 4,7% of the responses. This category comprises examples of novel or alternative methodologies for formulating climate change policies. For instance, the Climate City Contract engages public authorities, businesses, citizens, civil society, and businesses in a collaborative effort to establish a shared vision and strategic plan that will guide the local government towards climate neutrality.

The variety of approaches indicates a comprehensive and integrated approach to climate policy development, involving research, goal setting, planning, implementation, and evaluation. However, the approaches may vary significantly considering the size of the city/region (Figure 18). Smaller cities (less than 50.000 inhabitants) are more likely to have a comprehensive approach to climate change, with high percentages of setting target and goals, developing plans and strategies, and implementing policies and measures. However, they seem to lag behind in conducting research and analysis and monitoring and evaluating progress and impact, which is essential for learning and improvement.

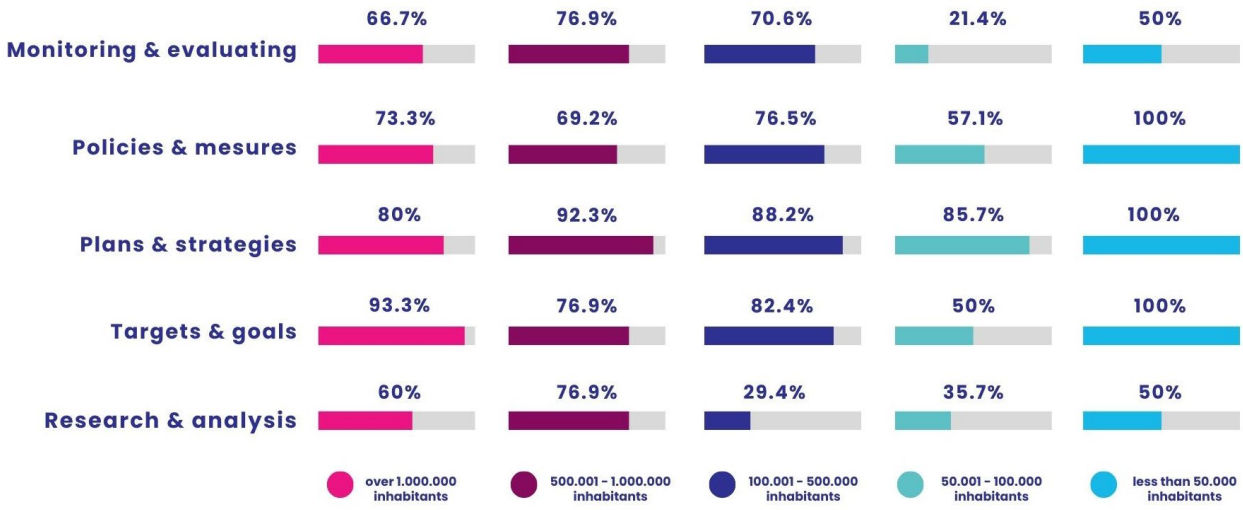

Figure 18 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and approaches to develop climate change policies

Medium-sized cities/regions (between 50.000 and 500.000 inhabitants) have a more varied approach to climate change, with some gaps and weaknesses in certain areas. For example, in less than 40% of the cities/regions conducting research and analysis is considered. Moreover, only 21% of the cities/regions with 50.001-100.00 inhabitants are considering monitoring and evaluation activities. This may suggest a possible lack of capacity or resources to carry out these activities.

It can be noticed that larger cities/regions have a more balanced approach for development of climate change policies, with relatively high percentages in all areas. This suggests that larger cities may have more resources and capacity to implement and manage climate change policies.

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In general, it can be concluded that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to develop climate change policies and that different cities/regions may have different strengths and weaknesses depending on their size, context, and priorities.

Public authorities make use of various measures to ensure the inclusivity of their climate change policies, including equity assessments, engagement with marginalized communities, incorporation of diverse perspectives, and addressing social and environmental justice issues (Figure 19). The highest reported approach is "Incorporating diverse perspectives and voices" (68,8%), indicating a strong commitment to considering a broad range of viewpoints and experiences in policy development. This suggests that there is a recognition of the importance of listening to different stakeholders and groups that are affected by climate change and its solutions.

Figure 19 How cities/regions ensure that the climate change policies are inclusive (multiple answers)

The second most common response was addressing “Social and environmental justice” issues, with 51,6% of participants selecting this option. This indicates that there is a concern for the fairness and equity of the impacts and benefits of climate change policies, especially for those who are most vulnerable and marginalized. “Conducting equity assessments and analyses” was chose by 39,1% of the survey participants which reflects commitment to evaluating policies through an equity lens, considering potential disparities and impacts on different population groups. This means that there may exist a practice of evaluating and measuring the potential and actual effects of climate change policies on different groups and communities and identifying any gaps or barriers that need to be addressed.

Engaging with marginalized and vulnerable communities (37,5%), the fourth most common response chosen and reflects a focus on actively involving communities that may be disproportionately affected by climate change. This implies that there is an effort to involve and empower those who are often excluded or ignored in the policy-making process, and to understand their needs and preferences.

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The "Others" responses reflect a variety of perspectives and experiences, as well as some uncertainty and scepticism about the inclusiveness related actions on the development of climate change policies.

Even more, we can observe some differentiation on strategies adopted by the cities/regions to ensure the inclusiveness of the climate policies (Figure 20).

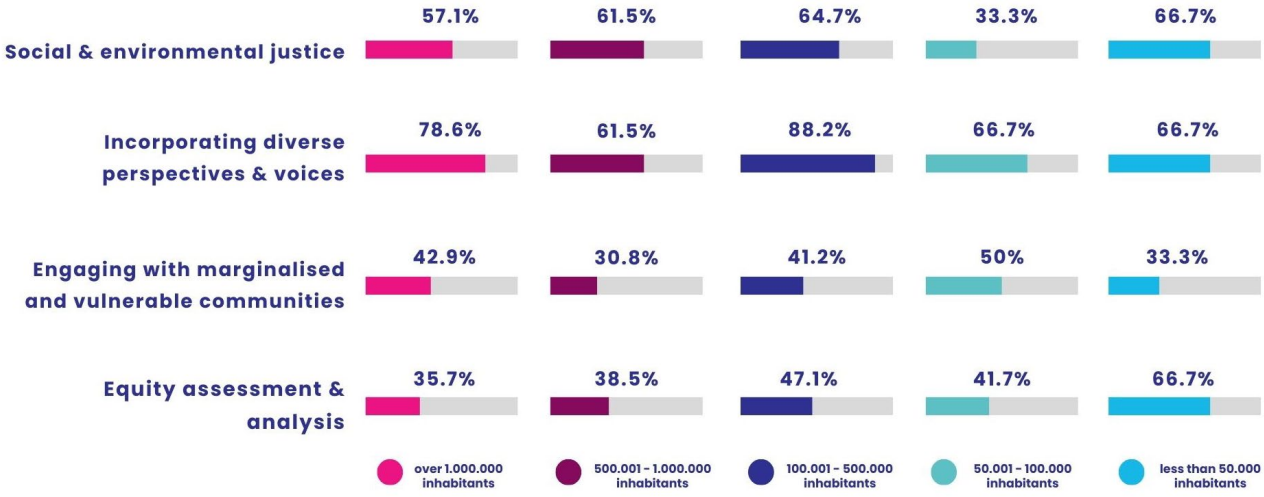

Figure 20 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and methodologies for ensuring the inclusivity of climate change policies

The results reveal some interesting patterns: the smallest population size cities/regions (less than 50.000) have the highest percentage of using equity assessments and analyses and social and environmental justice (66,7%), while the largest population size cities/regions have the lowest percentage of using these methods (35,7% and 57,1%, respectively). On the other hand, the largest population size cities/regions have the highest percentage of incorporating diverse perspectives and voices (78,6%), while the smallest population size cities/regions have the lowest percentage of using this method (66,7%). Engaging with marginalized and vulnerable communities seems to be more common among medium-sized populations (50.001 – 500.000) than among very small or very large population size cities/regions.

Public authorities face diverse barriers in developing climate change policies, including regulatory, organizational, financial, technical, institutional, and social (Figure 21).

The main barrier (73,4%) is considered the organisational barrier. This indicates that many authorities face challenges in enacting climate change policies within their own structures and processes. Furthermore, it may indicate a lack of coordination, cooperation, and communication among the various departments involved in climate policymaking.

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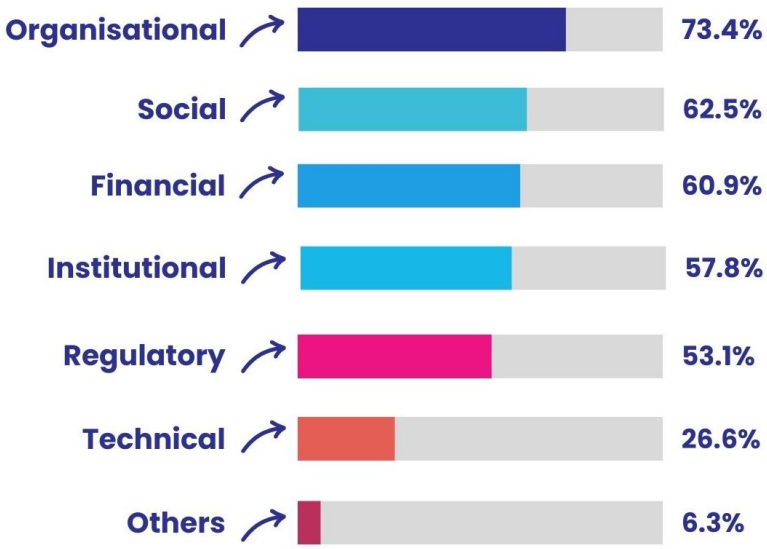

Figure 21 Nature of the main barriers faced in developing climate change policies by the cities/regions responded to the survey (multiple answers)

Social (62,5%) and financial (60,9%) barriers are also highly mentioned. The high costs of mitigation and adaptation measures, a lack of funding sources, and the uncertainty of future benefits constitute the main financial obstacles. Social barriers may include reluctance to change, a lack of awareness, and insufficient stakeholder and public participation in climate policy processes. This shows that the difficulty of implementing climate change policy is related to economic and social factors rather than scientific and technological concerns.

The institutional barrier ranks fourth in frequency of answers, accounting for 57,8%. This suggests that developing and implementing the legal and political structures that underpin climate change policies is difficult.

Regulation stands as the fifth most prevalent barrier, getting 53,1%. This represents the difficulty of complying with and adapting to existing and emerging legislation and requirements governing climate change policy, such as guidelines, regulations, protocols, and standards.

With 26,6%, the sixth common barrier is technical, but at a great distance from the other barriers. This highlights limitations in accessing and using scientific and technological knowledge and instruments, such as data, models, methodologies, and innovations, that enable implementation of climate change strategies.

Other barriers include various factors such as acceptance and contractual commitments One authority highlighted the impact of war and related challenges, which made climate change policies a non-priority. This reflects the influence of broader geopolitical contexts on local policy priorities.

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Structuring the barriers for developing climate policies, there are some interesting findings related to the population size of the cities/regions (Figure 22). The most common barriers declared are organizational, financial and social, as they have the highest percentages across all city sizes and the least common barrier is technical, with less than 36% for all cities/regions.

The results also indicate that there is some variation in the perception of barriers depending on the city/region size: regulatory barriers are more prevalent in larger cities/regions (500.000-1.000.000 inhabitants) than in medium size ones (100.001-500.000 inhabitants), while financial barriers are more prevalent in medium-sized cities/regions than in larger or smaller ones. Highest percentage for regulatory barriers is also faced by smaller size cities/regions.

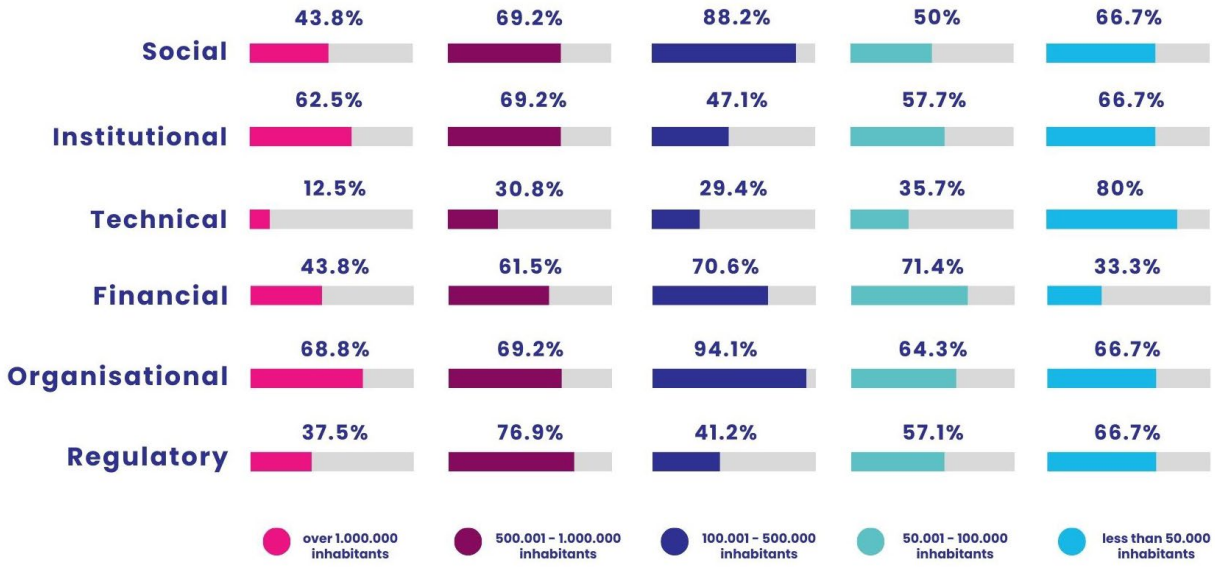

Figure 22 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and the main barriers faced while developing climate change policies

These results provide useful insights into the complex obstacles that authorities encounter when formulating policies for addressing climate change. It demonstrates the significance of responding to organisational, financial, social and regulatory dimensions. Tailored approaches and joint actions are essential in overcoming these barriers.

According to the survey results (Figure 23), the most important challenge to the implementation of climate change policies for public authorities is the lack of public acceptance (51.6%). This suggests that public authorities face challenges in fostering awareness of the importance and advantages of implementing climate change policies, as well as overcoming potential resistance or disagreements from citizens or stakeholders. In relation to the results obtained for lack of political acceptance challenge (31.3%), it is indicated that securing support and commitment from the public and political leaders, whether at the local, national, or international level, is critical for effective climate change policy implementation.

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The second most important challenge is the lack of clearly defined motivation/trigger (48,4%), which correlating with (and followed by) "Difficulty to understand data-based evidence" – 45,3%, indicate that public authorities may not have a clear vision/goal for their climate change policies or may not have a strong incentive or pressure to act on climate change and there is a possibility that public authorities do not have sufficient capacity for using data to inform their decision-making and policy design. This could affect their decision-making process and their usage of empirical information. This is substantiated by the 40,6% of the responders which declared that public authorities' lack of knowledge and skills. This suggests that public authorities also encounter problems in incorporation personnel with various professional skills that could address better the implementation of climate change policies.

Figure 23 Main challenges to the implementation of climate change policies (multiple answers)

More than 40% of respondents mention challenges related to poor evidence base. This emphasises the significance of efficient data collection and analysis and suggests that some authorities may have difficulty in acquiring or generating appropriate data and information to implement their climate policies.

Only 31,3% of the respondents mentioned that the lack of political acceptance is a challenge. This highlights the importance of securing political endorsement and commitment for climate measures, as the effectiveness of policies frequently relies on the support of political leaders. This could be correlated with the "Difficulty to Define the Right Moment for Launching the Policy" – 28,1%, that could be connected with the dynamic nature of political environment, external factors and necessity to coordinate actions with other policies

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Challenges such as unclear responsibilities within the organization (43,8%), unclear legal framework (26,6%), and unclear relation to strategic framework (18,8%) emphasise the organisational and regulatory difficulties that might hinder climate change policy implementation.

Some respondents mentioned other challenges, such as financial constraints, lack of cooperation, lobby of industry, national policies that undermine local action, and underestimation of the urgency of climate change.

The challenges faced by cities/regions in climate change policy implementation vary across city/region sizes, indicating the need for tailored strategies (Figure 24). Lack of public acceptance and lack of political acceptance are the most common challenges across all city sizes, with more than 50% of respondents choosing them for each category. This suggests that there is a need for more awareness-raising and communication campaigns to inform and engage citizens and decision-makers about the benefits and urgency of climate action.

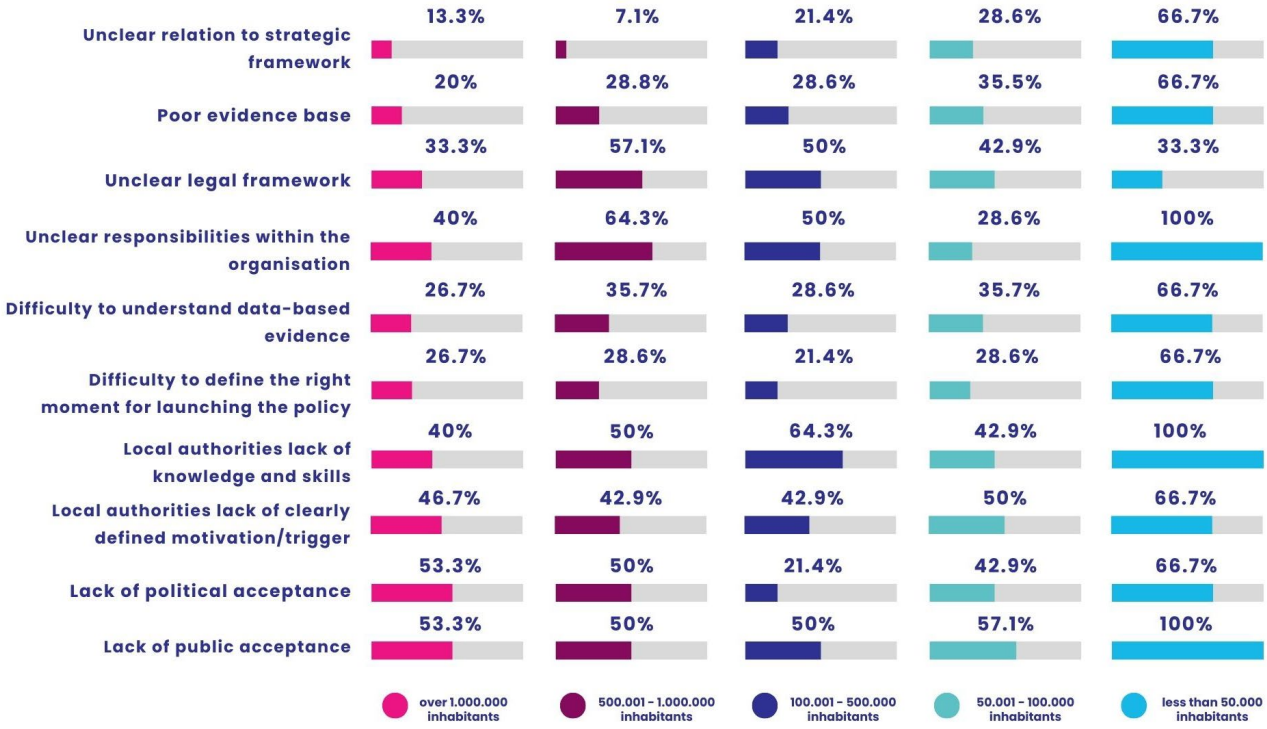

Figure 24 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and the main challenges to the implementation of climate change policies

Public authorities' lack of knowledge and skills is another significant challenge, especially for smaller and medium sized cities/regions, indicating that there is a gap in the capacity and expertise of local staff to design and implement effective climate policies and measures.

Difficulty to define the right moment for launching the policy is a challenge that decreases with city/region size, from 66,7% for small cities/regions to 26,7% for cities with over 1.000.000 inhabitants. This may reflect the different levels of readiness and preparedness of public authorities

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to act on climate change, as well as the availability of resources and opportunities for acting in this regard.

Unclear responsibilities within the organization and unclear legal framework are challenges that increase with city size, from 28,6% for cities with 50.001 – 100.000 inhabitants to 64,3% for cities with 500.001 – 1.000.000 inhabitants. This may indicate that larger cities face more complexity and fragmentation in their governance structures and regulatory frameworks, which can hamper the coordination and implementation of climate policies.

Poor evidence base and unclear relation to strategic framework are challenges that are relatively low across all city sizes, with less than 40% and 30% respectively of respondents choosing them for each category. This may suggest that public authorities have access to sufficient data and information to support their climate actions, and that they have a clear vision and direction for their climate strategies.

Many of the above-mentioned challenges are interconnected, requiring a comprehensive approach. For example, addressing public and political acceptance may also involve improving public authorities' knowledge and skills. Additionally, challenges related to timing and data understanding underline the importance of strategic communication and well-timed policy interventions.

The findings indicate (Figure 25) that the main driver motivating the formulation of climate change policy is regulatory driver (65,6%), representing an important amount of the overall responses. This implies that the decisions of authorities are primarily guided by the legal framework and regulations that govern their activities, requiring them to mitigate the emissions of greenhouse gases and adapt to the consequences of climate change. Regulatory drivers cover a range of factors, such as national, EU, or international legislation, standards, agreements, or incentives.

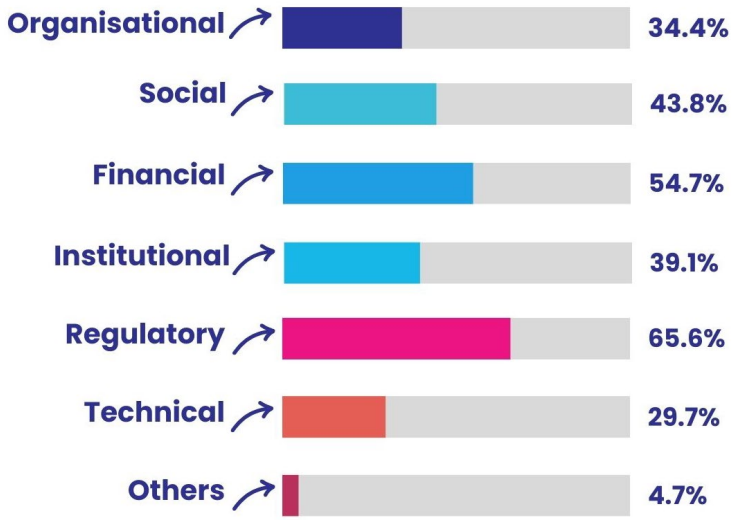

Figure 25 The nature of the main drivers for developing climate change policies (multiple answers)

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The financial driver emerges as the second most significant factor, accounting for 54,7%. This suggests that the authorities are also driven by the economic incentives or limitations associated with the development and implementation of climate change policies. Financial drivers are significant factors that determine the allocation of resources and encompass several aspects such as market opportunities, competitiveness, cost reduction, risk management, and access to diverse funding sources.

The third most important driver is social (43,8%). This means that the authorities are also influenced by the expectations and demands of the society in which they act. This shows the role of public awareness, engagement and participation in shaping climate policies. Social drivers play a crucial role in promoting the acceptance and legitimacy of climate action, as well as fostering collective action and facilitating behavioural change.

The fourth most important driver is institutional (39.1%). This shows that the authorities are also affected by the formal and informal rules and norms that shape their behaviour and interactions. Furthermore, this emphasises the significance of the institutional structures and procedures that facilitate or constrain the development of climate policy, including governance systems, policy frameworks, planning tools, and monitoring mechanisms. Institutional factors have a crucial role in promoting coherence, consistency, and efficient implementation of climate policy across all levels and sectors.

The organisational driver stands fifth in terms of importance, accounting for 34,4%. This suggests that the authorities are also driven by the internal factors, which have an impact on the development of climate policies. These internal factors include leadership, vision, strategy, culture, and capacity. Organisational drivers encompass several factors like as leadership, innovation and reputation. These drivers can help to create a supportive environment and foster collaboration and coordination among different actors and sectors involved in climate action.

The technical driver ranks as the sixth significant driver (29,7%). This demonstrates that the public authorities are also driven by the availability and quality of the technologies and tools that enable them to develop climate change policies, but they are not so important and definitory. Technical drivers encompass several elements such as data, information, knowledge, methodologies, and best practices. These drivers play a crucial role in enhancing the sustainability and efficiency of climate policies, while also promoting innovation and facilitating the gathering of new knowledge.

Other several drivers are also identified: cooperation in EU-funded projects and cooperation with stakeholders, that underscores the importance of collaborative initiatives and external partnerships. Additionally, the local political mindset is considered a driver, this suggesting that the political orientation and priorities of local leaders play a crucial role in shaping climate policy. Some authorities considered the political pressure as driver, emphasizing the influence of external and internal political dynamics on climate policy development.

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Analysing the responses by the population size typology (Figure 26), it is observed that regulatory drivers are the most common across all city sizes, ranging from 57,1% to 100%, suggesting that cities/regions are mainly motivated by legal obligations and standards to address climate change issues. Other most common driver is social, which is especially high for cities/regions with less than 50,000 inhabitants (100%) and over one million inhabitants (56,3%), indicating that public awareness and demand for climate action are also important factors for many cities. Financial drivers gain prominence in mid-sized (76,9%) and larger cities/regions, reflecting the resource-intensive nature of climate change initiatives.

