



# inspiration for change



**good practices** for  
boosting **climate action**  
in agriculture, buildings  
and transport policy

Southern Europe

# LIFE Plan Up

[planup.eu](http://planup.eu)

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**The European Green Deal, adopted by the European Commission in December 2019, has set a clear direction: Europe will aim to become the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050.**

This means that over the next few years, European policies for the decarbonisation and depollution of the economy will be shaping the future of its 500 million citizens at an unprecedented speed.

The National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) submitted by all 27 Member States in early 2020 aim at streamlining efforts to comply with European legislation and will be the main instrument for achieving the carbon neutrality objective.

Other policies and financial instruments at the European level are already in place or will be adopted over the next two or three years and will also contribute to the transition: the Climate Law, the Multiannual Financial Framework – setting the EU budget for 2021-2027 – and the Just Transition Fund, to name a few.