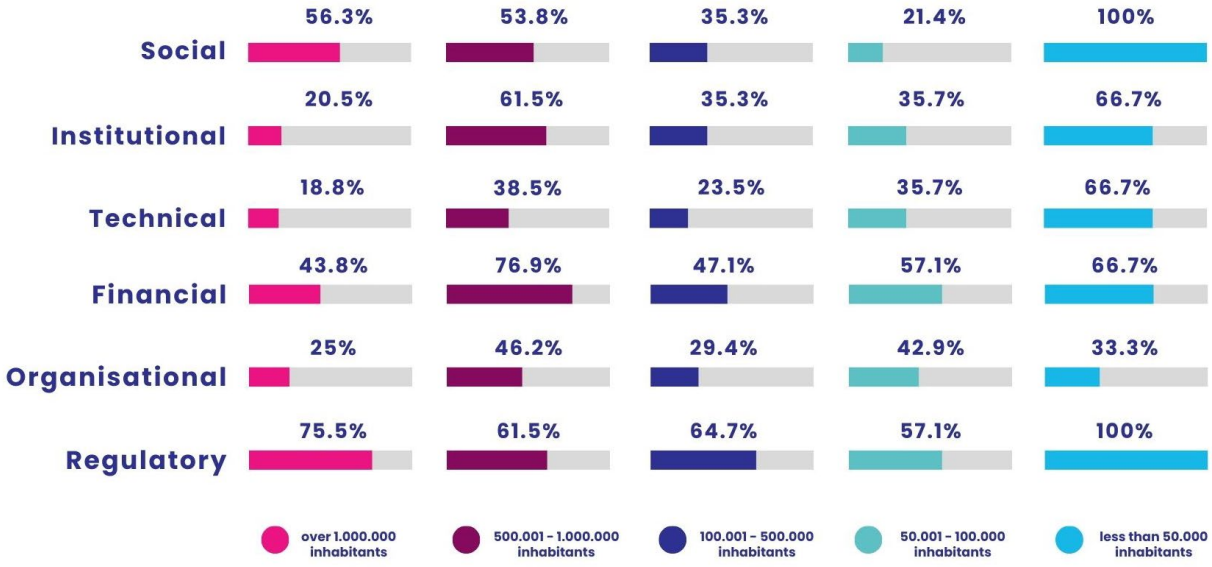

Figure 26 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and the main drivers for developing climate change policies

Technical drivers, institutional drivers, and organisational drivers all play significant roles across different city/region sizes, indicating the need for more coordination and communication between different levels of governance and society.

The responses indicate that the drivers behind climate policy development are diverse, spanning a range of regulatory, financial, social, organisational, technical, and institutional variables. The acknowledgement of cooperation in projects funded by the European Union and coordination with relevant stakeholders underlines the significance of external partnerships and collaborative initiatives in advancing climate policies. Additionally, it is observed that that different types of cities/regions may face different challenges and opportunities when implementing climate change policies, and that they may need different types of support and incentives from higher levels of government or other stakeholders

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4.3 Existing city authorities' capacity to engage with stakeholders and end-users

A climate policy that reflects the needs and preferences of those who are the most affected by it can be more meaningful, successful, and inclusive if stakeholders are actively engaged in its from vision definition to the implementation and assessment. This engagement ensures diverse community perspectives and knowledge are considered, enhances policy legitimacy, fosters community ownership, and helps identify local climate priorities and vulnerabilities. It also contributes to building community resilience through informed participation, raising awareness about climate change issues, identifying conflicts of interest, and facilitating collaborative problem-solving. Inclusive engagement promotes social equity, builds trust between authorities and communities, enhances compliance with regulations, and exploits the community creativity, fostering adaptability and innovative solutions.

According to the survey findings, an important percentage of participants (81,3%) indicated that their respective cities/regions have actively involved stakeholders in the development of climate change policy (Figure 27). This demonstrates that many public authorities recognise the significance of inclusive and participatory processes for developing climate change policies, which is a positive indication. Moreover, the large number of cities or areas that have engaged with stakeholders indicates the acknowledged importance of including various perspectives in the formulation of climate policies.

Nevertheless, a certain number of the participants indicated that their city or region has never involved stakeholders in the development of climate change policies (9,4%), suggesting that further improvement is necessary. This implies that certain local administrations have neglected to take advantage of the benefits of engaging stakeholders, presumably resulting in the adoption of policies that are not in accordance with the interests and expectations of their citizens.

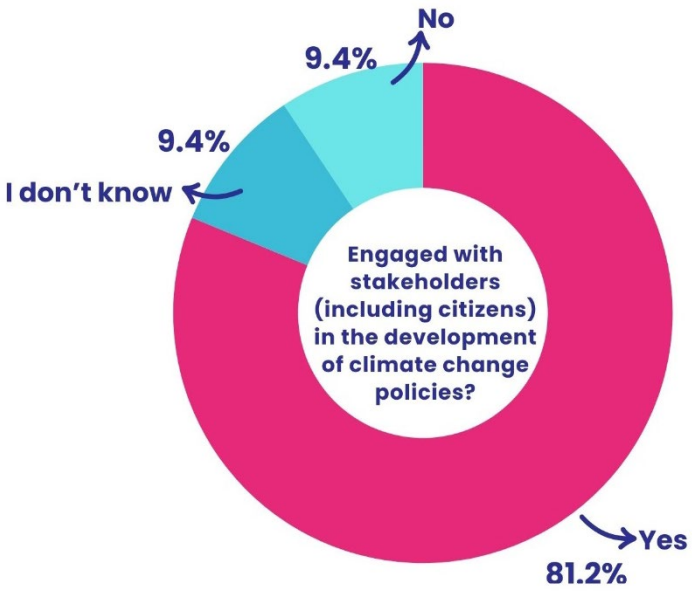

Figure 27 Engagement with stakeholders by city/region ever (including citizens) in the development of climate change policies

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Similarly, 9,4% of respondents were unsure as to whether or not their city or region has ever engaged stakeholders in the development of climate change policies. The finding suggests an issue in the transparency and communication practices between public authorities and their stakeholders, which could compromise trust and accountability.

The majority of respondents across all city sizes have engaged with stakeholders (including citizens) in the development of climate change policies (Figure 28). Engagement is particularly high in larger cities (93,8%) and mid-sized cities (with a variation from 71% to 85,7%) demonstrating a commitment to involving diverse perspectives in policy development. Smaller cities (33,3%) show lower engagement percentages, indicating potential variations in resource availability or awareness.

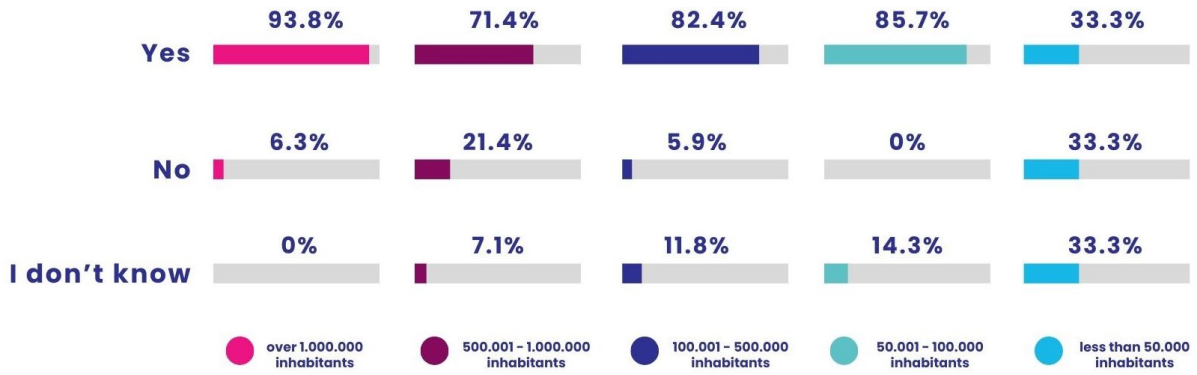

Figure 28 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and engagement with stakeholders (including citizens) in the development of climate change policies

Moreover, the cities/regions which declared having a climate policy in place, it can observe that all have engaged in a high degree with stakeholders (including citizens) in the development of climate change policies, with more than 84,5% (Figure 29).

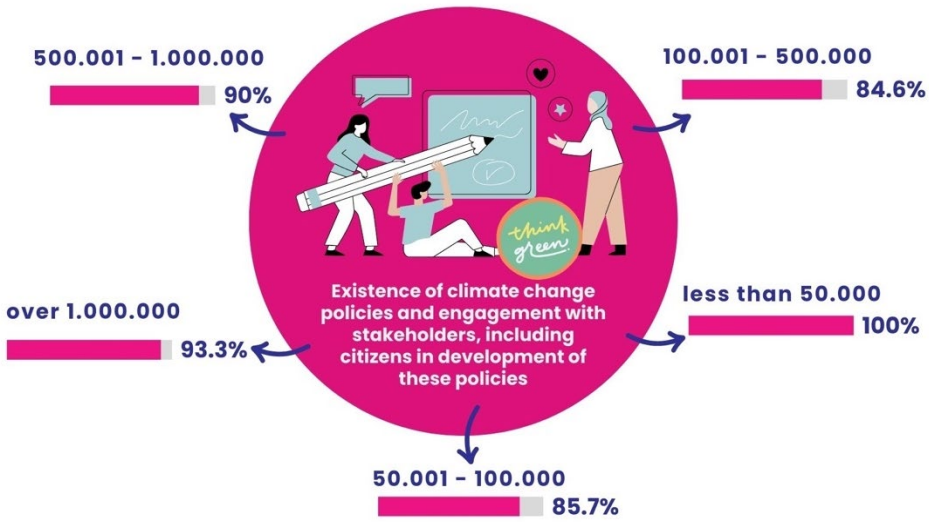

Figure 29 Cities/regions that have climate change policies and engage with stakeholders, including citizens in development of these policies

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These findings emphasize the encouraging tendency of stakeholder involvement in the development of climate change policies, which may suggest that stakeholder engagement is a common practice in the development of climate change policies across cities of various sizes.

A dedicated department in stakeholder engagement might provide numerous benefits for authorities. It provides specialized expertise, develops strategies, and implements strategic plans, promoting consistency and coordination. The department can allocate resources efficiently, explore innovative approaches, and build capacity for staff and stakeholders. It can adapt quickly to changing circumstances and stakeholder needs, ensuring engagement strategies remain relevant. The department also builds positive relationships with stakeholders, fostering trust and cooperation. Effective stakeholder engagement contributes to a positive organizational reputation, demonstrating transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness.

The findings of the research indicate that a significant percentage of cities/regions (53,1%) do not have a specific department that is dedicated to stakeholder engagement (Figure 30). The result indicate that the engagement activities is distributed among several departments or that there might be an issue with institutional mechanisms for engaging stakeholders in decision-making process. Additional details on this specific aspect have been provided through the question: "If you do not have a special department for stakeholder engagement, in which form does your city/region organise its engagement activities?".

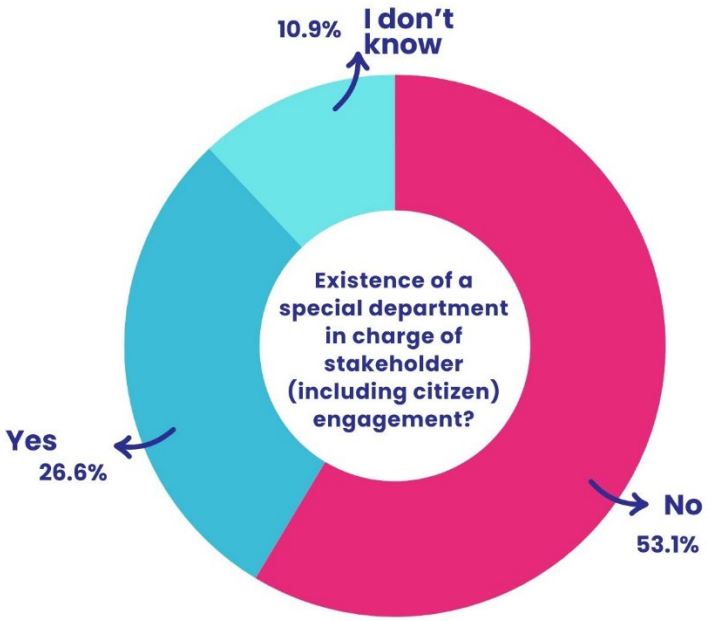

Figure 30 Existence of a dedicated department in charge of stakeholders (including citizens) engagement

The existence of a stakeholder engagement department in an administration (26,6%) indicates that the significance of citizen and stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes is acknowledged and prioritized. This suggests that these cities/regions might have better organised and institutionalised methods for engaging with the community, which could result in improved efficiency and focused engagement among stakeholders. Further clarification regarding this

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particular aspect is provided by the responses related to the questions “Please tell us more about your department in charge with stakeholder engagement and its activities”.

Among the cities and regions, there is a small percentage (10,9%) that does not know whether or not they have a specialised department for stakeholder engagement. This could be an indication that the authorities are either not aware of the issue or are not transparent about it. Consequently, there could be a need to raise the awareness and to facilitate a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities in relation to stakeholder engagement inside the organizational structure.

Depending on the context and the objectives, the department may adopt different approaches and roles to engage with relevant stakeholders, as mentioned by the responders. Some of the functions that the department performs indicated are: approving environmental terms and conditions for projects, policies and programs; co-creating policies with stakeholders through dialogue and consultation; facilitating citizen participation in shaping public policies that affect their lives and interests; and conducting public relations activities to communicate and promote the environmental agenda.

The involvement of different departments or entities in stakeholder engagement shows a collaborative approach to urban development. For example, the unit within the department of urban development supports other units in the authority, the local authority Mobility department cooperates with the regional authority, and multiple departments participate in strategic management goals. Some organisations also use innovative methods to engage stakeholders, such as co-creating solutions, consulting research and facilitating participatory processes on behalf of the local authority. Local and regional governments play a role in fostering citizen engagement, where a law on participation and funds projects to encourage active citizenship exists. The departments that are responsible for stakeholder engagement activities vary according to the local context, such as Urban Planning, Green Policy, Development, and Climate. Some authorities mentioned that the stakeholder engagement departments are still in the process of creation or evolving, indicating a commitment to continuous improvement in stakeholder engagement practices.

Investigation related to the influence of the size of the city/region on the organisational structure revealed that for cities with less than 50.000 inhabitants, 50% have a special department and 50% do not (Figure 31), which suggests that there is no clear correlation between population size and stakeholder engagement in this category. However, for cities with 100.001 to 500.000 inhabitants, only 12,5% have a special department and 87,5% do not, which implies that larger cities may face more challenges or barriers to establish a dedicated department for stakeholder engagement. On the other hand, for cities with over 1mil. inhabitants, 33,3% have a special department and 53,3% do not, which indicates that some very large cities may still manage to create such a department despite the complexity and diversity of their stakeholders.

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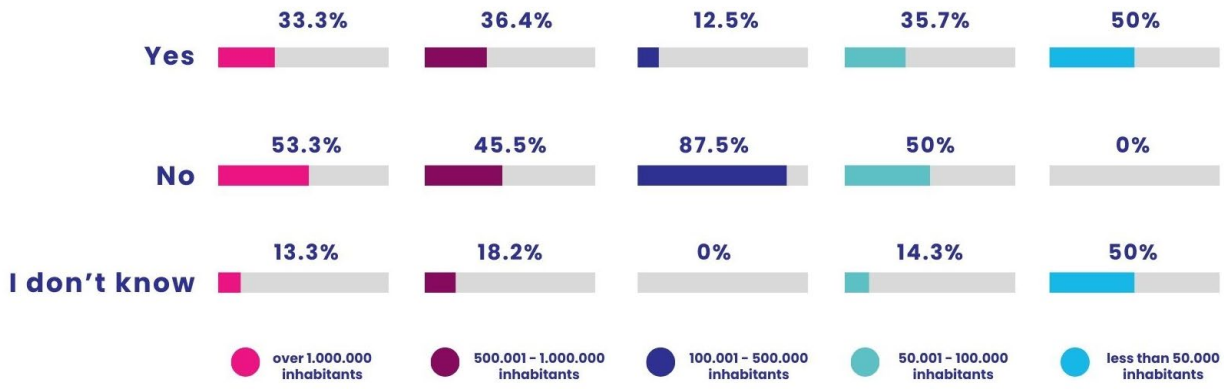

Figure 31 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and the existence of a dedicated department in charge for stakeholder engagement

The public authorities that do not have a dedicated department (34 answers) adopt different forms or methods of engaging with the stakeholders (Figure 32), depending on the context, the objectives, etc. The main approach to engagement involves the assignment of dedicated personnel across diverse functional departments (41,2%). This suggests that the engagement of stakeholders is integrated into the main functions of the authority and underline a flexible and adaptable strategy for engaging stakeholders, which is tailored to meet the specific demands and characteristics of different projects.

Building partnerships with NGOs, universities, or research institutions is the second common form used for engagement (23,5%). These partnerships may provide expertise, networks, and resources for engaging with various groups of potential stakeholders. Using external consultants, who are able to provide specialised expertise and procedures for stakeholder engagement, is the third most popular way used (20,6%).

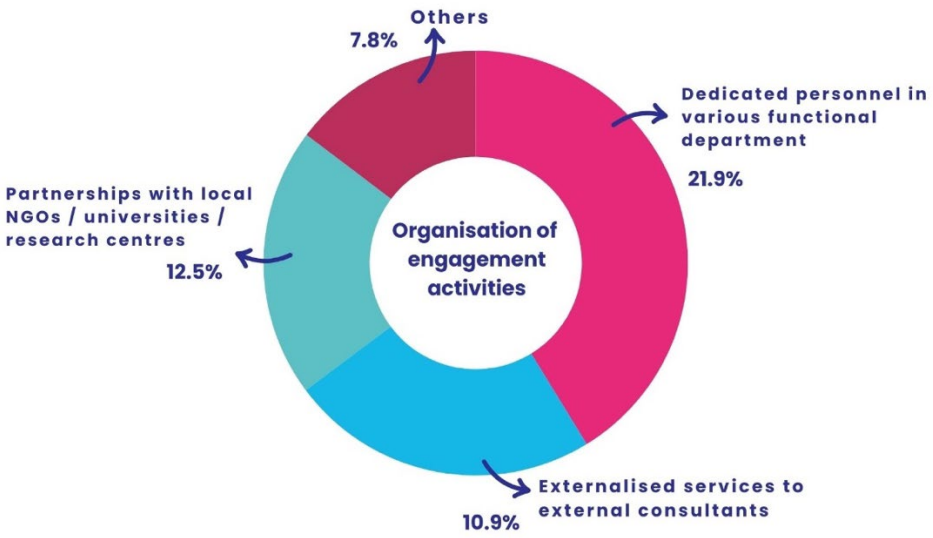

Figure 32 Organisation of engagement activities in cities/regions that do not have specialised department engaged with stakeholders.

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Several responses – "Others", 14,7% - highlight the usage off all mentioned methodologies and the use of an ad hoc methodology, whereby stakeholder engagement is organised on a project-specific level, particularly when some projects require the integration of such aspects (included in Others).

Moreover, it is observed that the engagement activities among the cities/regions that do not have a dedicated department in charge of stakeholder engagement, varies based on their population size (Figure 33). Allocating dedicated personnel in various functional departments is the most used practice across various population sizes, with predilection on larger cities/region (over 500.001 inhabitants). This could suggest that large and very large cities have more resources and autonomy to manage their engagement activities internally, without relying on external partners.

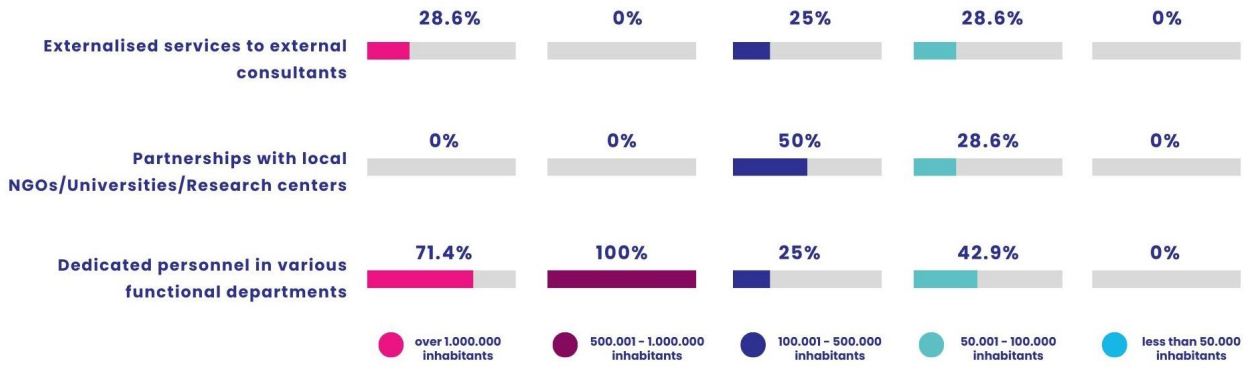

Figure 33 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and stakeholder engagement methodologies in cities/regions that do not have a dedicated department for this engagement

Externalized services to external consultants are less common but are still utilized form of engagement, particularly by mid-sized cities/regions, while partnerships with local NGOs, universities, and research centres is a common form of engagement, particularly in mid-sized cities/regions.

The research results indicate that public authorities make use of many strategies for engaging stakeholders, with a focus on flexibility and cooperation to promote the inclusiveness and effectiveness of these engagement initiatives.

Across the various cities/regions that mentioned the engagement of stakeholders for development of climate change policies, the results provide some insights into the level of engagement that stakeholders have (Figure 34). The data suggests that the majority of cities/regions acknowledge the significance of engaging stakeholders in the development/implementation of climate change policies, although with significant variations in the frequency such involvement.

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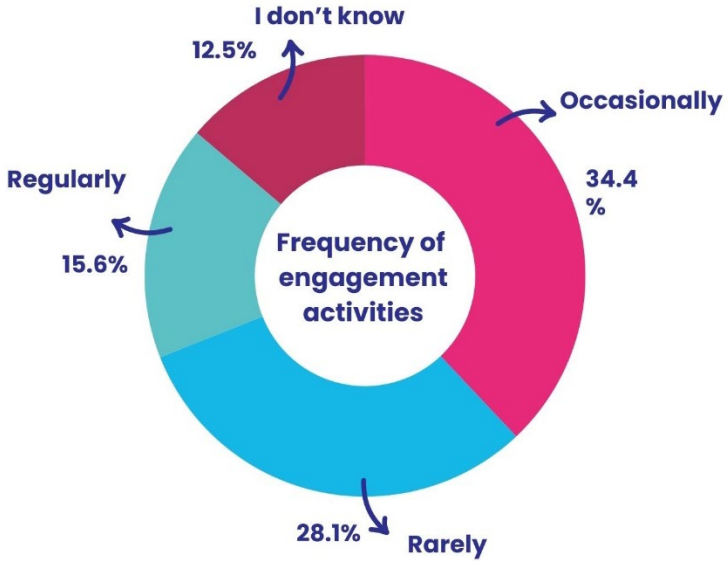

Figure 34 Frequently of engagement with stakeholders (including citizens) in the development and/or implementation

In the most cases (34,4%) cities/regions engage with stakeholders occasionally, typically once every few months. This rate indicates that there is an effort to involve stakeholders in the process of development and/or implementation of climate change policies that takes place on a more intermittent but ongoing basis. According to the data collected, it is evident that many cities/regions organise actions for engagement with stakeholders rarely (28,1%), often occurring once or twice annually. This implies a less frequent although still regular strategy for engaging with stakeholders.

Cities/regions engage with stakeholders, including citizens, regularly, with a frequency of at least once a month - 15,6% of responses - highlighting the adoption of a proactive and consistent strategy for engaging with stakeholders. Moreover, the results show that there is a possible need for increased awareness of engagement activities in the light of the fact that 12,5% indicate that there is uncertainty regarding the frequency of stakeholder engagement.

The absence of responses "Never" could suggest a general recognition of the importance of stakeholder engagement by the authorities.

Cities/regions with a population of less than 50.000 show a rarely engagement with stakeholders, whereas cities/regions with a population exceeding 500.000 indicate a more equally distributed frequency of engagement (Figure 35). This could suggest that smaller cities/regions might encounter more challenges or barriers when it comes to engaging stakeholders, because of factors such as limited resources, capacity, or motivation.

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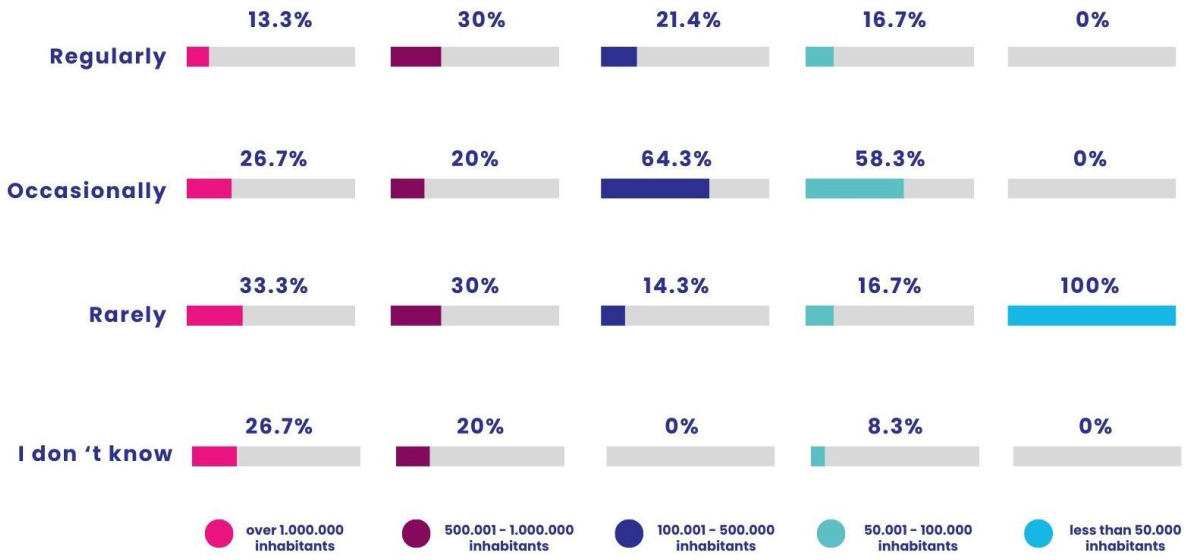

Figure 35 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and frequency of stakeholder engagement

These results indicate that stakeholder engagement is an important factor for regional development and governance.

Cities and regions make use of diverse and combined methods to successfully engage with stakeholders (Figure 36), recognising the importance of working with multiple methods to reach different segments of the community.

Figure 36 Methods used by cities/region use to engage with stakeholders (multiple answers)

Community events and meetings are widely used for stakeholder engagement - 68,8% of responses, indicating that public authorities prefer this method that allows direct interaction and dialogue with the community. Social media (53,1%), that enables real-time communication and interaction with a diverse audience, is the second most use platform for stakeholder engagement.

The use of collaborative partnerships with an array of organisations and entities is emphasized by 50% of responses, while 45,3% mentioned the use of online surveys for stakeholder engagement.

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This approach provides a practical and flexible option for collecting input and feedback from a broad audience.

The use of educational programs and workshops as a method to inform and involve stakeholders in the decision-making process is taken into consideration by 39,1%. Citizen assemblies and Participatory budgeting are less frequently used, with 34,4% and respectively, 31,3%. Nevertheless, the use of these methods indicates a commitment to more structured and deliberative forms of engagement, empowering citizens in decision-making processes. On the other hand, 6,3% of responses for uncertainty about the methods used for stakeholder engagement, suggest a potential need to increase the awareness about engagement activities, as emphasised for the other previous responses, as well.

Specifically, community events and meetings are the most common method across all cites/region size sizes, with a range of 46,7% to 100% (Figure 37). Online surveys are widely used, particularly in larger areas with a population over 500.000. Social media use is more prevalent in cities/regions of medium size, often with a population ranging from 100.000 to 500.000, compared to smaller or bigger cities/regions. Participatory budgeting is more widespread in smaller and medium cities/regions with a population lower than 500.000 than in larger ones.

Citizen assemblies are more prevalent in larger cities/regions with a population over 500.000 than in smaller municipalities. The use of educational programmes and workshops varies across different cities/regions, with some smaller and medium size cities/regions showing higher levels of adoption. Collaborative partnerships show diversity, with certain cities adopting them to a greater extent than others, irrespective of their population size.

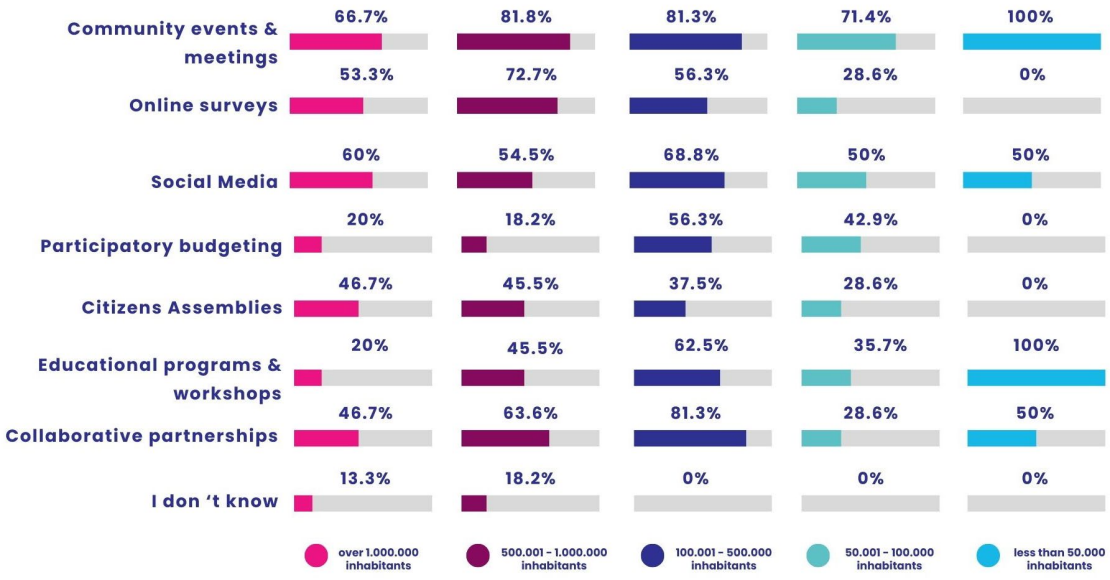

Figure 37 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and methods used to engage with stakeholders

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Cities and regions adopt numerous methods for involving stakeholders, tailoring them to the specific circumstances and needs of each area. This demonstrates a comprehensive approach to engaging the community.

When questioned about methods of communication for engaging with stakeholders, the answers indicated a multi-channel approach to communication, combining a mix of direct, digital, and traditional methods to communicate with a wide range of stakeholders (Figure 38).

Figure 38 Communication tools used by cities/region to engage with stakeholders (multiple answers)

The dominant communication channels used by cities/regions to communicate with stakeholders are social media and online platforms, accounting for the highest percentage (73,4%), reflecting a recognition of the importance of digital engagement for real-time communication. This is closely followed by public meetings and forums, which constitute the second most used method for communication (62,5%). Traditional media is the third most common method for stakeholder communication, with 59,4%. This indicates the adoption of a holistic approach that integrates conventional and digital methods.

A personalized approach that allows for in-depth discussions and tailored communication is used by the 42,2% of the responders (One-on-one meetings), while workshops and training sessions with the same percentage, highlight a commitment to more interactive and educational forms of communication. The least common channels are newsletters, with 39,1%.

The reference to the "Local Green Deal platform" (Others) entails a new and specific strategy towards the communication of information.

In particular, the most popular communication channels across all city/region sizes are social media and online platforms, followed by traditional media (Figure 39). The least popular channels are newsletters and one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, excepting larger cities (5000.001-1.000.000 inhabitants). The Figure 39 also shows that larger cities/regions have the tendency to use

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more diverse and frequent communication channels than smaller one, except for newsletters, which are more common in smaller cities/regions. However, there is also some variation within each city/region size category. For instance, smaller cities/regions predominantly use social media and public meetings, while workshops and training are not usual for this type of cities/regions.

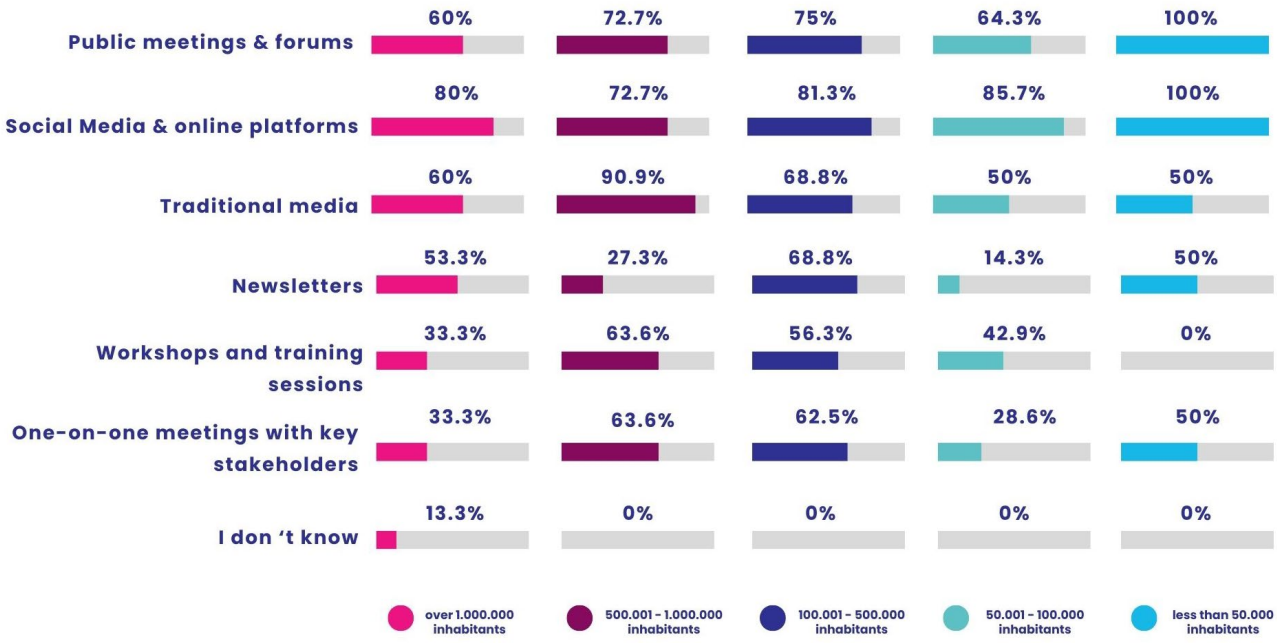

Figure 39 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and communication tools used for climate change actions and goals communications

The data indicates that communication tools are tailored according to the specific needs and preferences of each city or area, with a distinct preference towards digital platforms, such as social media and online platforms, which have become widely used for communication. Public engagement is characterized by the active involvement of various stakeholders, including citizens, in the development of policies and strategies. The quality and legitimacy of public policies and actions may be enhanced through the contribution of stakeholders' insightful opinions, perspectives, and feedback.

According to 50,0% of the responses, stakeholders, including citizens, are considered to be "Somewhat involved" in the formal public engagement process (Figure 40). This indicates that although stakeholders, including citizens, are involved, there is potential for increasing the level and meaning of their engagement.

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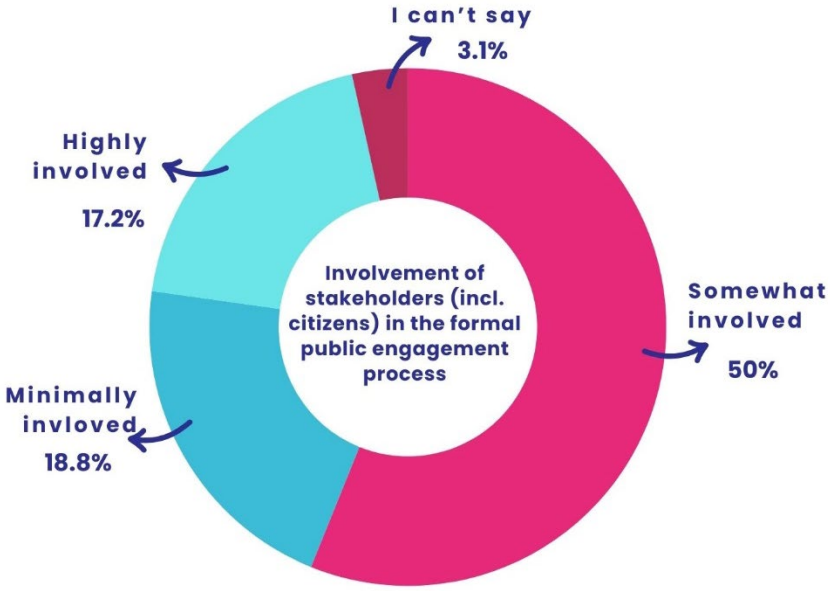

Figure 40 Assessed *level of involvement of stakeholders*

The substantial percentage of responses recorded for "Minimally Involved" (18,8%) or "Highly involved" (17,2%) indicates that gaining a more active and engaged public participation in the formal engagement process may encounter challenges or constraints. The share of responses related to "I Can't Say" (3,1%) suggests that enhanced monitoring or assessment mechanisms might be necessary. The assessment of stakeholder participation in the official public engagement process varies according to city/region size (Figure 41). Across all cities/regions, an important percentage of the respondents indicated an average level of involvement in the official public engagement process, with values varying from 40% to 64,3%. The percentage of participants who indicated a high level of engagement in the official public engagement process increased in correlation with the size of the city/region, starting from 0% in cities with a population between 50.001-100.000 and reaching 33,3% in cities with a population over 1.000.000.

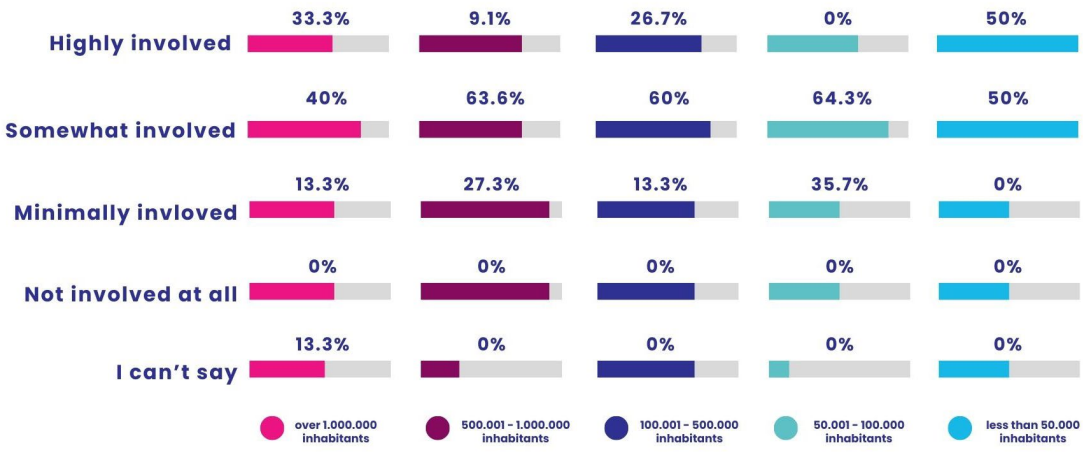

Figure 41 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and responders' perception level of stakeholder involvement

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Nonetheless, the overall results show the need for additional efforts to improve strategies for engagement while developing a more inclusive and participatory formal public engagement process.

An overview of the perceived involvement of the diverse range of stakeholders in the development of climate change policy is presented in Figure 42.

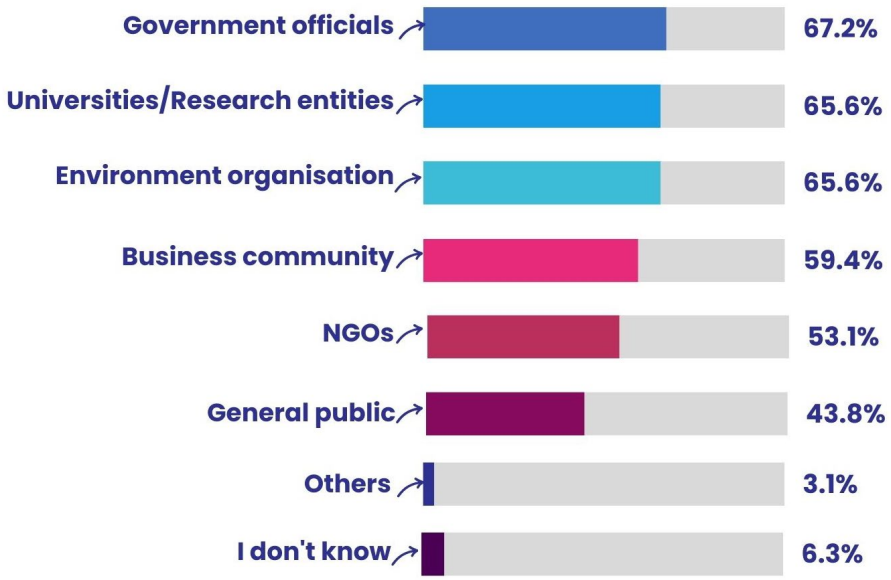

Figure 42 Stakeholders involved in developing climate change policies (multiple answers)

Government officials (67,2%), research institutions/universities and environmental organisations (65,6% each) are the stakeholders that are most frequently engaged in developing climate change policies. This indicates that these organisations are highly significant and actively involved in the policy-making process. Given the traditional important position that government entities take in the process of policy formulation, such a result was anticipated. However, the participation of the other two groups shows a commitment to integrating academic knowledge and scientific research into the policy, as well as to collaboration with organisations that are active in environmental protection and lobbying.

The participation of business communities (59,4%) and NGOs (53,1%) reflects a climate policy development process that is equitable and inclusive. Nevertheless, the least selected category refers to the implications for the general public (43,8%). This indicates a shortage of awareness, participation, or representation regarding the opinions and requirements of the general public in the process of climate policy development.

Only 6,3% of respondents selected the "I don't know" option, which may indicate a lack of transparency or information regarding the climate policy-making process, while 3,1% of the participants chose the "Others" category. Those that chose “Others” presented specific examples

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of additional stakeholders or situations that were not incorporated within the previous groups, such existence of a Regional Climate Pact that is not popular among environmental organisations because of its vagueness.

Some patterns can be noticed concerning stakeholder engagement in the climate policy process across cities/regions of different sizes (Figure 43).

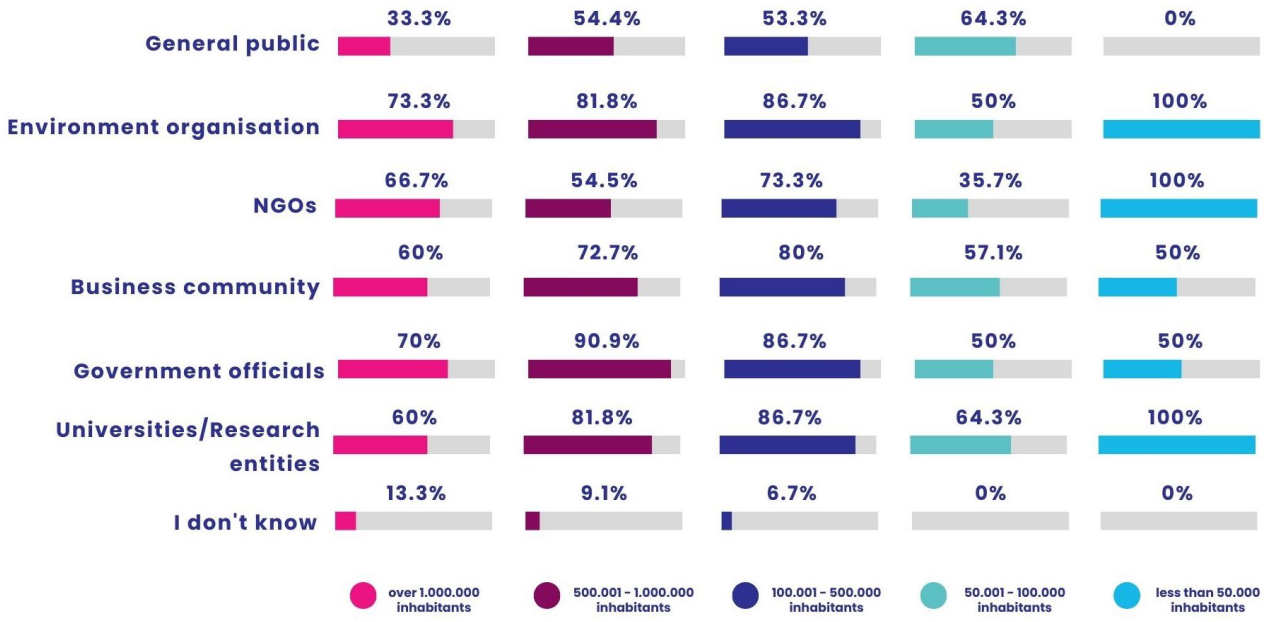

Figure 43 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and types of stakeholders involved in the development of the climate change policy

The general public has limited engagement across cities/regions of all sizes, with participation rates ranging from 0% to 64,3%. This indicates that the public may have lacked awareness or interest in the policy development process or encountered obstacles that hindered their effective participation. The environmental organization has a greater degree of engagement across all city/region sizes, except the smallest one (less than 50.000 inhabitants), when its level of involvement was equal to that of the NGOs. The NGOs had a reasonable level of engagement in all cities/region. The business community involvement varies across different city/region sizes, ranging from 50% to 80%. This may suggest that the business community had diverse interests and perspectives on climate policy, and their willingness to cooperate with other stakeholders depended on the potential costs and benefits involved. The government officials showed significant engagement in all cities/regions, except in those with less than 100.000 inhabitants, where their involvement was average. This suggests that the government officials might be responsible for both guiding and organising the policy process and that they aimed to engage and cooperate with various stakeholders to different extend. The universities and research entities have significant engagement in cities/regions of all sizes, indicating that the universities and research institutions contributes with knowledge and experience to inform and assist the policy-making process.

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The process of implementing climate change policies involves a wide range of stakeholders, similar to the development of climate change policy (Figure 44).

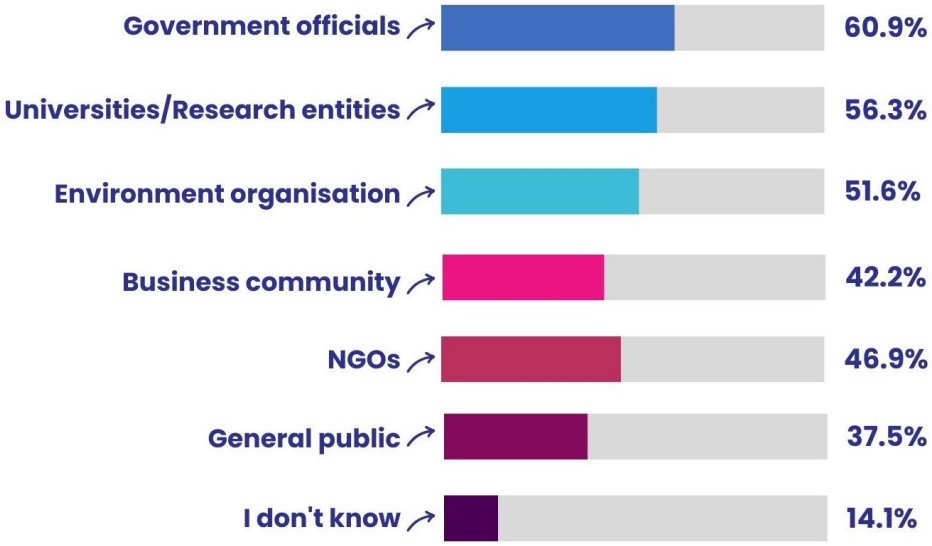

Figure 44 Stakeholders involved in implementing climate change policies & measures (multiple answers)

The participation of government officials, 60,9%, was observed to be the predominant stakeholder group involved in implementing climate change policies and measures, suggesting a substantial involvement of governmental entities in this process. This is associated with the significant position that governments frequently play in the implementation of policies.

Academic institutions/research organisations (56,3%), environmental organisations (51,6%) and NGOs (46,9%), were all involved in implementing climate change policies & measures. This implies a commitment to taking into consideration the perspectives of academics, non-governmental organisations, and environmental experts during the implementation phase.

Slightly less participation was observed from the business community (42,2%) and the general public (37,5%) respectively. Although business community and public participation is essential for the successful implementation of climate related measures, it may be worthwhile to investigate strategies for increasing this involvement.

Universities and research institutions show significant engagement across cities/region of all sizes, with participation rates ranging from around 50% to over 70% (Figure 45). This suggests that these entities are actively involved and have a significant impact in providing scientific knowledge to guide and enhance the decision-making and implementation process related to climate change. Similarly, environmental groups and NGOs are constantly engaged in all cities/regions, with rate ranging from around 42,9% to over 63,6%.

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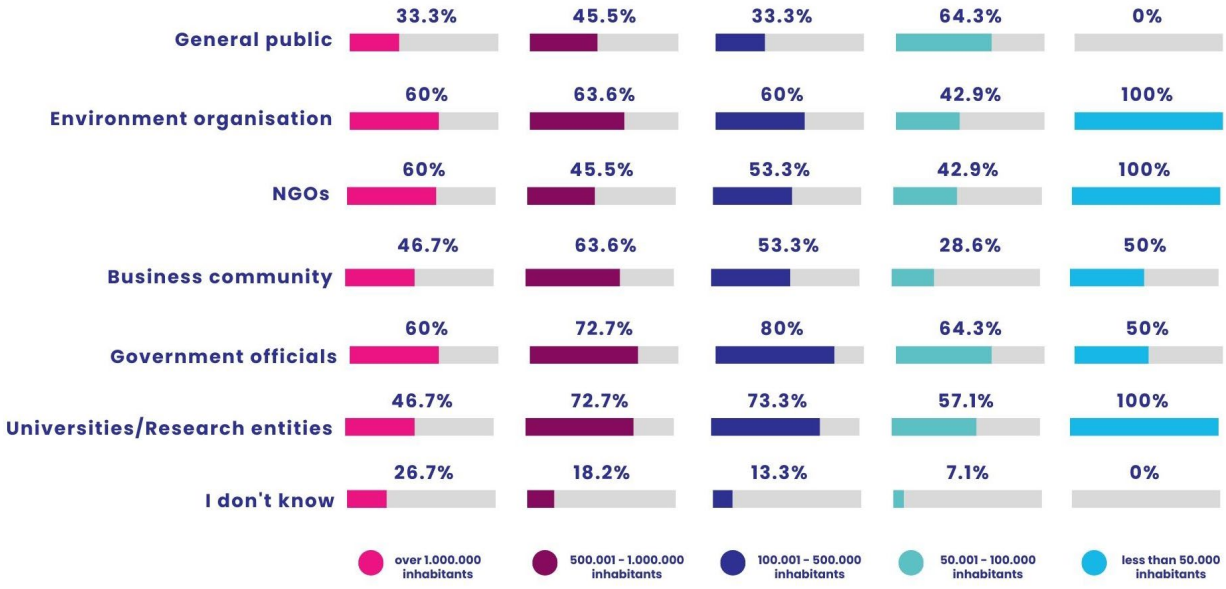

Figure 45 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and types of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the climate change policy

Government officials represent higher levels of engagement in mid-size and larger cities/regions (over 500.000 inhabitants) compared to smaller ones (below 100.000 inhabitants). This phenomenon may be related to the fact that larger cities have complex and diverse governance frameworks and institutions, requiring higher degrees of coordination and collaboration across various governmental levels and sectors. Furthermore, it has been observed that the business sector shows more involvement in larger cities/regions (above 500.000 inhabitants), as compared to smaller cities/regions (less than 100.000 inhabitants). This trend may be attributed to the existence of more economic opportunities and climate change-related complexities in larger urban areas, such as potential for green innovation, renewable energy, and carbon emissions mitigation. Similar to the case of developing climate change policies, the general public is the least engaged group concerning implementing climate change policies, especially for cities/regions with a population of 50.001-100.000.

To ensure that stakeholders are involved in the implementation of climate change policy, effective mechanisms for communication, consultation, and collaboration among them must be implemented. This might help in creating a climate of trust, legitimacy, and ownership of policies, as well as in recognising and addressing potential challenges, risks, and opportunities. The information obtained from the survey illustrates a wide range of approaches adopted by cities and regions in order to facilitate the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of climate change policies (Figure 46).

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Figure 46 How do cities/regions ensure that stakeholders are involved in implementation of climate change policies (multiple answers)

The primary approaches considered by public authorities are feedback and consultation opportunities, with 46,9%, representing the majority of cases. These strategies facilitate the participation of stakeholders, allowing them to express their perspectives and share their experiences. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this also suggests that the stakeholders could not have direct or proactive involvement in the implementation of the climate policies.

Next, the popular approach includes engagement in working groups or task forces (37,5%), which allow more collaboration and co-creation between the policy makers and the stakeholders in the implementation of policies, as well as more transparency and accountability. At the same position is considered the “Regular progress updates and communication”.

The training and capacity-building programmes were identified as the least often selected method of stakeholder involvement, with only 15,6% respondents choosing this option. This suggests that there is a limited availability of skill development and enhancement opportunities for stakeholders in various cities/regions in relation to climate change policies implementation. This could hinder the stakeholders' capacity to contribute and influence, in addition to reducing their feeling of ownership and empowerment regarding the climate policies implementation.

The data additionally show that 23,4% of the participants selected the response "I don’t know” indicating their lack of awareness regarding their city/region's engagement of stakeholders in climate change policies implementation. This observation possibly indicates a deficiency in communication or transparency of the policies implementation actions.

The responses also include two remarks from the respondents who selected the "Others" option. One observation was made regarding the limited extent of community involvement in co-designing processes, with the exception of city assemblies, where citizen participation tends to be more consultative. This suggests that expectations and reality regarding stakeholder participation are sometimes not aligned, and that certain stakeholders may wish to have more involvement in the policy-making process. Another statement pointed to the existence of local and city-wide projects,

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suggesting that certain cities/regions engage their stakeholders through specific projects or measures related to climate change policy.

In general, mid-size and larger cities/regions (over 100.000 inhabitants) use more types of methods to ensure that stakeholders are engaged in the climate change implementation process, including consultation and feedback opportunities (Figure 47). Smaller cities/regions have a higher percentage of responses who are unaware of how their city or area engages stakeholders in climate action, implying a lack of transparency or knowledge. Across all cities/regions, training and capacity-building programmes are the least utilized method of stakeholder engagement, suggesting that stakeholders may have a deficiency in knowledge, skills or capacity to organise such events. Participation in task forces or working groups is the most irregular method of engaging stakeholders, with some regions and cities using it extensively while others do not.

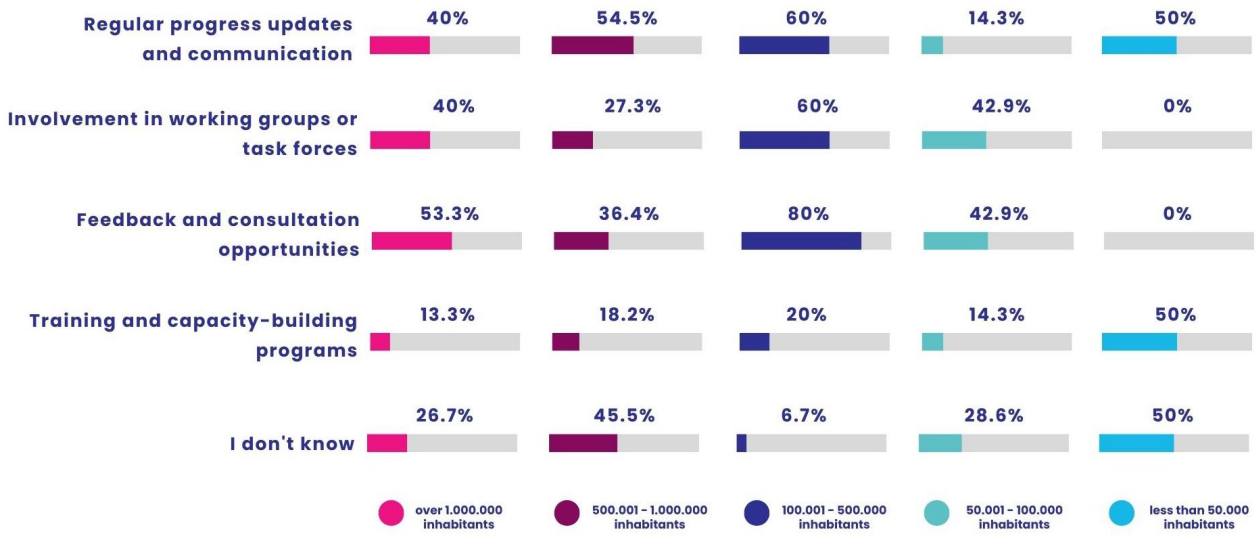

Figure 47 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and methodologies used for stakeholder involvement in the implementation of climate change policies

In conclusion, these results indicate a commitment to adopting a range of methods to engage stakeholders, while also highlighting areas for potential improvement in terms of communication and addressing obstacles related to awareness.

The stakeholder engagement process allows the authorities to gather diverse perspectives, identify potential conflicts and build trust among different actors. The outputs of the stakeholder engagement process should be integrated into the development of the climate related policies in a transparent and systematic way. Figure 48 shows some examples of how different cities/regions have integrated the stakeholder feedback into their climate change policies frameworks.

Integration of outputs into plans and strategies (48,4%) and identification and prioritisation of policy actions and measures (37,5%) are the most frequently mentioned approaches. This suggests that these processes demonstrated efficacy in providing pertinent and important information and

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recommendations to the public authorities and those responsible for decision-making. Furthermore, the process facilitated an understanding of the requirements and preferences of the local communities, and properly harmonised them with the scientific evidence and optimal approaches related to climate action. Additionally, this finding indicates these processes played a significant role in strengthening the credibility and acceptance of the climate policies, as it actively included stakeholders in their development. Moreover, it can be deduced that this approach facilitated the development of climate policy through the identification of specific and achievable projects and measures.

Figure 48 How outputs of the engagement process were integrated in the development of climate change policies (multiple answers)

The third most frequently used approach was informing the development of policies and decision-making processes (34,4%), indicating that the procedure provided valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers. The incorporation of outputs into policy goals and targets emerged as the fourth most prevalent approach (29,7%), signifying that this process facilitated the identification and assessment of desired results associated with climate change policies.

The results, however, indicate that an important percentage of cities/regions (29,7%) choose "do not know" option regarding the process in which the outputs were incorporated into the development of climate change policies. The result suggests the possibility of inadequate communication and feedback between those involved in the process and the policymakers, or a potential mismatch between the anticipated outcomes and the actual results of the process. Alternatively, this may suggest that certain cities lack a clear or coherent climate policy framework during the process, or face challenges or barriers in implementing the outcomes of the process into meaningful policies.

The outcomes also show that two responses to “Others”. According to one respondent, the results were never specifically related to climate change, but were instead integrated into other programmes such as mobility, spatial domain, energy transition, or agricultural transformation. This might happen due to a cross-sectoral or holistic approach to climate action, or it might be because of a lack of political will or capacity to address climate change as a separate issue. Another

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responder stated that there was no real engagement with climate change. This might be attributed to a lack of awareness or interest in climate change among local stakeholders or policymakers, or to a lack of resources or capacity to carry out a participatory approach on this topic.

Most of the cities/regions integrate stakeholder engagement outputs into plans and strategies, with a percentage varying from 45,5% to 61,5% and use these outputs for identification and prioritization of policy actions and measures (Figure 49). Informing decision-makers and incorporation into policy goals the stakeholder engagement outputs are averagely utilised by all city/region size. The percentage of respondents indicating uncertainty or not knowing about how outputs were used is generally low, excepting cities/regions with 500.001-1.000.000 inhabitants. Nevertheless, the differences in how outputs are used highlight the need for tailored instruments according to particular needs and circumstances.

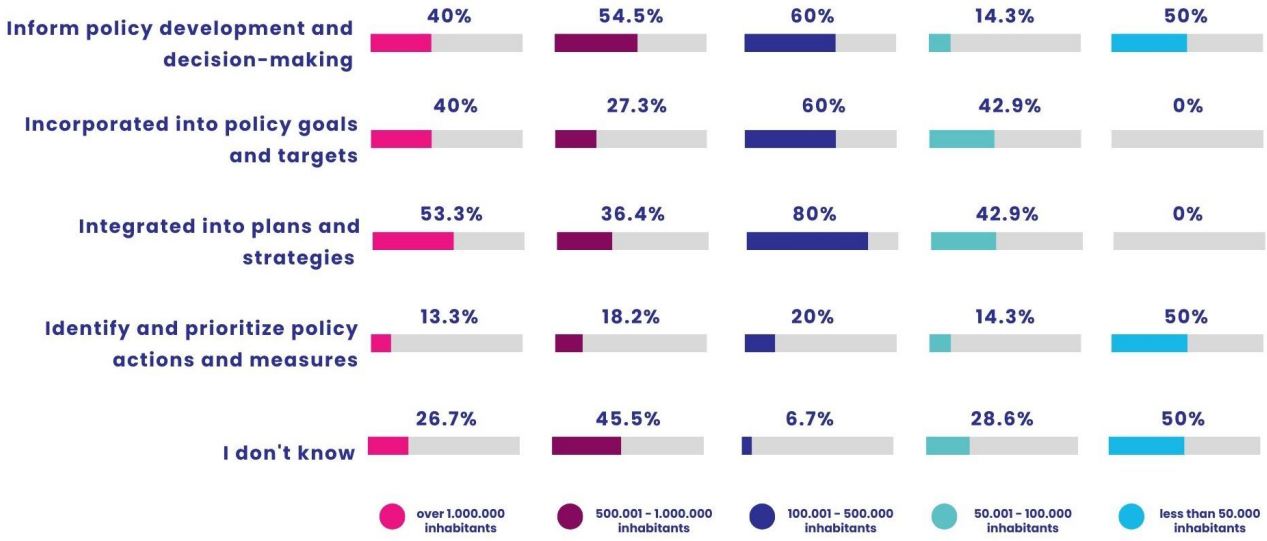

Figure 49 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and integration of the engagement process outputs in the development of climate change policies

These results provide an informative assessment of the impact and influence of participatory processes on the development of local climate change policies, highlighting the diverse ways in which they can shape policy development. Additionally, it underlines the numerous opportunities for enhancing the design and implementation of these processes with the aim of increasing their impact and efficiency.

The findings suggest that the main challenges encountered include the difficulty in reaching and engaging with different audiences, as stated by 50,0% of the participants (Figure 50). The following dominant challenges are limited resources or funding - 46,9% and the lack of interest or awareness among the target groups – 45,3%. Public engagement projects, particularly those addressing complex topics such as climate change, frequently deal with these types of issues. In addition, the responses highlight the importance of increased support for climate change initiatives as well as improved communication strategies.

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Resistance to change and opposition (40,6%), as well as participation fatigue (37,5%), are two significant psychological and behavioural challenges that authorities might confront in relation to the stakeholder engagement process. These challenges suggest the existence of difficulties or conflicts that limit or hinder the process of engagement. The finding could possibly indicate a shortcoming in motivation or the absence of adequate incentives to encourage active engagement. This suggests that there is a demand for more engagement in debate and deliberation mechanisms in order to cultivate mutual understanding and confidence, as well as to determine common goals and solutions.

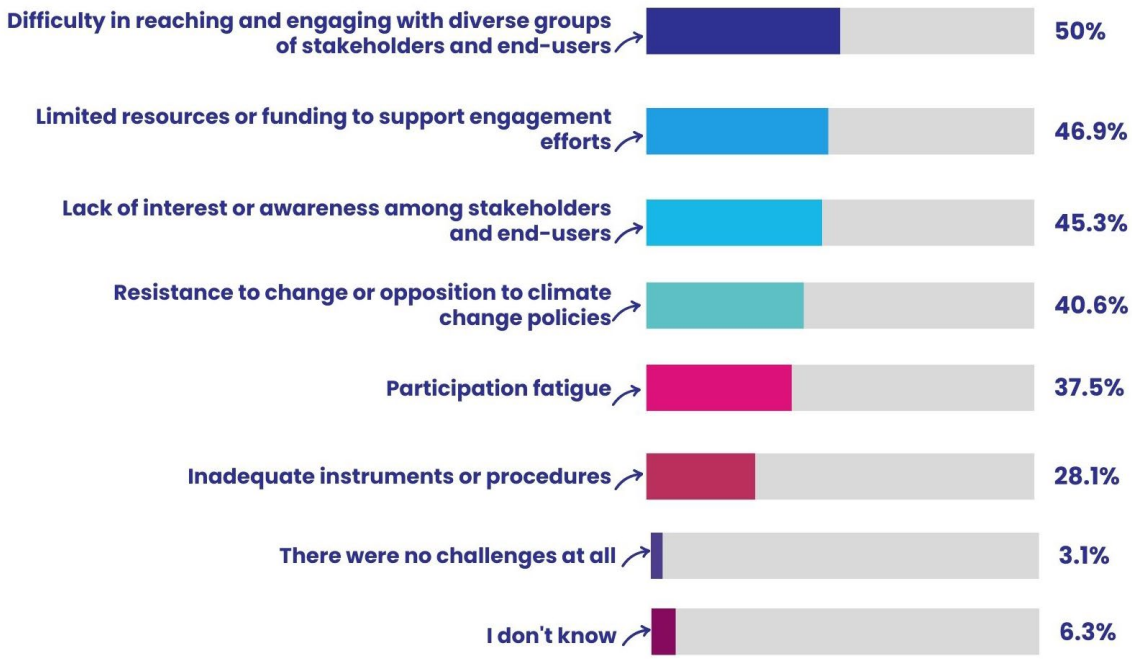

Figure 50 Main challenges for engaging stakeholders on climate change issues (multiple answers)

The responses recorded for "Inadequate instruments or procedures" (28,1%) suggests challenges associated with the tools and procedures used to conduct engagement. This may include several difficulties, such as inconsistent forms of communication, inadequate methods for consultation, inefficient processes for collecting feedback, or a potential lack in skills and/or capacities.

A small group representing 6,3% from total responses expressed uncertainty about their main challenges, potentially suggesting a lack of expertise or knowledge related to the topic matter.

In certain cases, stakeholder engagement processes may have been relatively seamless, as indicated by a number of responses declaring that there were no challenges (3,1%).

Ultimately, a number of participants identified additional issues that were not covered within the predefined set of alternatives. These obstacles were associated with the complexities concerning the formulation of clear priorities for citizens, the level of political commitment, the values-action

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gap - bringing citizens from knowledge to real action. These challenges underline the need for focused attention on the detailed elements of the stakeholder engagement and stresses the significance of leadership support in achieving effective stakeholder engagement, by mentioning the political commitment.

The predominant challenge declared across all city/region size was the lack of interest or awareness among stakeholders, closely followed by limited resources or funding (Figure 51).

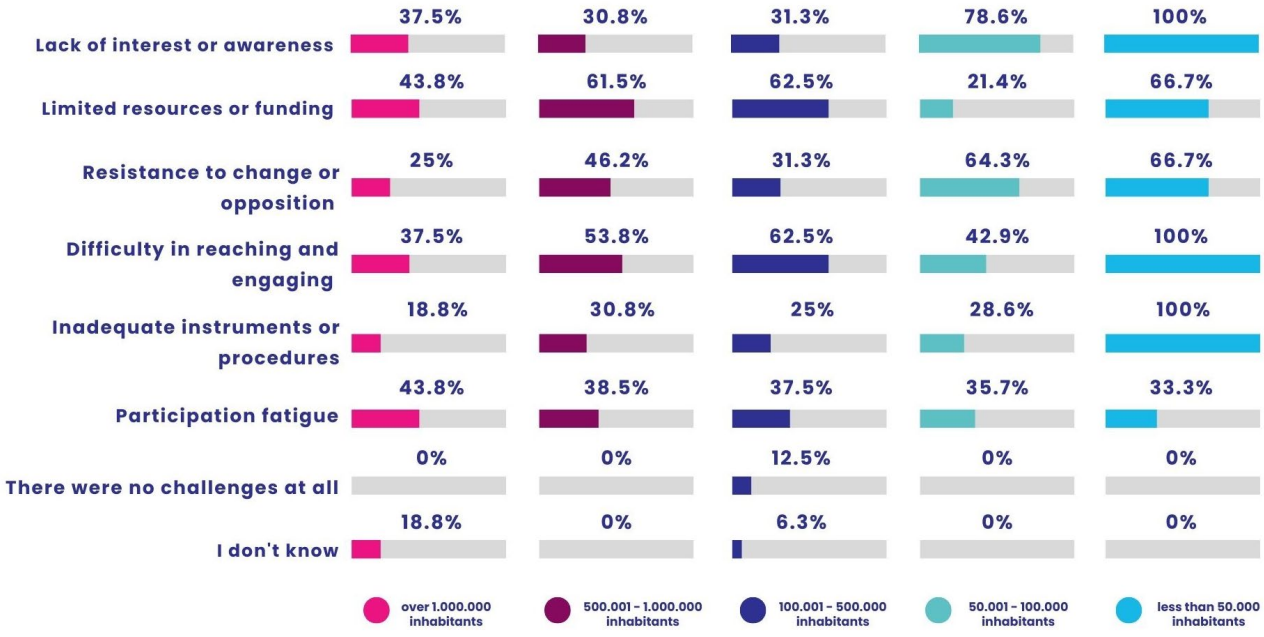

Figure 51 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and the main challenges faced in engaging with stakeholders on climate change issues

Nevertheless, the percentage of participants who indicated having these challenges varies considerably according to the size of the city/region. The cities/regions with the small populations (below 100.000 inhabitants) had the highest percentage of respondents who declared a lack of interest or awareness, whilst the cities of medium and large size had the smallest percentage. In contrast, the mid-sized cities/regions (between 100.001-1.000.000) had the highest percentage of responses who indicated a limitation of resources or funds, and the small (50.000-100.000 inhabitants) and largest (over 1.000.000) cities/regions showed the lowest percentage (42,9% and 37,5% respectively). Another significant observation is that cities/regions with a population between 100.001-500.000 had a higher prevalence of resistance to change or opposition (62,5%), while mid-size cities/regions noted a higher rate of difficulties in reaching and engaging stakeholders. Some respondents also mentioned obstacles such as inadequate instruments or procedures and participation fatigue, these issues having less variation across different city/region sizes. However, participation fatigue shows the tendency to increase from small to large cities (33,3% to 43,8%). Additionally, 12% of responses recorded from cities/regions with 100.001-500.000 inhabitants declared that they did not face any challenges in engaging with stakeholders on climate change issues.

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Overall, the results provide a comprehensive overview of the main challenges experienced in the process of engaging with stakeholders on topics related to climate change. Additionally, it helps emphasize particular areas that require additional efforts and actions in order to address these challenges and strengthen the engagement of stakeholders. By effectively addressing these issues, public authorities have the potential to further improve the legitimacy, accountability, and performance of their climate action efforts, thereby making a valuable contribution towards building a more sustainable and resilient future for their respective communities.

The results in Figure 52 presents interesting observations regarding the challenges experienced by public authorities in engaging stakeholders in implementation of climate change policy.

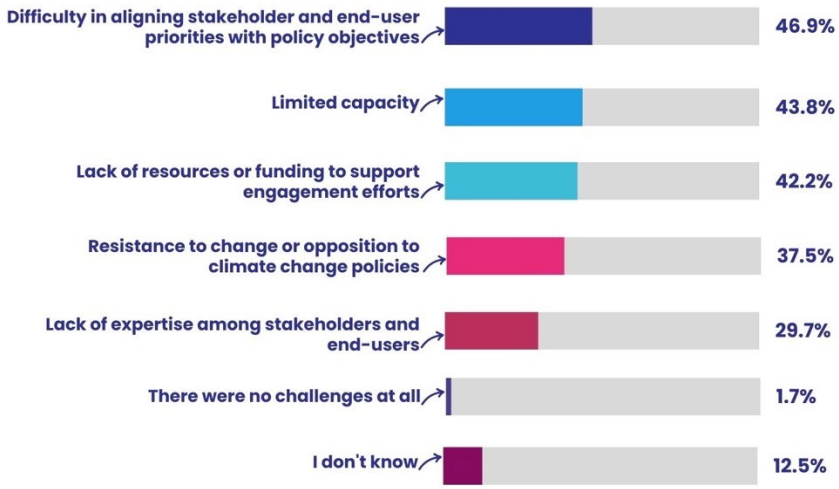

Figure 52 Main challenges for involving stakeholders *on implementation of climate change policies*

The number of responses of challenges related to aligning the priorities of stakeholders and end-users (46,9%) suggests that there are difficulties in ensuring that the goals of climate change policies are in line with the interests and concerns of both stakeholders and the wider community. This indicates that the various actors involved in the policy implementation process require improved coordination and communication, in addition to an in-depth understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed actions.

The most reported challenges are the limited capacity (43,8%) and the lack of resources or funding (42,2%). These problems emphasise the limitations connected to financial resources and organisational capacities, which frequently represent challenges in the implementation of policies.

Resistance to change or opposition (37,5%) and a lack of experience (29,7%) suggest potential challenges resulting from behavioural issues and knowledge shortcomings. This difficulty highlights the presence of diverse interests and values among the different groups involved, as well as a potential deficiency in confidence and credibility within those responsible for making policy decisions. This hypothesis indicates that there exists a shortage of the information and

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competencies necessary to comprehend and effectively address the complex challenges associated with climate change. Successful implementation of policies requires the ability to overcome resistance and develop competence.

A total of 12,5% of the participants provided the response "I don't know" when queried about the challenges they encountered in engaging stakeholders during the process of policy implementation, which implies the existence of possible gaps in comprehension or knowledge. The challenges related to the lack of political will and lack of a common actions are pointed out in “Others” option, underlining the significance of political leadership in promoting public engagement, similar with the previous question.

The main challenge generally identified in involving stakeholders in the implementation of the climate change policy is the lack of resources or funding, particularly in cities/regions with populations below 1.000.000 (Figure 53). Over 50% of the respondents in these cities/regions noted this issue as a serious challenge. Limited capacity is a significant challenge, especially for cities/regions of medium size (100.000 – 1.000.000), with 42,9% and 68,8% respectively. A notable challenge faced by several respondents is a lack of expertise, in particular in smaller cities/regions with populations under 100.000. The majority of respondents report moderate challenges when it comes to resistance to change or opposition, and there is not a clear pattern based on city/region sizes. Difficulty in aligning stakeholder and end-user priorities is as well an important issue for the majority of respondents, particularly in medium-sized and large cities with a percentage around 50%.

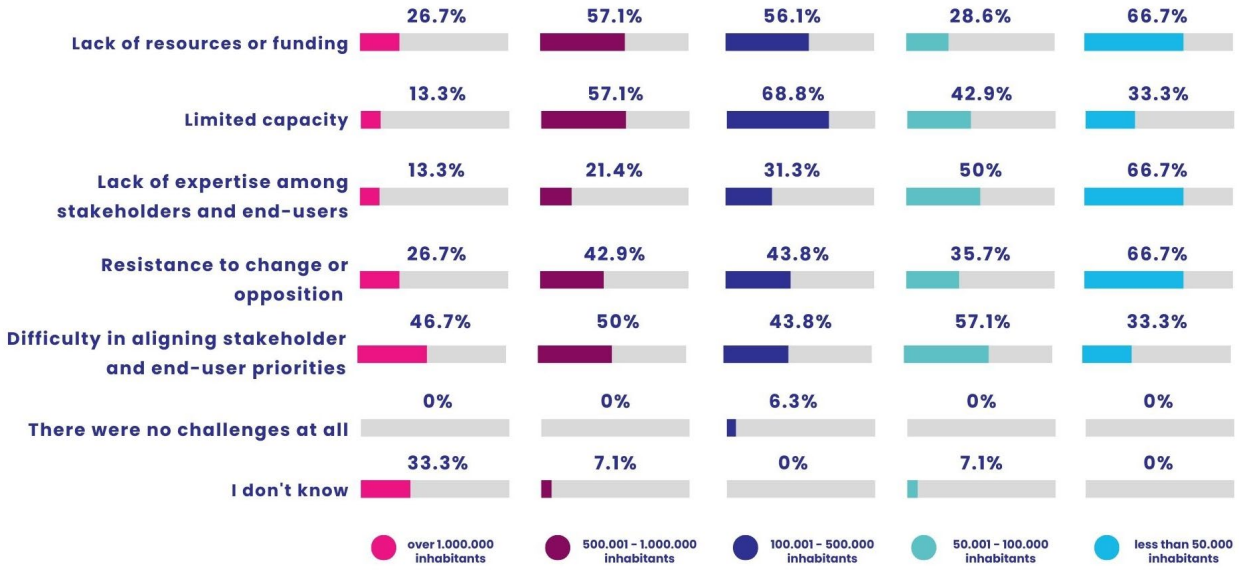

Figure 53 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and the main challenges faces in involving stakeholders in the implementation of the climate change policy

Public authorities experience many challenges that have to be overcome and managed when endeavouring to engage stakeholders in the implementation of climate change policies, as demonstrated by the results. In order to effectively address this issue, it is necessary that they

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continue to seek additional support, guidance, and collaboration from both the national and EU levels. Furthermore, it is crucial for them to encourage increased involvement, participation, and communication with citizens and other relevant stakeholders.

4.4 Climate Assemblies in surveyed cities/regions

Climate assemblies provide an important mechanism to strengthen the role of citizens in shaping strategies for addressing the climate crisis, while also reinforcing confidence and public support for climate-related initiatives. Additionally, they have the capacity to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange among individuals with various points of view and cultural backgrounds, while also cultivating a common sense of responsibility and solidarity.

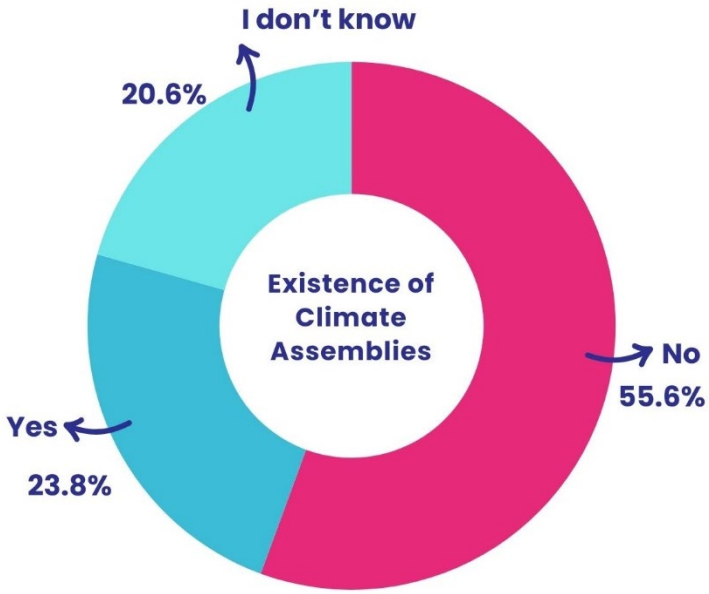

Figure 54 Existence *of Climate Assemblies in cities/regions surveyed*

Nevertheless, the high percentage of negative responses (55,6%) and only 23,8% for positive suggests that climate assemblies are a relatively new and unexplored concept for an important part of the authorities (Figure 54). These findings highlight the potential for investigating and adopting new approaches to engagement that encourage more public engagement in issues associated with climate change. From the total, 20,6% of respondents indicated that they are unaware whether their city or region has ever held a climate assembly. This may indicate a lack of understanding regarding the concept, doubts regarding the current status of such initiatives, lack of communication and awareness or that this type of engagement may not have become a standard practice.

The geographical distribution of the cities and regions that participated in the survey and reported hosting Climate Assemblies was diverse, encompassing various parts of Europe (Figure 55). Climate assemblies reveal the absence of geographical constraints, implying a broad and extensive commitment to engage communities in tackling the issue of climate change. The presence of cities

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across Southern, Eastern, Northern, and Western Europe indicates a growing acceptance and adoption of climate assemblies among various European geographical areas.

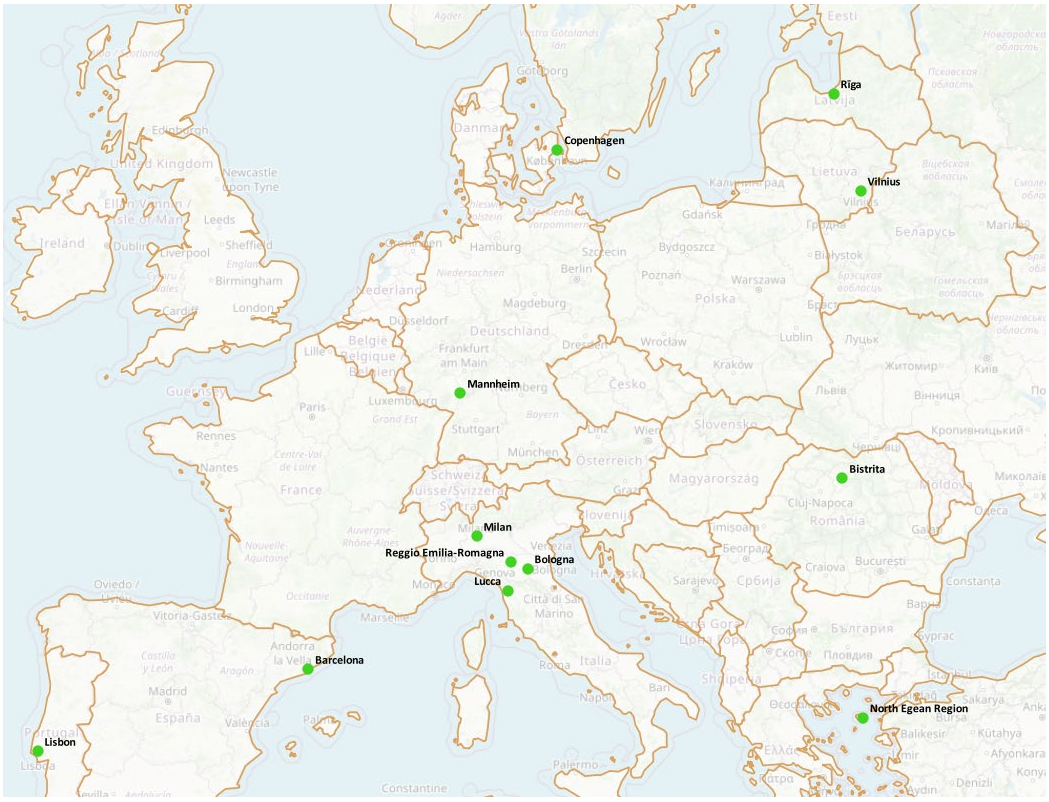

Figure 55 Geographical distribution of the cities/regions which held a Climate Assembly and were involved in the survey

The highest percentage of respondents who confirmed having a climate assembly (Figure 56) in their city/region was recorded in cities/regions with 500.001 – 1.000.000 inhabitants (42,9%), followed by cities/regions with 50.001 – 100.000 inhabitants (28,6%). On the third place are larger cities/regions (over 1.000.000) with 18,8% and mid-sized cities/regions, with 12,5%.

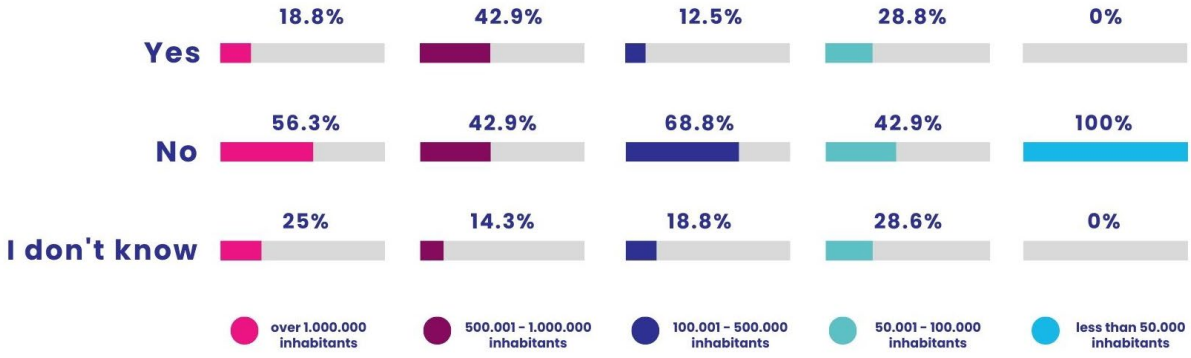

Figure 56 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and existence of Climate Assemblies

These results indicate that there is a significant contrast between the size of the city/region and the level of public involvement in climate assemblies or the willingness to organise climate assemblies. There seems to be a negative correlation between the size of cities/regions and their readiness to organize or support climate assemblies. At the same time, smaller cities/regions have a greater

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likelihood to support such initiatives. This may be related to several factors, including resource availability, complexity of governance structure, capacity and skills, variety of perspectives and interests and the level of public participation and awareness.

A significant proportion of the participants (34,4%) stated that the main responsibility for coordinating climate assemblies lies with local authorities (Figure 57). This implies that in many cases, the local government assumes the role of driving these engagement initiatives. Compared to local authorities, the involvement of regional authorities (12,5%), private entities (4,7%) and NGOs (3,1%) in the running of climate assemblies is rather limited. This observation possibly indicates the implementation of a concentrated approach, wherein local governments have a prominent role in leading community engagement activities.

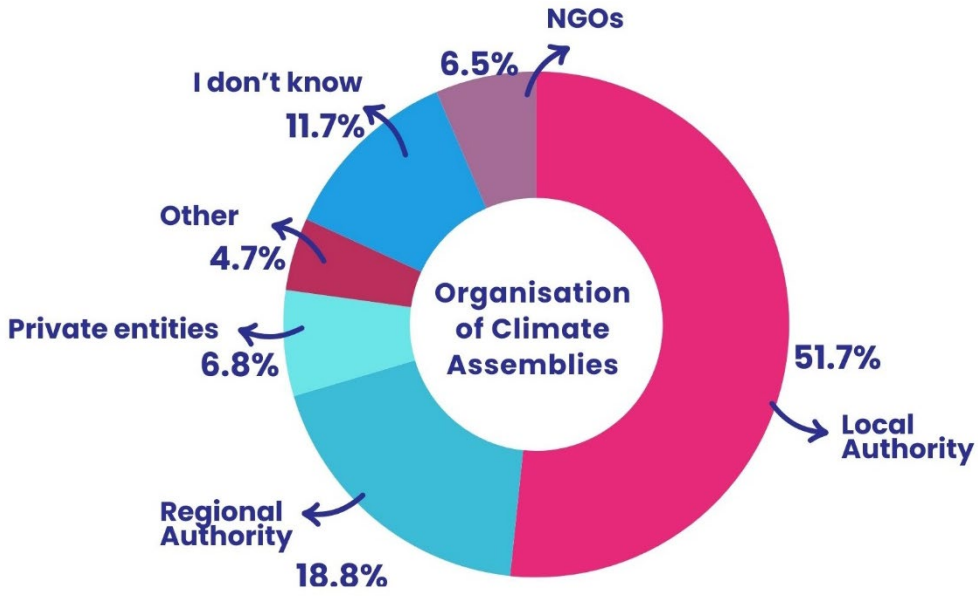

Figure 57 Who organizes Climate Assemblies

A minority of participants (7,8%) indicated a lack of clarity regarding the entity responsible for the coordination of climate assemblies. The finding suggests a potential gap in terms of effective communication or knowledge related to the distinct entities responsible for the organization and implementation of these events.

The "Others" category contains a particular situation wherein associations of cities are identified as being in charge of the coordination and management of climate assemblies. The result highlights the possibility of collaboration or adoption of a shared responsibility model among various cities.

The local authority was chosen as the main responsible authority for coordinating climate assemblies across all cities/region size which has organised climate assemblies, with a vast majority (Figure 58). The regional authority is mentioned as the responsible entity for organising climate assemblies in several cities/region, with the highest percentage for cities/regions with 50.001 -

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100.000 inhabitants (75,5%). NGOs and private entities are mentioned only by two categories of cities/regions, with 25% each in cities/region with a population of 50.001 - 100.000, and by the cities/regions with 500.001 - 1.000.000 with 16,7% and 33,3% respectively.

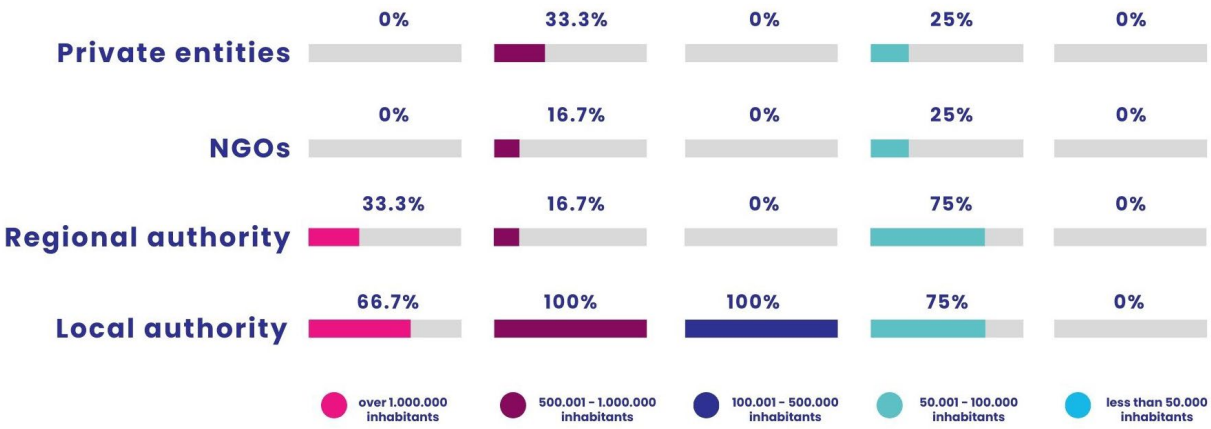

Figure 58 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and involvement of different organisations in Climate Assemblies set-up

Summarising, there is no one or straightforward answer to what public authority organises climate assemblies. Every alternative has advantages and disadvantages and may be more appropriate in varying contexts and situations. It is of paramount importance to ensure that the climate assemblies are conducted in a way that respects principles of democracy, inclusivity, transparency, and efficiency. Moreover, it is essential that these assemblies fully reflect the perspectives and principles of the participatory democracy.

The findings highlight interesting insights regarding the organisation of climate assemblies in among the cities/regions participating in the survey (Figure 59). Firstly, it is noticeable that there is no single or dominant recipe for the organisation of climate assemblies. However, there are a multitude of approaches and numerous actors involved in this process. This implies that climate assemblies are tailored to the specific circumstances and demands of particular cities/regions. The results demonstrate that the usual approach is the allocation of specialized persons within diverse functional departments (14,1%), which have the responsibility of coordinating climate assemblies. This finding suggests that climate assemblies are perceived as a strategic and interdisciplinary subject that requires the cooperation and collaboration of various sectors and levels of governance.

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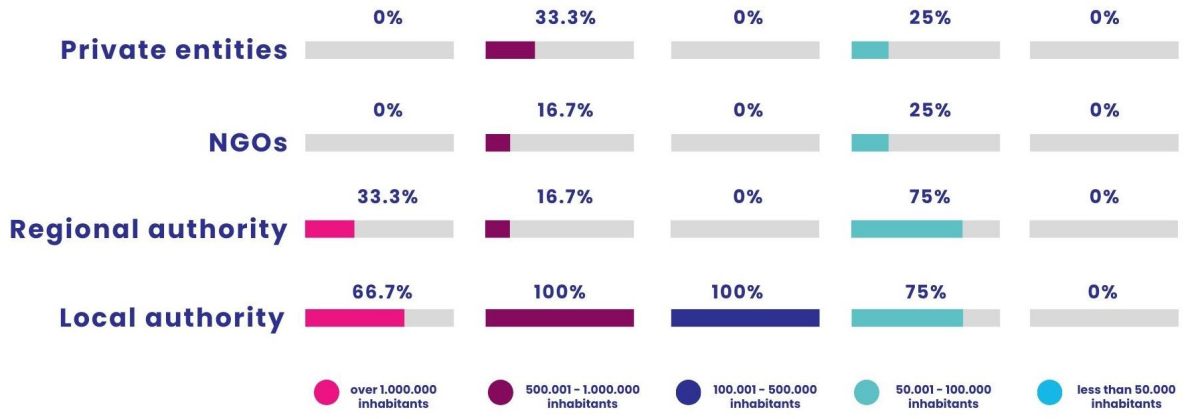

Figure 59 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and responsible entity for organisation of Climate Assemblies in cities/regions who declared to have such engagement method

Furthermore, it suggests that climate assemblies are integrated into the usual activities and budgets of the local or regional administration, compared to being a singular or spontaneous endeavour.

Additionally, the results indicate that collaborations with universities or research centres are commonly noticed (10,9%), followed by the use of external consultants (6,3%) (Figure 59). These ideas suggest that climate assemblies need a considerable level of competence and methodological rigor, and that public authorities need external support and advice from academic or professional specialists. Furthermore, this has the potential to enhance the credibility and legitimacy of both the process and the resulting outcomes.

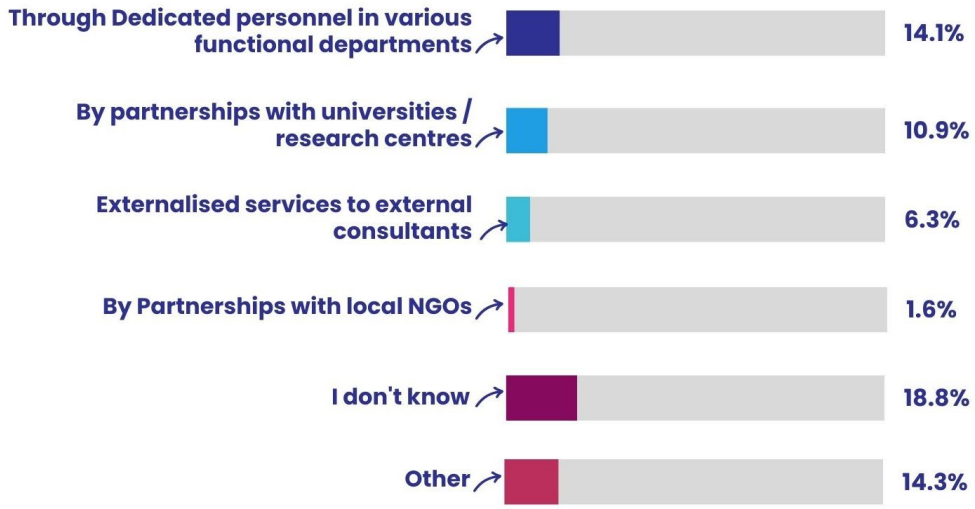

Figure 60 Partnership for Climate Assemblies organisation

Nevertheless, the partnership with NGOs is very rare (1,6%). This is surprising considering the pivotal role and huge potential of civil society groups in encouraging mobilisation and citizen engagement in relation to climate issues. The result indicates a potential deficiency in confidence or cooperation

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between public authorities and NGOs, or a possible lack of understanding or motivation among NGOs to actively participate in climate assemblies.

The dominant response observed was "I don't know", with 18,8%, potentially indicating a limited amount of communication or transparency on the procedure or a lower level of engagement or involvement from the survey participants.

The involvement of different organisation in Climate Assemblies varies across different population sizes of cities/regions (Figure 61). For instance, in smaller cities/regions (50.001 – 100.000 inhabitants), partnerships with universities/research centres are more adopted, while in larger cities (500.001 – 1.000.000 and over 1.000.000 inhabitants), a mix of partnerships with universities, and externalized services are most common.

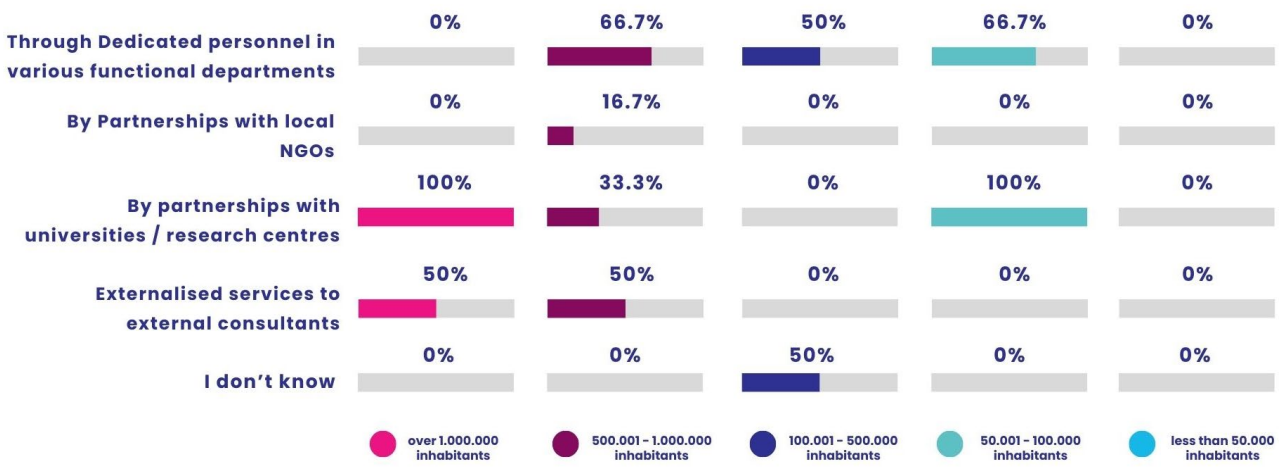

Figure 61 Differentiated variations between the city/region population size and organisations involved in organising the Climate Assemblies

A substantial percentage of participants indicated a low frequency of climate assembly organisation (Figure 62). Thus, 26,6% of the participants explicitly indicated that climate assemblies are rarely organised, typically occurring on an annual or biannual basis. This suggests that climate assemblies are not entirely missing from the political arena, but rather occur irregularly. Additionally, it may be assumed that citizen assemblies are predominantly engaged for addressing particular and urgent matters, rather than for continuous and regular engagement with the general public.

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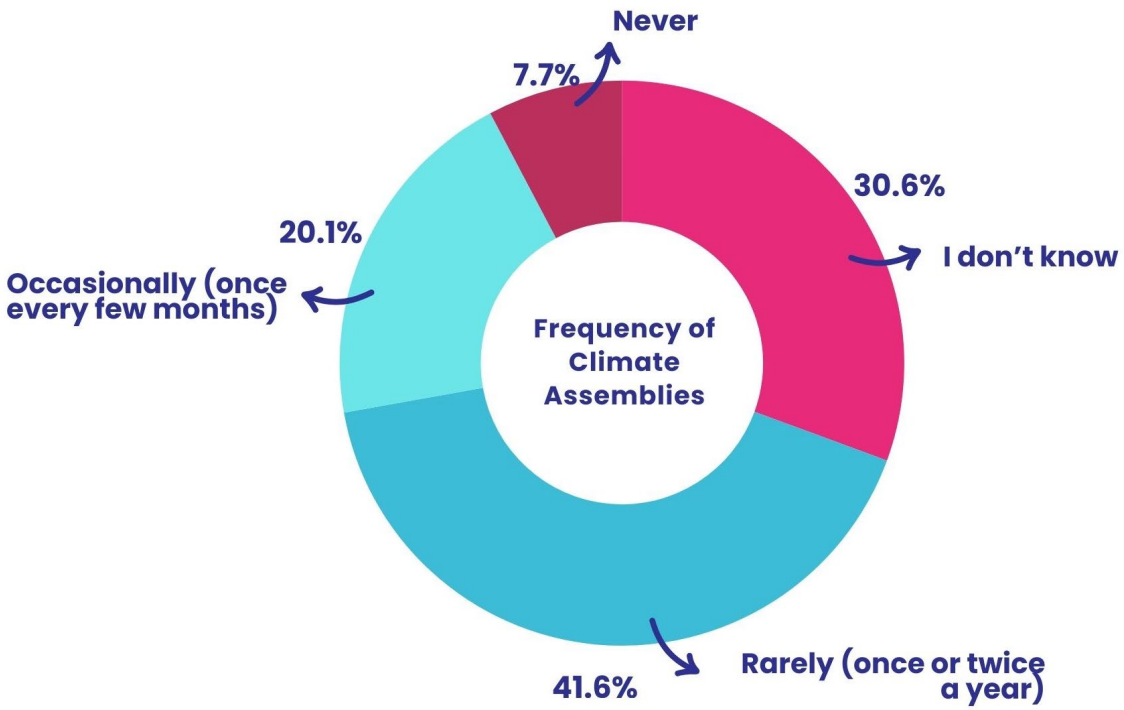

Figure 62 Frequency of Climate Assemblies organisation

According to the responses, 9,4% from the assemblies are occasionally organised, taking place on an intermittent basis, typically occurring once every few months. This observation indicates that certain cities/regions show a higher level of proactivity and innovation in adopting citizen assemblies as an instrument of promoting democratic engagement and discourse. Additionally, this implies that these regions have a greater level of competence and expertise in the field of developing and carrying out collaborative initiatives. Furthermore, they have a higher degree of confidence and engagement from the general public.

Notably, no respondents reported organizing climate assemblies regularly within their respective cities/regions. This indicates that the use of citizen assemblies is not widespread or regular in many areas, and that there is a scarcity of institutional backing and public knowledge regarding this particular form of democratic governance.

It is observed that only 3,1% of the respondents said that their region never organises climate assemblies. The observed percentage suggests that the cities/regions do not entirely lack awareness or disregard for climate assemblies. This also implies that these cities/regions have willingness to implement climate assemblies in the future, as indicated by the responses to the next questions.

Only 4,7% of the participants indicated a lack of knowledge regarding the frequency at which climate assemblies are organised in their respective cities/regions. The observed value indicates a deficiency in the dissemination and exchange of knowledge related to climate assemblies among the responders. Additionally, this suggests that these responders have a lack of engagement or interest

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in climate assemblies, or that they have limited knowledge regarding the potential benefits and results associated with this initiative.

In conclusion, the findings indicate a significant disparity in the frequency with which various regions organise climate assemblies, spanning from never to occasionally. Additionally, this observation indicates that there exists high potential for enhancement and gaining knowledge with regards to increasing the frequency, quality, and impact of climate assemblies.

There is a wide array of reasons indicated for the decision to prevent holding climate assemblies, including factors such as limited understanding of the topic, as well as specific impediments like the absence of enthusiasm among policymakers or general public (Figure 63). Some cities/regions have formulated strategies for upcoming climate assemblies, demonstrating a proactive attitude toward public involvement. The incorporation of climate-related topics into various policies is a common approach, indicating a preference for addressing issues related to climate within existing strategical frameworks. Several cities/regions are using a sequential methodology by strategically organising climate assemblies subsequent to the establishment of climate policy. Other cities/regions face difficulties in organising climate assemblies because of limitations in capacity, resources, and organisational structure. The presence or absence of legal obligations is a factor that influences the decision-making process for certain cities/regions. The significance of evaluating community interest in engagement activities is further illustrated by the absence of citizen interest, perceived lack of necessity, and concerns around randomization. Certain cities/regions mentioned the lack of knowledge of particular methods of engagement, suggesting a need for preparation and awareness inside the organisation. It was mentioned as well that climate assemblies must be organized centrally. This could indicate a preference for a centralized approach to organizing engagement initiatives, potentially involving coordination at higher administrative levels.

Figure 63 Most common reasons mentioned for not organising Climate Assemblies

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Among the sample of 64 participants, the majority (87,5%) responded affirmatively, while a minority of only 12,5% provided a negative response (Figure 64). This observation suggests the significant level of interest and/or involvement shown by the participants on the topic of climate change and democratic deliberation. This indicates an interest in continuing or replicating such assemblies within their own contexts. Also, this finding could suggest that the participants perceived a lack of knowledge or skills in organizing or facilitating a Climate Assembly in an effective manner, hence indicating a need for additional information or training in this regard. In any case, the table demonstrates a favourable attitude and an interest in gaining further knowledge on this innovative mode of civic engagement.

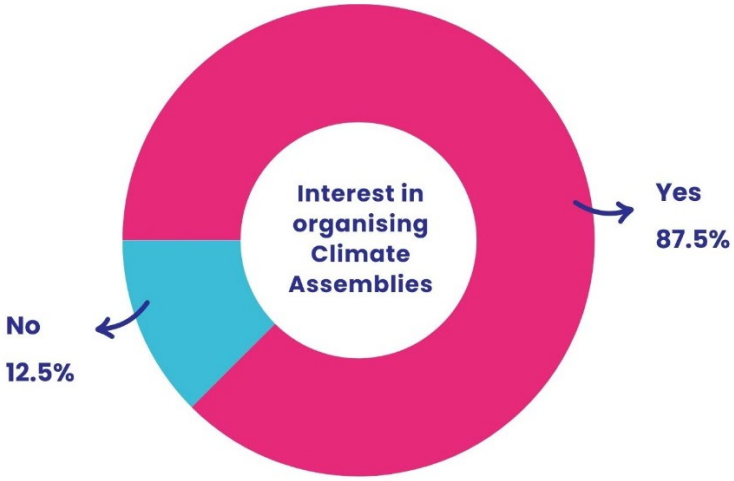

Figure 64 Willingness to learn about Climate Assemblies among the survey participants

The survey results demonstrate a range of preferences among participants in terms of the format via which they would like to receive information about CLIMAS. The absence of a dominant format indicates the many learning styles and preferences expressed by the participants.

The category that received the most preference among the participants was presentations, which was picked by 60,9% of the responders (Figure 65). This choice indicates the significance of effective and concise communication, allowing participants to engage with speakers and request additional clarification regarding CLIMAS' primary concepts and goals.

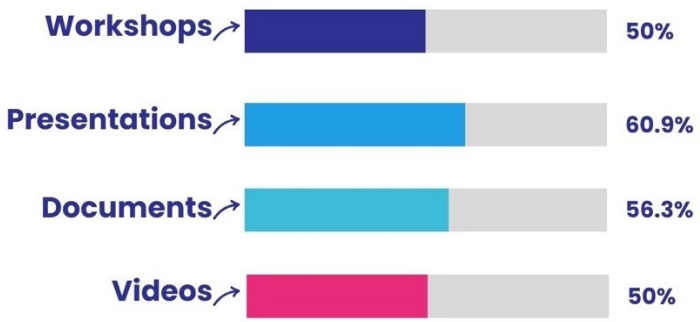

Figure 65 Preferred methods for delivery the information about Climate Assemblies and CLIMAS project

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Documents emerged as the second most favoured category, with the preference of 56,3% of the participants. This tendency demonstrates an interest to obtain more comprehensive and thorough knowledge regarding CLIMAS and its approaches. Participants also value the inclusion of written references for future reference.

The category of workshops and videos are ranked as the third most favourite among the participants, with 50%. This observation indicates that the individuals involved are open to actively participating in and collaborating during their learning experiences. Workshops serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and viewpoints among participants and facilitators, promoting a collaborative environment conducive to reciprocal knowledge acquisition, while the preference for audio and visual materials, suggests preferences for more engaging and dynamic learning experience.

In brief, the respondents in the survey demonstrate a predilection for presentations, documents, and workshops, underlining the significance of effective communication, comprehensive information, and engaging informative experiences. Gaining an understanding of these preferences is essential in order to tailor strategies for communication that effectively deliver information on CLIMAS to a wide range of people.

By tailoring information delivery to the preferences of potential organizers, CLIMAS can enhance the effectiveness of its educational initiatives and empower individuals and organizations to successfully plan and implement climate assemblies.

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5. In-depth discussion on current engagement practices – cities representatives' insights

The survey presented in the previous section has been complemented with a series of interviews with a selection of 11 public authorities' representatives. The selection of the public authorities' representatives to be interviewed has been made based on few criteria: geographical location, previous knowledge, and experience in engaging with stakeholders, including citizens and their city's interest to address the climate change.

The interviews with the cities' representatives revealed a series of common aspects that they are facing in their activities in engaging with stakeholders and citizens. The analysis also revealed many aspects that are characteristic to a certain city/area. The analysis shows that the cities use various methods, face different obstacles, and implement many solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

In Figure 66 is presented an overview of the roles that interviewees have in their respective administrations. They range from leading the communication and engagement activities within the administration to lead the mission of their city to achieve the ambitious high-level goals for climate change at local level. Moreover, several cities, chose to have several persons represented in the discussions; their role in the administration has been very valuable for the interview. In terms of gender, a very small majority of men over women. One of the first observation resulted from the analysis is that all the interviewees showed a high level of interest and passion on the subject; this is mainly due to their individual values. All of them, indifferent of their role and position in the organisation, express their commitment to collaborate with stakeholders and citizens to achieve together the main targets proposed at local level for climate.

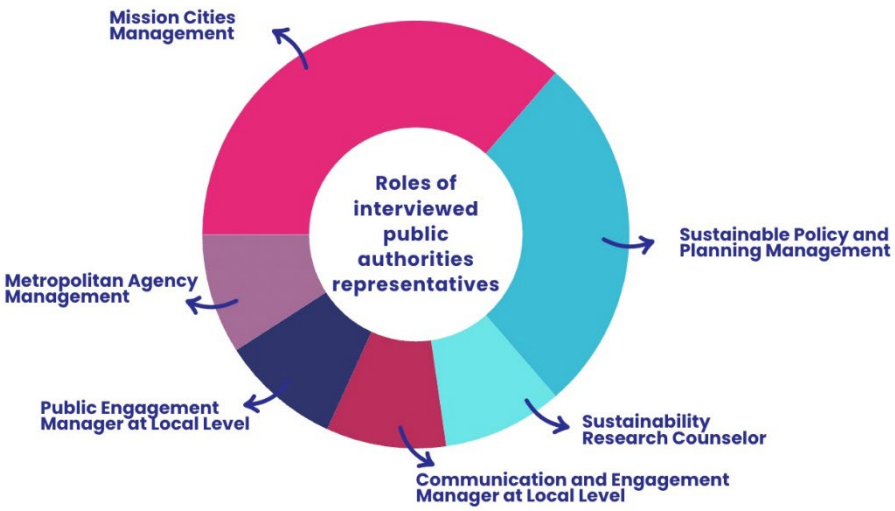

Figure 66 The role of the public authorities' representatives interviewed

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Many cities' representatives emphasized the need to address the climate actions in an **integrated manner**. The majority of the cities have an umbrella strategy, such as Climate Strategy that acts as the main instrument to deploy the actions at local level for climate change. Most of the cities' representatives declared that **climate related actions are looking beyond climate policies and environmental impact,** not only addressing to mitigation actions but also at demonstrating how these actions aiming to establish how individual efforts contribute to overall welfare. This broader perspective seeks to engage the public by emphasizing the tangible benefits, such as cost reduction for energy. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees stated that climate issues are incorporated in other policies, such mobility policies (Figure 67). Therefore, the engagement activities, mainly with the citizens have a major importance now; cities need to pay more effort in communicating in a clear and honest manner the need for individual mind-set change that will allow the acceptance of necessary climate actions.

"… a new public service opened at local level. It was focusing on issues such as waste management, circularity, biodiversity, air quality…. …this service also focused on how people could save energy to lower their bills …."

Several cities' representatives mentioned the **influence of major disruptions** on climate-related initiatives and regulations at local level. They refer mainly at conflicts elsewhere in the world, but in particular at the war in Ukraine. The war is causing major concern in European cities (and beyond) about rising energy prices, with important consequences on environmental policies. While many European cities are concerned of the indirect effects of the war, the cities in the conflict areas are concerned on the environmental consequences of the war on the destructions of habitats, natural and build environment.

"The war between Russia and Ukraine […] offered this awareness of the energy price issue. Because of this […] the regional government has set new rules to the level of energy performance…."

"The climate topics somehow rise during the full-scale invasion. …. discussions about the environmental impact of the war have started."

While the war in Ukraine affected every individual in Europe in a form or another, city authorities are under the pressure to operate with lower budget sometimes or in an economic environment that is more volatile than before. This pressure is translated in actions that requires that everybody should act in a more environmentally friendly manner; however, the behaviour change is not achieved overnight, therefore the cities made also significant effort in communicating with their citizens and to engage with all stakeholders. Many actions have been mentioned by the cities' representatives from communication campaigns through newsletter, citizens' awareness raising campaigns to climate assemblies.

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It was observed as well that **public consultation is compulsory** in many cities, but there are consistent challenges in participants selection and process accuracy in several cities. There are population groups that were indicated to be more difficult to reach, such as migrants, women, and younger generations. This emphasises the need for targeted strategies, language inclusivity, and culturally sensitive approaches, and moreover a need for refining and ensuring the effectiveness of these processes. The engagement activities that have been created as a mandatory stage in any process at local level could have been conducted to participation fatigue, lack of trust and confidence in the process. This raises the issue of the methods and channels that public authorities need to use in order to ensure a meaningful engagement process. As a consequence, public authorities invest nowadays in developing in house, multidisciplinary teams that covers many skills required to implement meaningful engagement campaigns; there are cities across Europe which teams are covering a wide range of skills such as communication, sociology, psychology that traditionally are not in a public authority technical team. The need to combine technical skills with the ability to understand each and individual need and how to address it, choosing the right manner and communication techniques was early recognised by many successful cities. Interesting to observe that they are mainly cities in Western Europe, where there is a long-standing tradition in open communication, both from administration, but also from citizens. While in Eastern Europe, it is observed that general public becomes more articulated in expressing their needs and expectations than in the past; public authorities are becoming more receptive and have developed a strong relationship with representatives of the general public. This is a necessary step to build trust and confidence between actors.

"…we are obliged to make a participation planning, for every major plan we do. And even something quite small like building permit, participation is part of the process and we're not allowed to do anything without participation planning."

"Public consultation is compulsory by law, but the process is not always straightforward."

"It needs quite a lot of tailored skills and understanding the different perspectives"

"We are failing to cope with 2 major changes: on the one hand, the audience is evolving into a much more digitally competent audience and as a result, engagement tools that refer to physical presence in a space are easily becoming obsolete, and on the other hand, only basic tools are used at the level of the administration or the one who should manage engagement."

"… we had the situation when … an NGO developed the recommendations for the City Council on how to deal with climate change on local level and these goals were later on introduced to the City Council and to all departments responsible."

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As a **mechanism of consultation**, surveys are a widely used across cities, indicating that this is a preferred tool in data collection approaches. Additionally, focus groups and diverse forms of meetings have been mentioned. Moreover, several cities mentioned the intention to organise Climate Assemblies as recognition of the need for diverse methods to gather comprehensive insights.

"Random collection of thoughts and ideas and perceptions … we use surveys."

"We have a digital city panel which is actually like an online survey and … the next survey will be on the green transitions."

"…decision makers are really asking people what their opinion, their thoughts are…. when we are developing some new programs and new solutions, new policies for the city ….and it is organized in different ways."

Participatory budgeting emerges as a common method for citizen engagement across multiple cities, highlighting a commitment to involving citizens in decision-making processes related to resource allocation. This approach empowers citizens to have a direct impact on resource allocation and decision-making processes.

"A nice example here is the participatory budgeting component. [The city] is among those with a high index in this regard because there is a great interest on the part of the community to be active."

"Every year we have some opportunity that is called participatory budget…. we have a list of projects that could be included in the annual budget of the Council…the citizens have the opportunity to vote the most interesting proposal that they want to be developed."

Communication strategies vary across cities, including formalized communication in some, in others involving well-known figures for awareness campaigns. The interviewees mentioned various communication channels such as meetings, seminars, webinars, and online platforms used at local level to communicate with stakeholders and citizens.

Social media was identified as a valuable tool for communication and opinion collection in various cities. This reflects the evolving landscape of communication channels in engaging citizens.

"And we have climate ambassadors. Those are prominent figures at local level. Ice hockey player or CEO or this kind of role."

"There are many young people on social networks who are very active on environmental issues. Among young people this is widespread, and they really understand very well that it is important."

"Facebook is the most used tool to communicate with citizens and to collect their opinions"

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The challenge of countering **fake information** related to climate change and the risk to engage with less knowledgeable, but very vocal people was mentioned as well by interviewees. This aspect is very important for the authorities to disseminate accurate information for maintaining public trust.

"Fake information that are disseminated are very hard to be counteracted"

"There is a risk of selecting people who do not have the necessary experience, but have a lot of guts, and who can block experienced people who could make a real contribution to the debate"

The main challenge that has been mentioned is the **language used** in communicating different messages to the public. Sometimes, the usage of a very scientific language could not be easily understood by the general public, and therefore it is easy to be counteracted by those promoting fake news. This puts pressure on public authorities to expand the in-house skills or to create new partnerships with organisations (NGOs, private entities etc) to re-fine the communication messages and support in choosing the right communication channels to reach everybody. There is also the danger of not using the most sensitive language in case of certain social groups – such as women, LGBTQ+ or even migrants. The necessity to have a simple, easy to understand message by everybody raises many difficulties to many public authorities. They invest in creating a general message then later is adapted for the understanding of certain groups of people. For example, the reduction of Russian oil dependence may not be grasped, but the support to counteract the increase of the monthly energy bill for the household is easily understood. It is also worth mentioning that several public authorities mentioned that the public is much more aware of the climate emergency, therefore before the authority made actions, the public already made several steps to become more environmentally friendly. The cost of the energy, the scarcity to different resources, the loss of jobs sometimes, pushed many people to already make the change. For others, the existence of public programmes that are tailored in such a way to facilitate the behaviour change have been mentioned as successful. Despite these positive examples, the public authorities mentioned the need to "step-up" and increase the efforts to facilitate the individual behaviour change. The European Commission programme for Mission Cities with all its supporting projects and initiatives have been mentioned as important source of inspiration, knowledge, and support in dealing with local awareness aspects. CLIMAS project therefore becomes an important source of inspiration for those cities that would like to diversify their toolbox for engagement with stakeholders and citizens.

However, the Climate Assemblies introduces some challenges related to the **political acceptance** of this mechanism for engagement.

The existence of the Climate Assembly in an already complicated policy-making system may trigger some resistance in understanding the real value of a Climate Assembly.

Climate Assembly is a tool for canvassing the balance and range of public opinion on climate issues, by providing the necessary prominence in the array of issues to be dealt at local level by the policy-makers. And, overtime, it could also provide a measure for the level in which the local climate policies are being successful and changing the mind-set.

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"[Climate Assembly] is a political choice."

"City Council, which is democratically elected, is legally the only assembly which has executive power. The question is, if we have a Citizen Assembly, what can we offer to these people? …you shouldn't be holding an assembly where you're not able to implement the decisions of this Assembly."

"Some of the politicians are very clear and eager to use Climate Assemblies… Some of them are a little bit: Why do we need to establish a Citizen Assembly when we have the City Council?"

In a fast-changing society, where the values of individuals are evolving fast, as a consequence of the technological progress, there is more and more the need to re-connect with each other and re-assess the individual values against those of the majority. The emergency posed by the climate change is a perfect opportunity to develop new types of relationships and partnerships, that initially were not possible or needed. The politicians' role has changed; their importance is more significant nowadays than ever. Their role as facilitators of the change at local level is crucial; their acceptance of the role and the way they implement it will ensure the community's success or failure on longer term. However, the actual value of a Climate Assembly may transcend the political acceptance; their value could be measured in the way the community contributed to the changes required to meet the climate goals.

The interviews with public authorities' representatives offered a very interesting picture of how the engagement of stakeholders and citizens is developed in cities across Europe, and how Climate Assemblies are perceived and used. The diagram below (Figure 67) offers an overview of the main findings from this analysis.

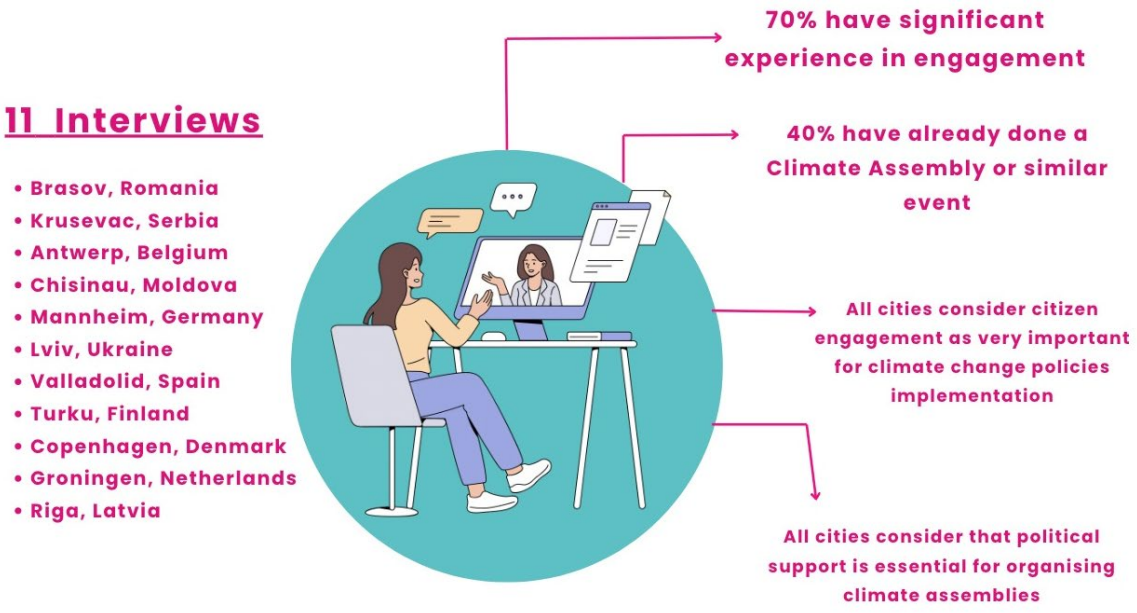

Figure 67 Main findings of the interviews organised with 11 cities' representatives

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We could conclude that the interviews support the findings from the pan-European survey and explain some of these findings. For example, the need of a multi-disciplinary team that could develop in-house meaningful strategies for engagement or the ability to create strategic partnerships with relevant organisations have been mentioned as basic conditions for successful engagement strategies in both analyses done. What it is very encouraging from both analyses is the interest of public authorities to invest in engaging citizens and stakeholders in any action done to meet the climate goals. Even though some of them do not have enough capacity to do meaningful engagement campaigns, all of them are interested to learn new techniques and methods to communicate and collect relevant needs and expectations of the stakeholders and citizens; moreover, the majority of the cities are very much interested in testing new methods for deliberation of solutions that could be included in future local policies. They need information and knowledge in this regard, and they express that follow many European initiatives that could provide them with such knowledge. CLIMAS projects and its future outputs will be one of them.

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6. Conclusions

Effective stakeholder engagement, including citizens plays an essential role in ensuring democratic governance, social inclusivity, the legitimacy of authorities, and the achievement of policies and projects objectives. It enhances the quality of public policies and services, promotes community engagement and a sense of ownership, supports in the development of well-informed decisions, and facilitates the building of trust between authorities and the general public.

Nonetheless, effective engagement is not a straightforward exercise. The consultation procedure necessitates capacities for careful organisation, planning, and assessment, in addition to specialized skills in facilitating discussions, managing feedback, and mediating potential disagreements. The main dimensions that define the **public authorities capacity to engage with stakeholders** as resulted from the interviews carried out, the survey results and the findings of several EU financed research projects (Cristea, 2023; Cristea et al., 2022; Cristea, Moldoveanu, & Gabi, 2023; Cristea & Zagan, 2020b; Morfoulaki & Chatziathanasiou, 2023) are:

a) **Resources** include financial, human and technological resources that enable authorities to organize and implement stakeholder engagement activities (e.g. budget/funds to organize events, staff to facilitate dialogues, tools to communicate and interact with stakeholders etc.).
b) **Expertise and skills** imply the competencies that authorities need to communicate, negotiate, understand, analyse and organize stakeholder engagement processes (e.g. negotiation skills to facilitate discussions and resolve conflicts, understanding of stakeholder needs to tailor engagement strategies, analytical skills to ensure inclusive representation and assess engagement initiatives, organizational skills for planning and coordinating engagement activities, communication and negotiation skills to deliver information and listen to stakeholders, etc.).
c) **Regulatory framework and guidelines** refer to application of the regulatory framework that govern the stakeholder engagement, develop and apply guidelines that lead stakeholder engagement activities that ensuring consistency. Additionally, it is compulsory to ensure the transparency in the decision-making process.
d) The fourth dimension identified is the **organizational culture and attitude** that reflects the degree of openness, adaptability, and commitment that authorities show towards stakeholder engagement. *Openness* is represented by a willingness to actively engage stakeholders in decision-making processes and to diligently consider their opinions and needs. *Adaptability* requires the capacity to adjust strategies and actions in response to emerging challenges, feedback from stakeholders, and changing circumstances. *Commitment* requires demonstrating a real interest in and adherence to engaging stakeholders, as well as fulfilling promises and obligations.

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Organizing **Climate Assemblies** involves a comprehensive and inclusive approach to engaging citizens. Public authorities, as the most important actor in addressing climate change and engaging citizens in policy making, play a crucial role in supporting organisation of Climate Assemblies. Based on the interviews carried out for this deliverable with the cities that already organised Climate Assemblies and on the investigation of specialized literature (Araos et al., 2016; C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, n.d.; "Dossier," n.d.; "National Climate Assemblies," n.d.; "The growing traction of climate citizens assemblies—European Climate Foundation," n.d.; Elstub, Carrick, Farrell, & Mockler, 2021; Hall, 2020; Kainuma et al., 2023; Lacelle-Webster & Warren, 2021; Wagner & Lima, 2023), we can summarise several key steps and actions that the authorities can take to engage with citizens and successfully organize Climate Assemblies. First of all, the public authorities need to clearly define *the objectives and the scope* of the Climate Assembly by identifying the issues that the assembly will address, the expected outcomes, how the recommendations will be integrated into the policies. Developing a *communication plan* that defines the objectives, messages, channels, instruments, actions, and indicators for involving citizens during the Climate Assembly procedure represents another important step. Moreover, the communication plan has to include actions to communicate the outcomes to inform and guide the city's decision-making and policy-making on climate change related actions. An effective communication plan may facilitate a rise of interest, trust, awareness, feedback, and dissemination of outcomes. It should be adaptable and flexible in response to evolving circumstances. The content and format of the Climate Assembly should be *accessible and understandable* for all participants, regardless of their condition, background or education level.

One of the most important aspects of a climate assembly is the *participants selection*. The selection process determines who gets to participate, how representative are they for the wider population, and how diverse and balanced their views are. A poorly selected climate assembly can undermine its legitimacy, quality, and impact. Participants selection was one of the most discussed topics during the interviews, when the interviewees highlight several challenges in recruiting the participants. There is a sum of requirements that the selection should comply. This selection shall be randomly, stratified - clustered into categories based on certain criteria, such as demographics (gender, age, ethnicity, income, education, etc.), geography, inclusive (vulnerable groups, youth representation, balanced expertise), and sometimes, there is a need for setting-up deliberation groups. The process of participants selection shall be transparent, by communicating clearly and openly about its criteria, methodology, and purpose for selecting citizens. Transparent selection process ensures that the climate assembly is accountable and trustworthy to the public and the participants.

In certain situations, it might be important to organise a *pre-assembly information session* that provides an in-depth overview of the Climate Assembly's aims, scope, process, and expected outcomes. In addition to providing information and education regarding the Climate Assembly, this session might address any questions or worries that citizens may have. Furthermore, the session might serve as a platform for recruiting individuals for the Climate Assembly, using methods such as voluntary registration or random selection.

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To organize and manage the Climate Assembly, a *dedicated team* is necessary. This team should consist of city administration and external partners or consultants who can help with various aspects of the process, such as facilitating discussions, educating participants, communicating with the public, evaluating the outcomes, etc. The team should have well-defined roles and responsibilities and should meet and coordinate regularly.

Another important aspect discussed during the interviews about Climate Assemblies was represented by the importance of the *facilitation* in guiding and moderating the discussions and deliberations during the Climate Assembly. The facilitator is responsible for creating an atmosphere that encourages participants to freely express their opinions without anxiety about criticism and to guides discussions to ensure that participants stay on topic and have equal opportunities to express their opinion. The facilitator should actively encourage all participants to engage in discussions, ensuring that quieter voices are heard and maintain neutrality and impartiality throughout the process, avoiding personal bias and allowing participants to form their own conclusions. An important role of the facilitator, as emerges from the analysis, is to guide the group through decision-making processes, ensuring that outcomes are informed by the collective input of participants and to summarizes key points, ensuring that participants feel their contributions were valued.

At last, but not the least, is the implementation of a *feedback mechanism* and a procedure *to share the findings* of the Climate Assembly. The feedback mechanism helps to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the Climate Assembly, as well as to identify and address any issues or challenges. The findings and recommendations should be shared with the city administration, the stakeholders, the media, and the public, as well as with other cities or organizations that may be interested in organizing or learning from the Climate Assembly.

In conclusion, interest in engagement stakeholders and citizens it is very high in Europe. Every stage of the research done concluded with the same message: “public authorities acknowledge the fact that stakeholders and citizens need to be involved in designing and implementing solutions that will address the climate goals”. Climate Assemblies it is already a tool that some of the cities across Europe already use and many consider using.

The **public authorities’ role as facilitators of the dialogue** between all stakeholders, including citizens and decision/policymakers is crucial, and this report sheds light on the main aspects to be addressed or developed when engaging with stakeholders and citizens. CLIMAS project will build on this understanding in the development of future tools and wider recommendations.

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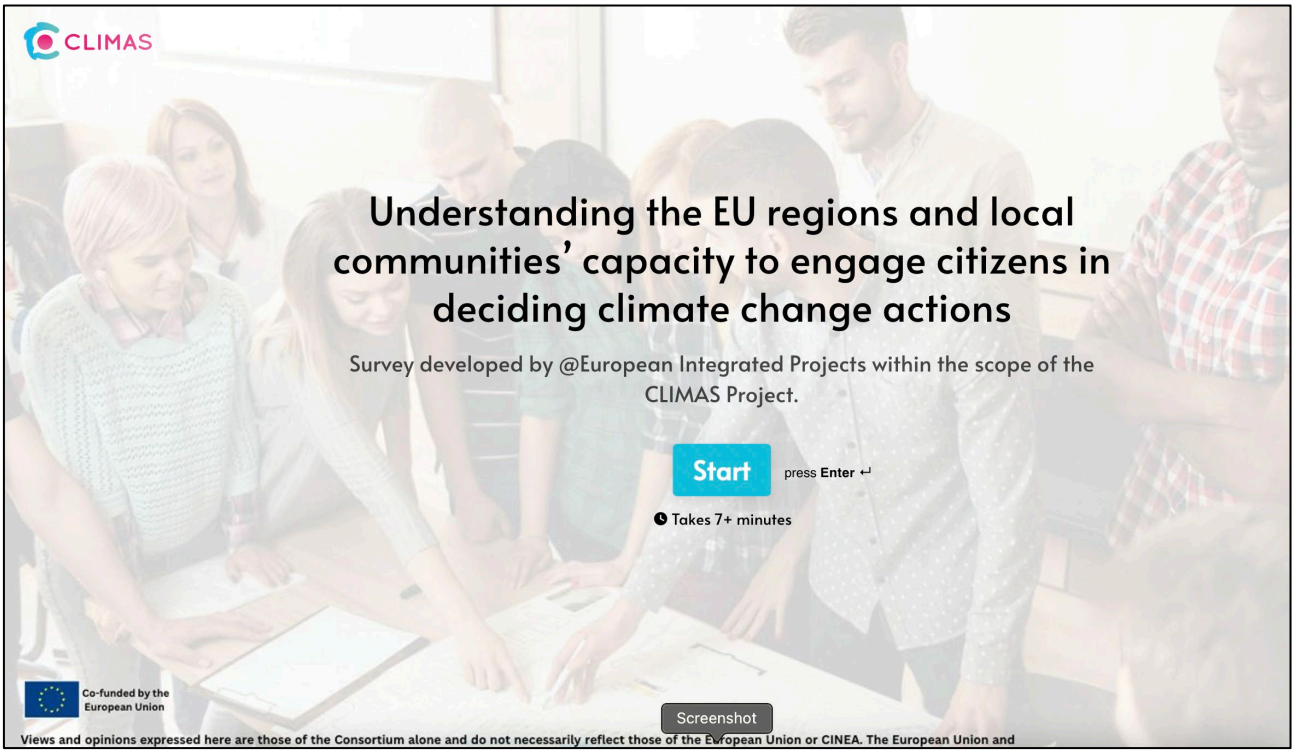
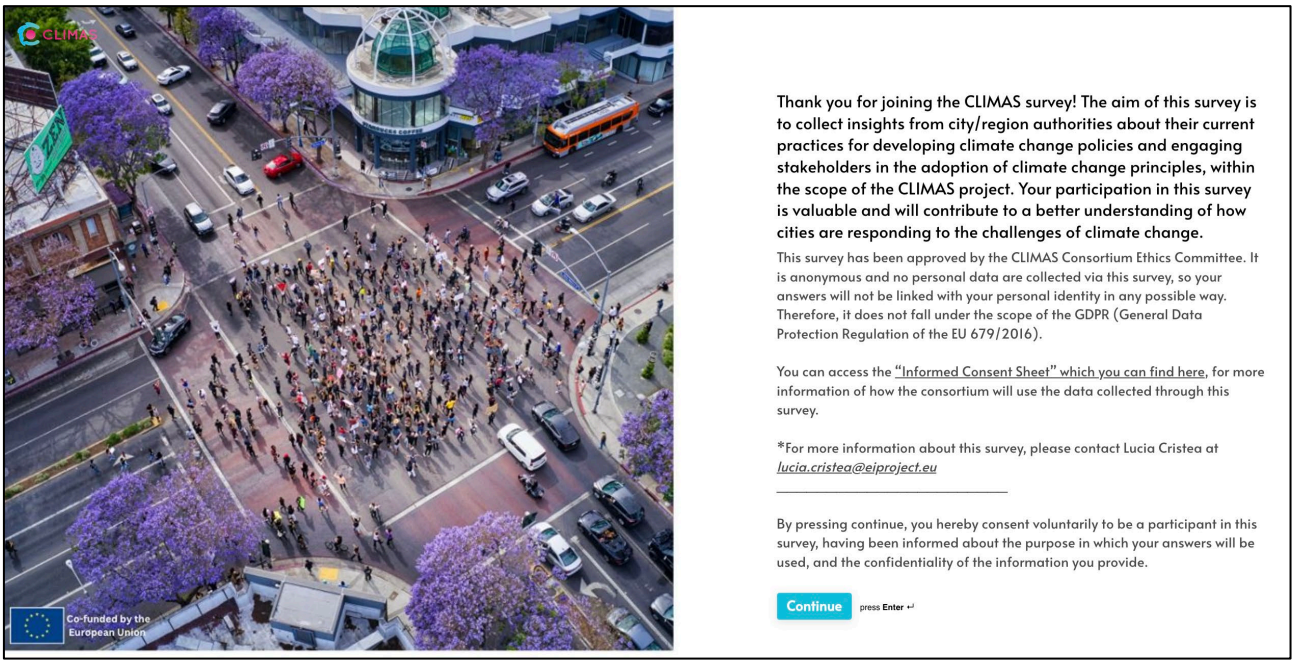
Annex 1: Survey questionnaire





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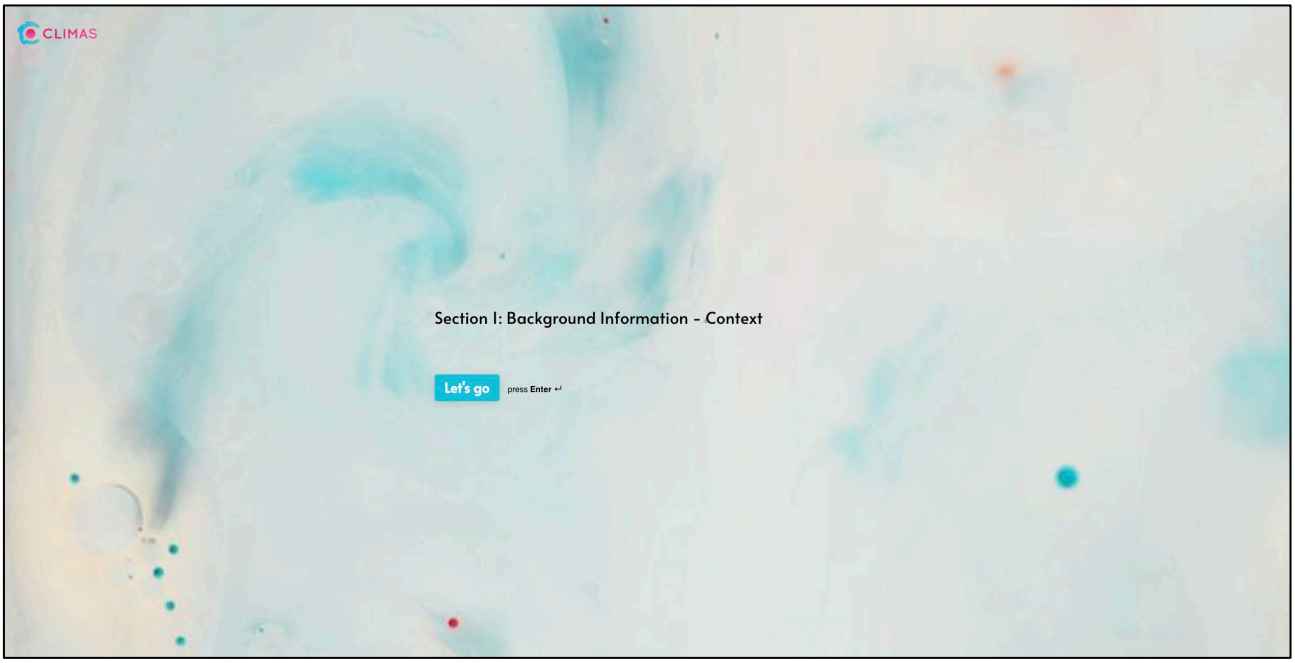

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CLIMAS

2→ Before we start, we need to know: are you representing a city or a region? *

A City

B Region

CLIMAS

3→ What is the name of your region?*

Type your answer here...

OK ✓ press Enter ↵

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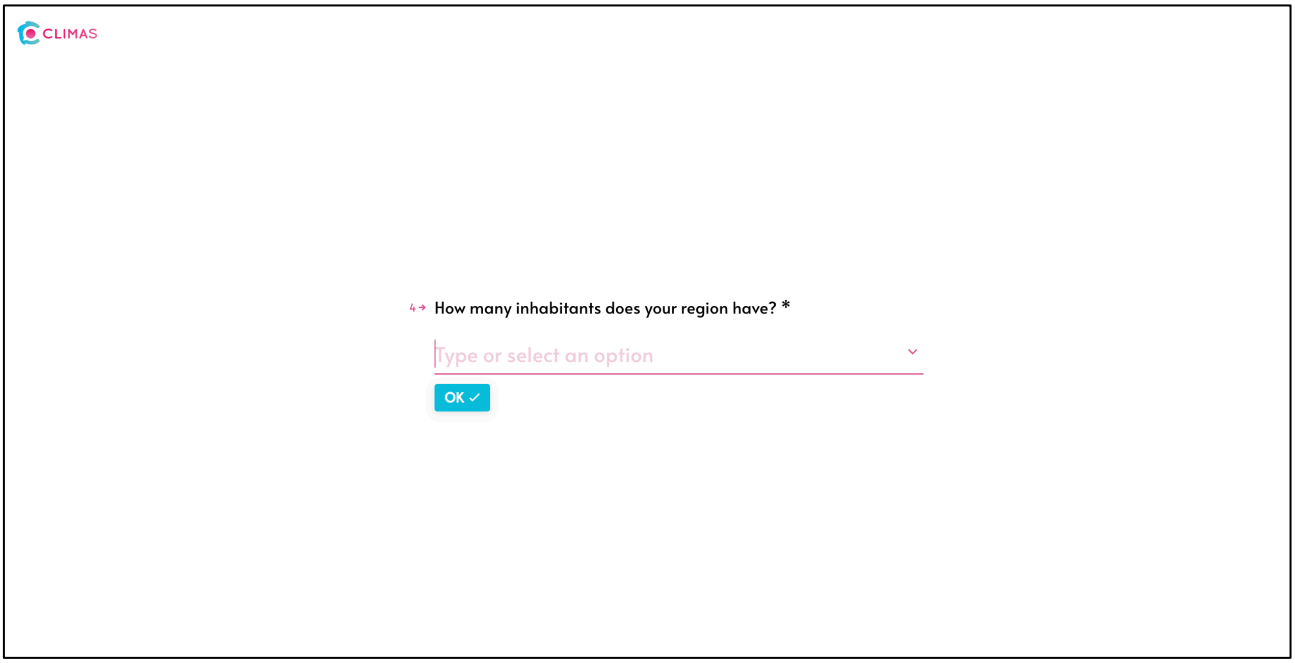

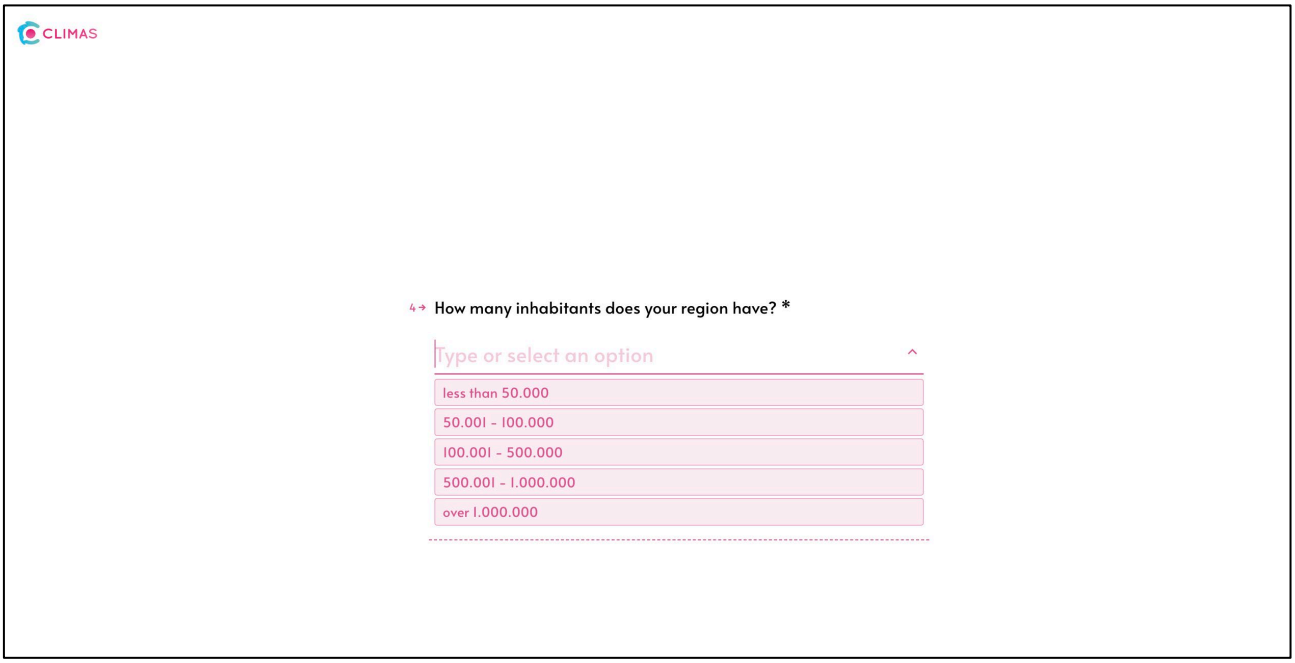

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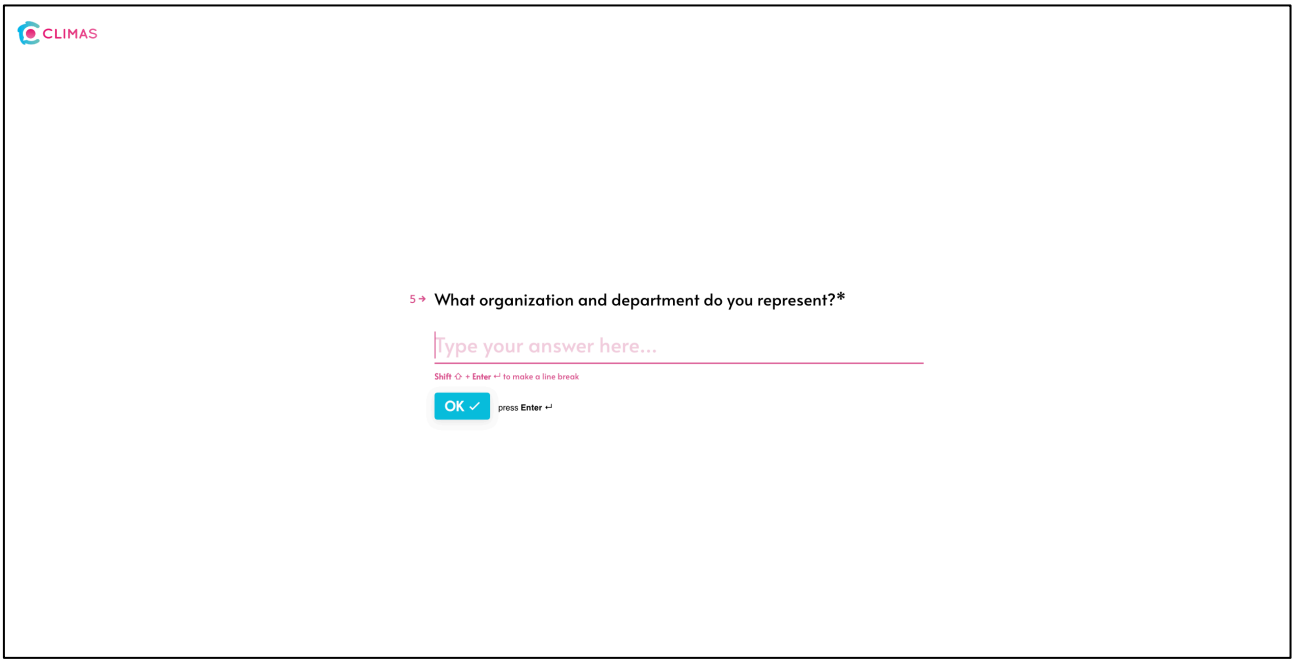

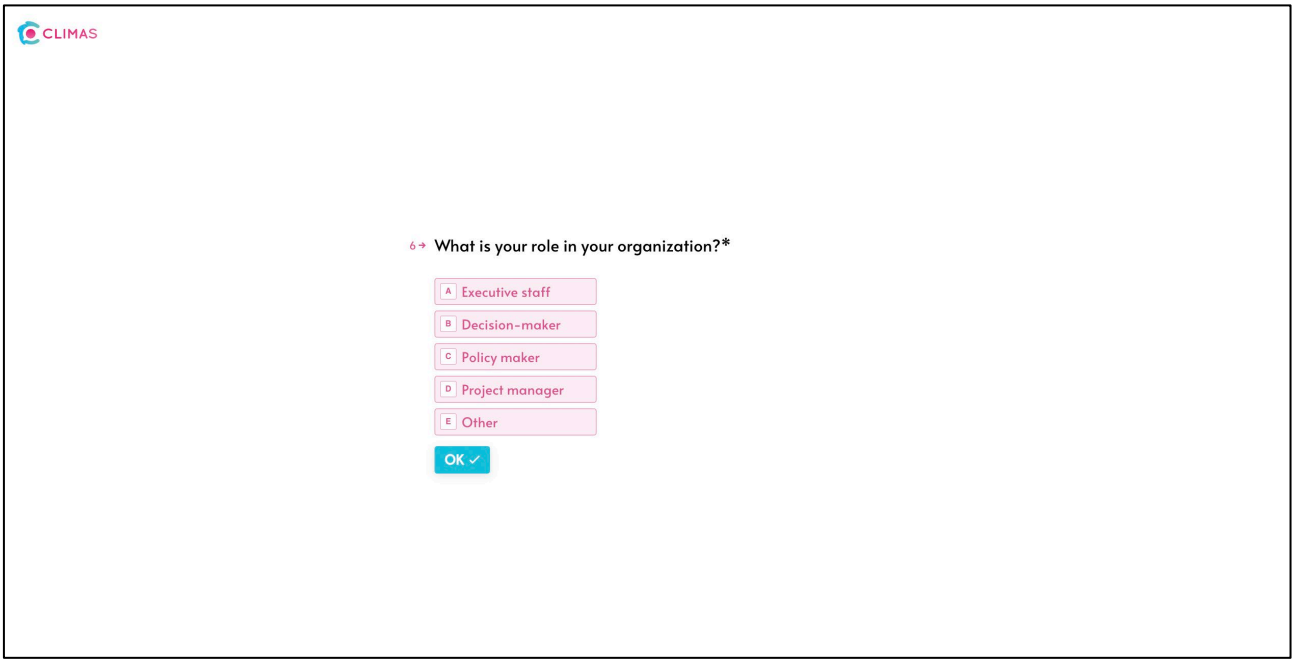

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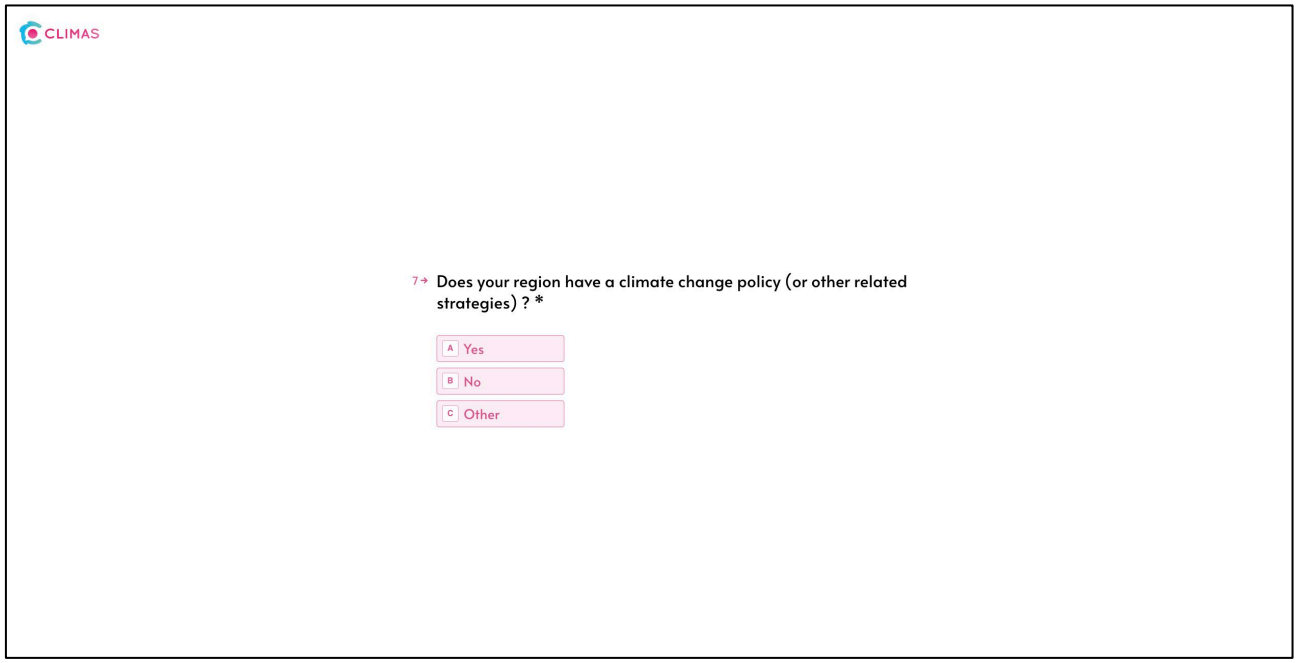

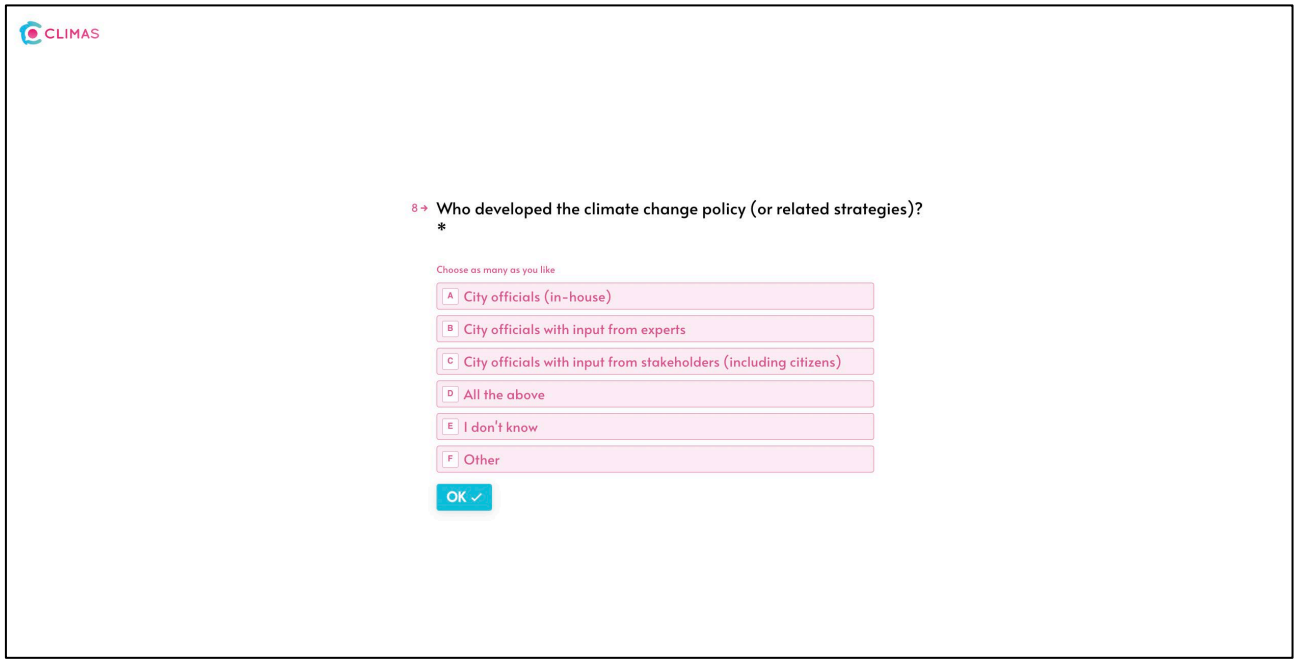

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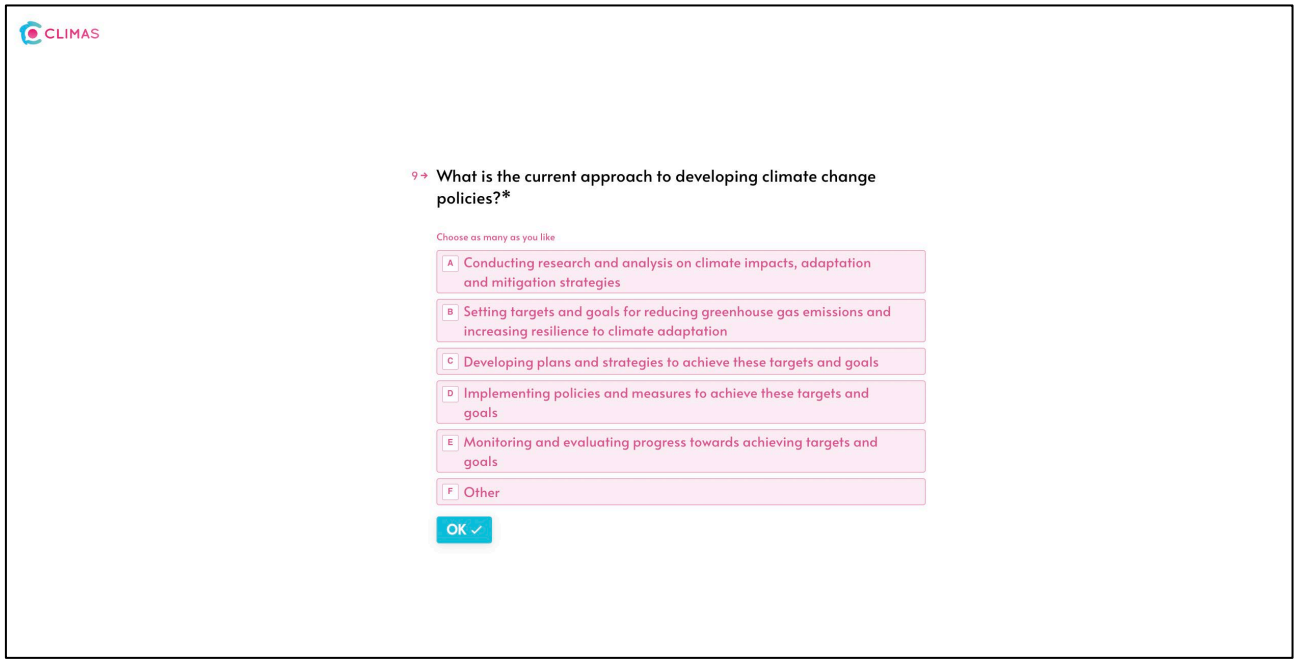

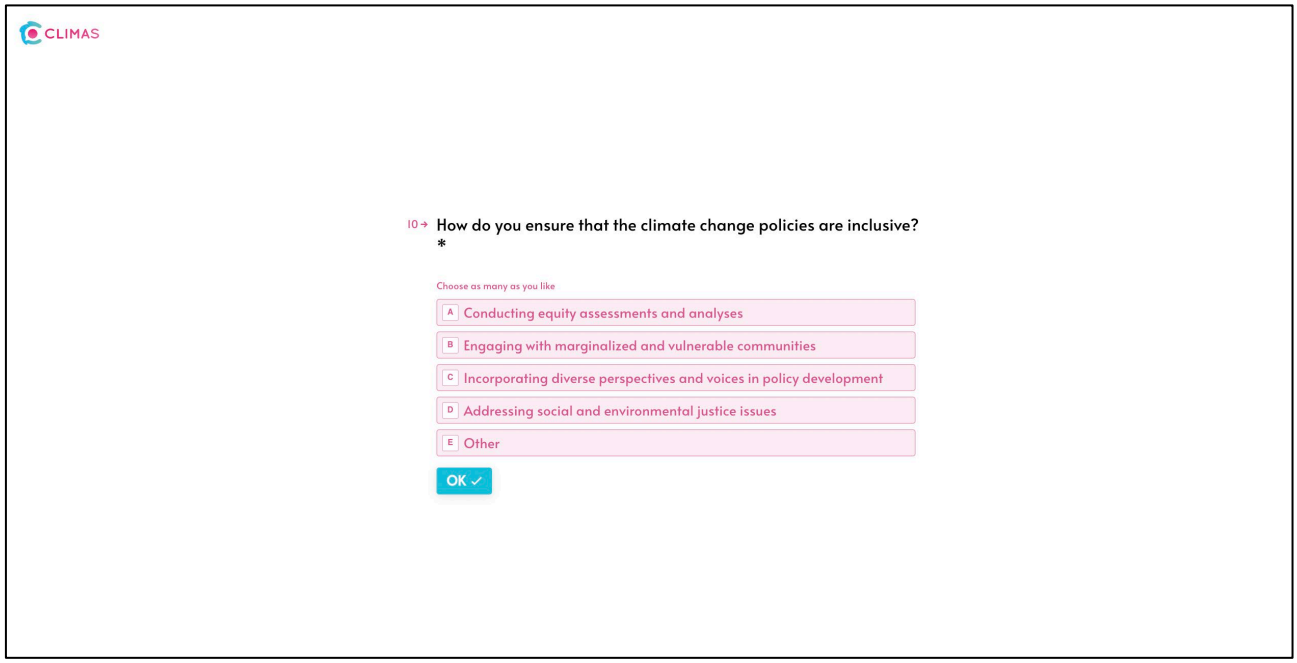

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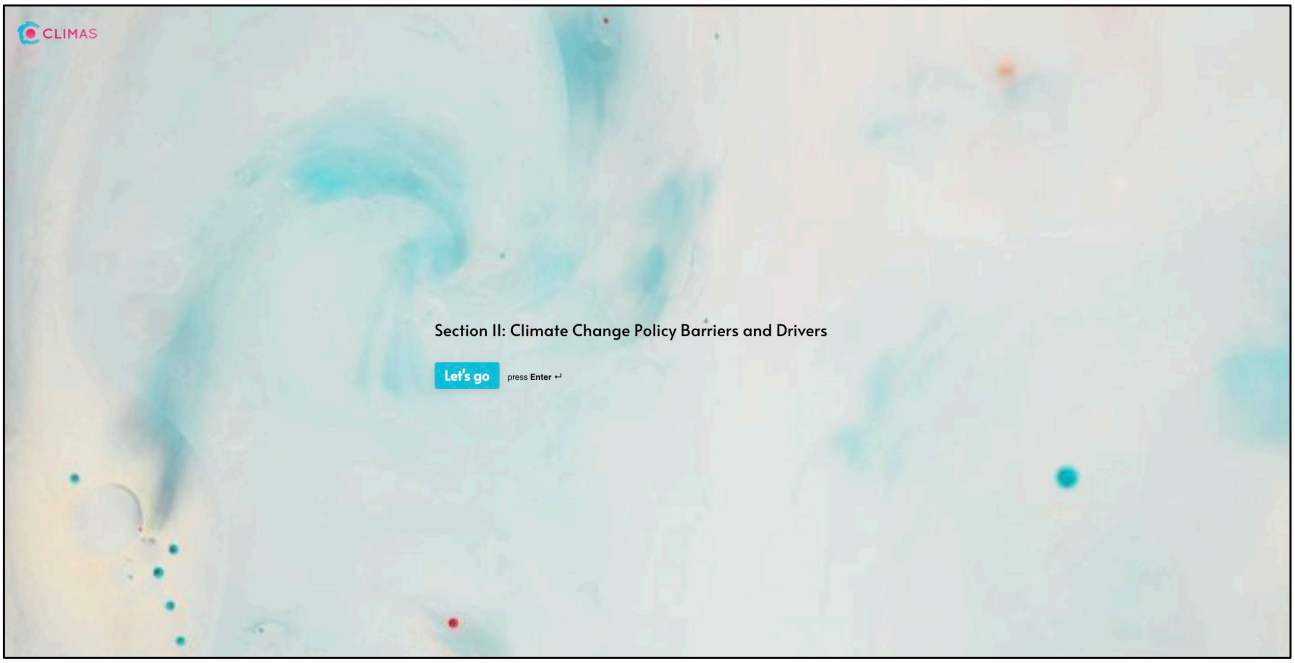

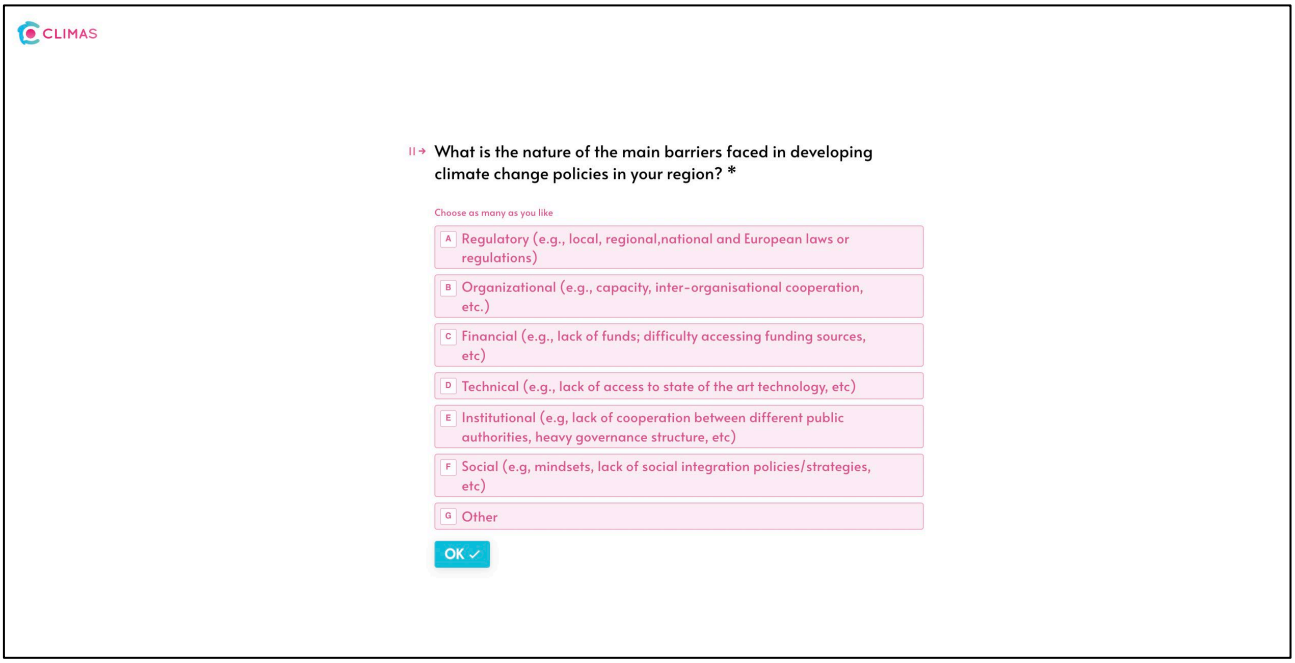

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CLIMAS

12→ What are the main challenges to the implementation of climate change policies observed in your region? *

Choose as many as you like

- A Lack of public acceptance
- B Lack of political acceptance
- C Local authorities' lack of clearly defined motivation/trigger
- D Local authorities' lack of knowledge and skills
- E Difficulty to define the right moment for launching the policy
- F Difficulty to understand data-based evidence
- G Unclear responsibilities within the organization
- H Unclear legal framework
- I Poor evidence base
- J Unclear relation to strategic framework
- K Other

OK ✓

CLIMAS

13→ What is the nature of the main drivers for developing climate change policies in your region? *

Choose as many as you like

- A Regulatory (e.g., local, regional,national and European laws or regulations)
- B Organizational (e.g., capacity, inter-organisational cooperation, etc.)
- C Financial (e.g., possibility to access funding sources, etc)
- D Technical (e.g., access to state of the art technology, etc)
- E Institutional (e.g, good cooperation between different public authorities, etc)
- F Social (e.g, mindsets, citizens pressurs, etc)
- G Other

OK ✓

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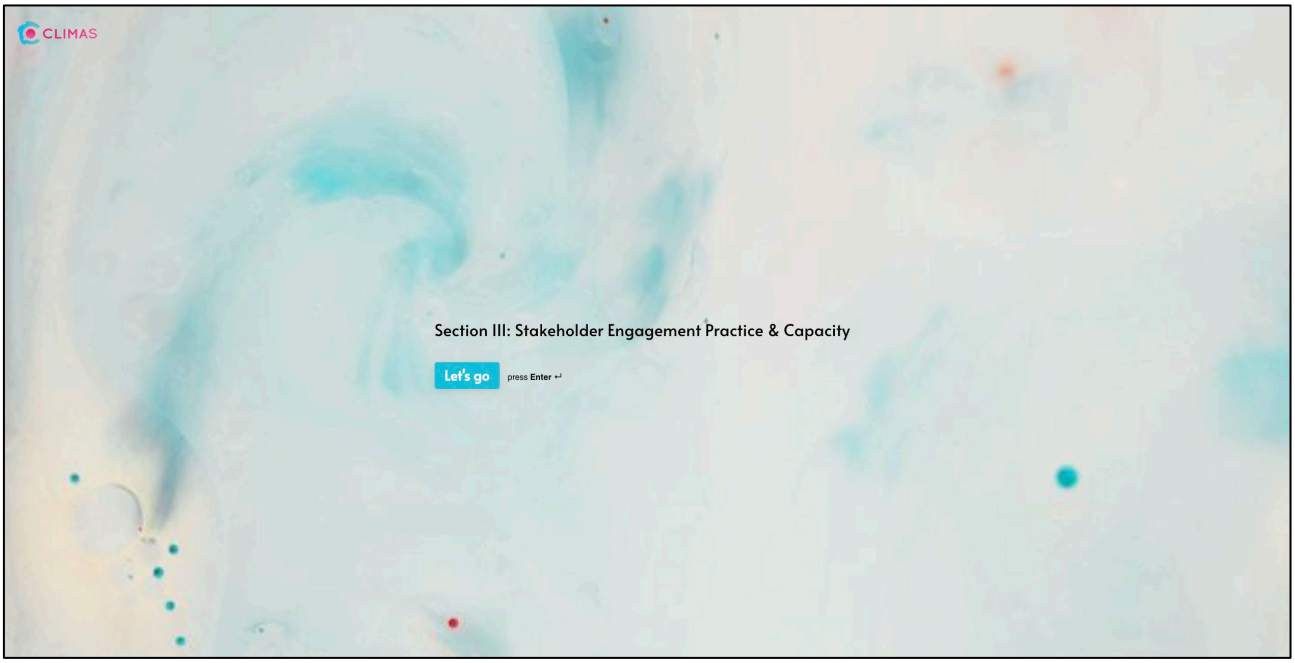

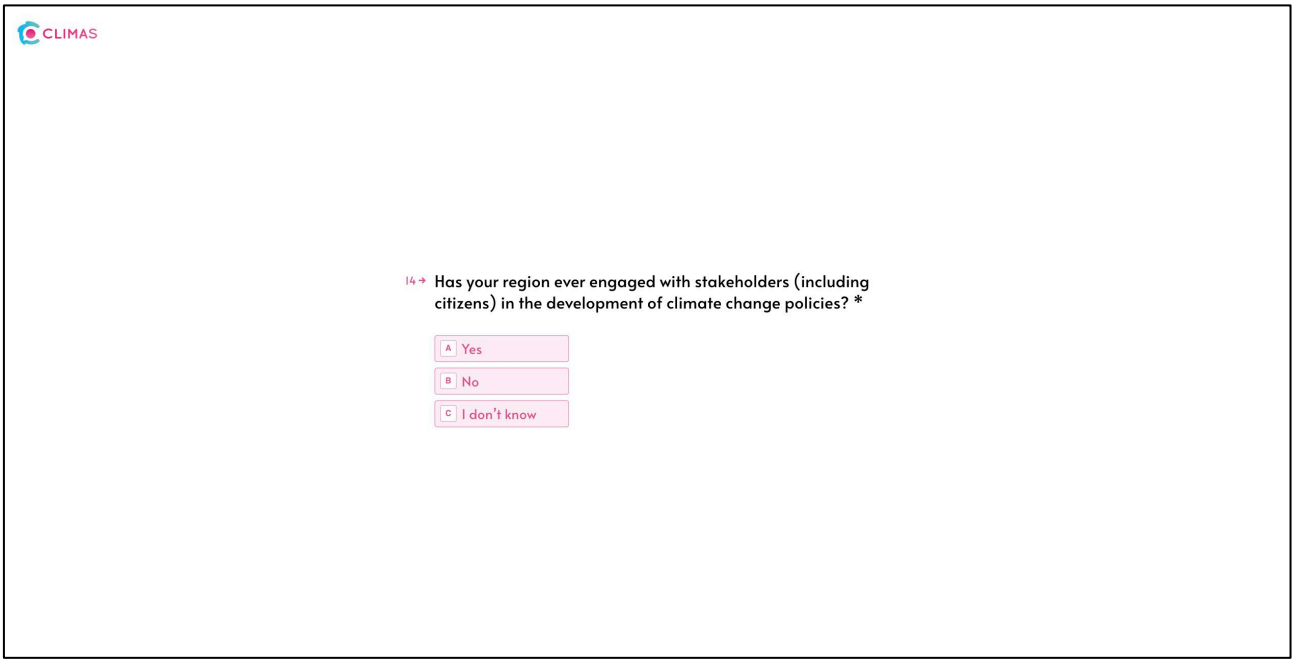

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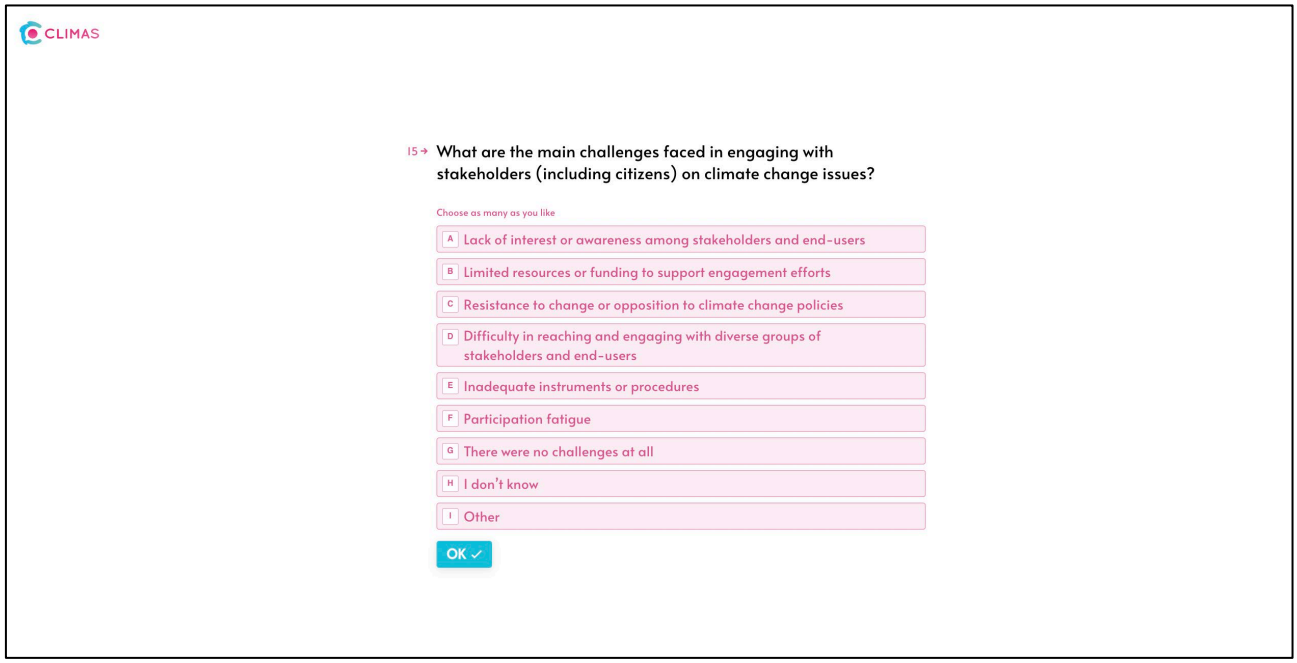

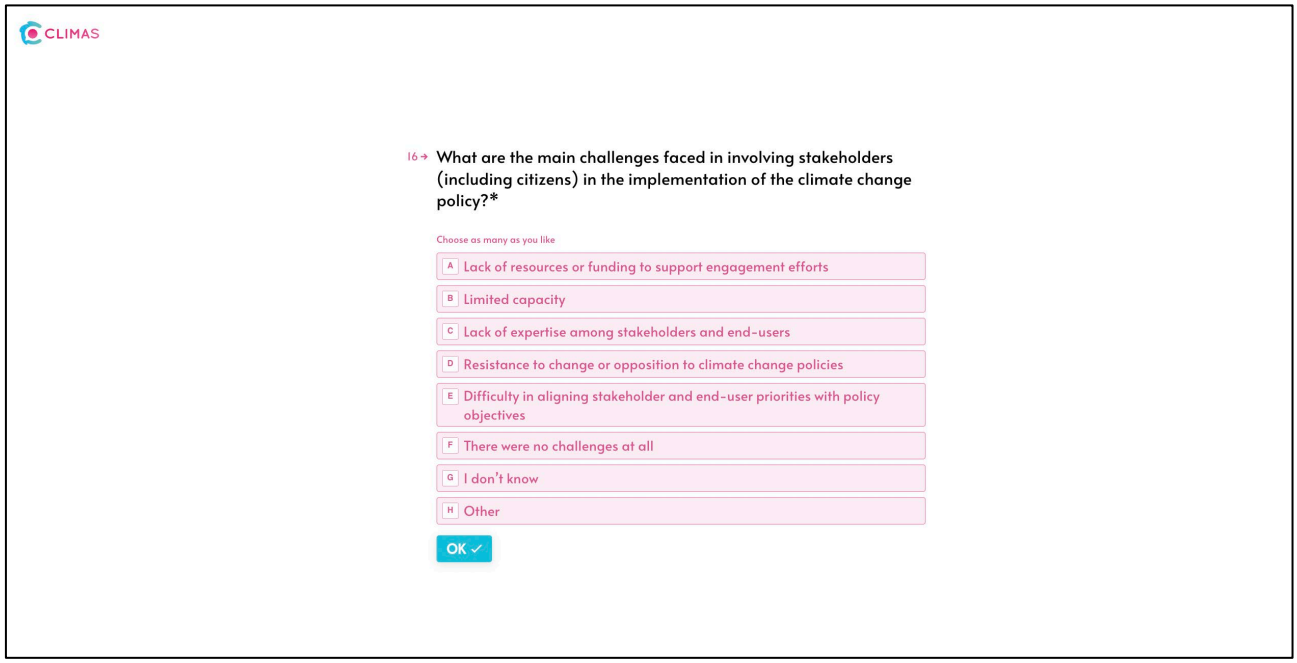

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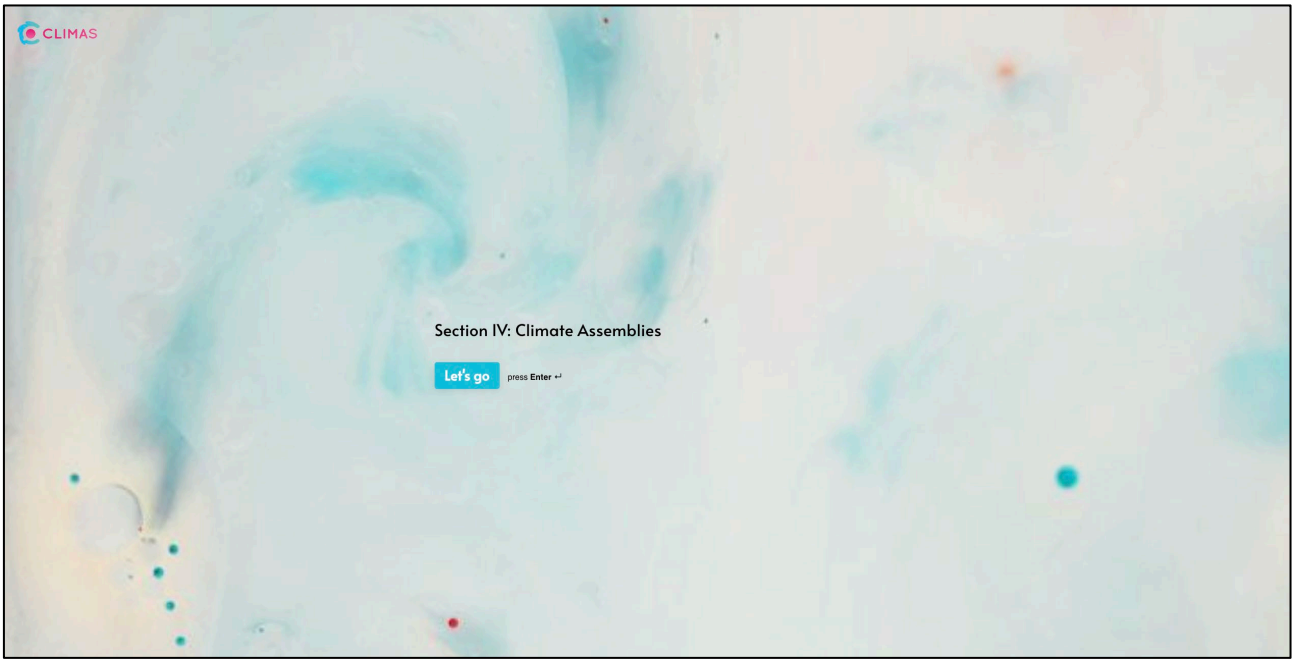

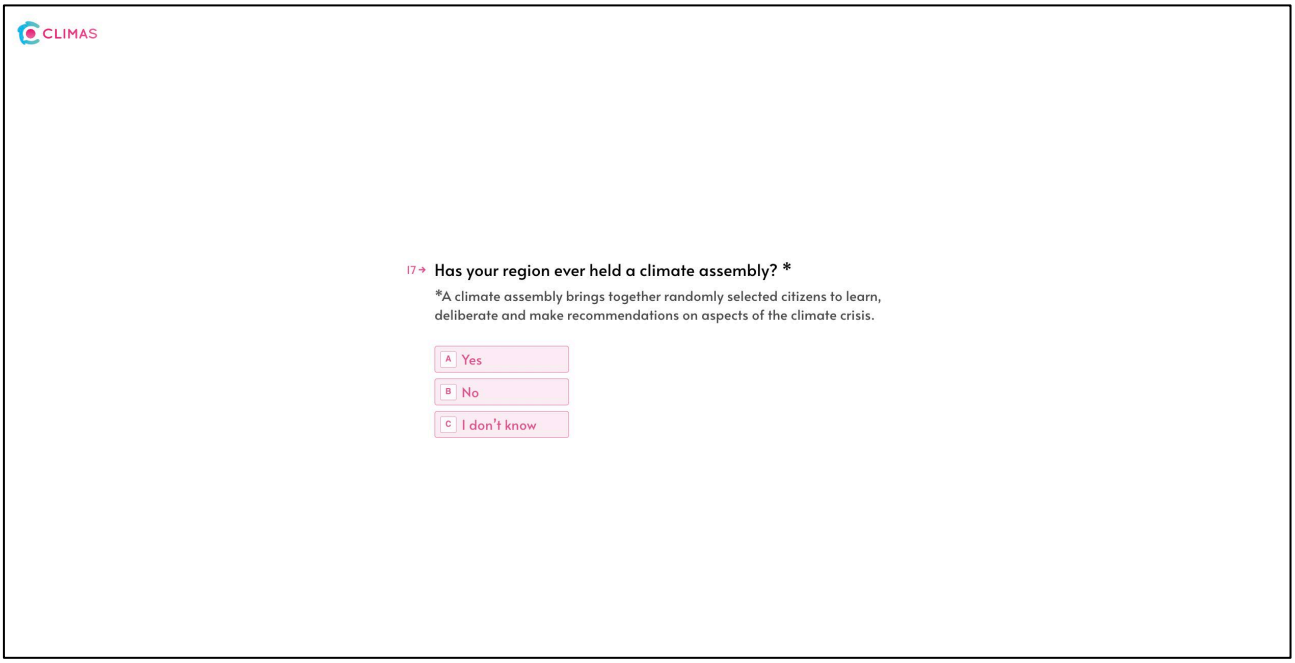

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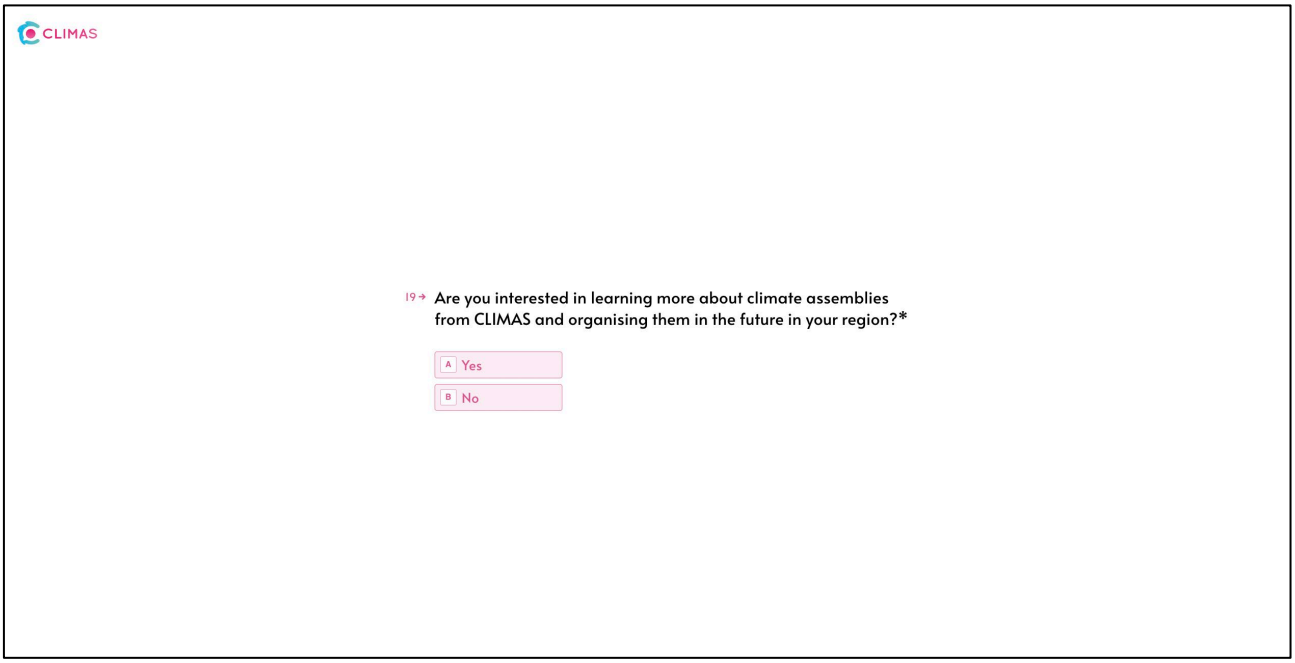

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CLIMAS

20→ Would you like CLIMAS to send you information about the project results?*

A Yes

B No

CLIMAS

21→ Moreover, do you provide your consent for the following activities? *

a. To be contacted by the CLIMAS Consortium in the next 2 years for matters related to project activities.
b. To be contacted by the CLIMAS Consortium for matters related to scientific research, even beyond the purposes of the current projects.

A Yes, I consent

B No, I do not consent

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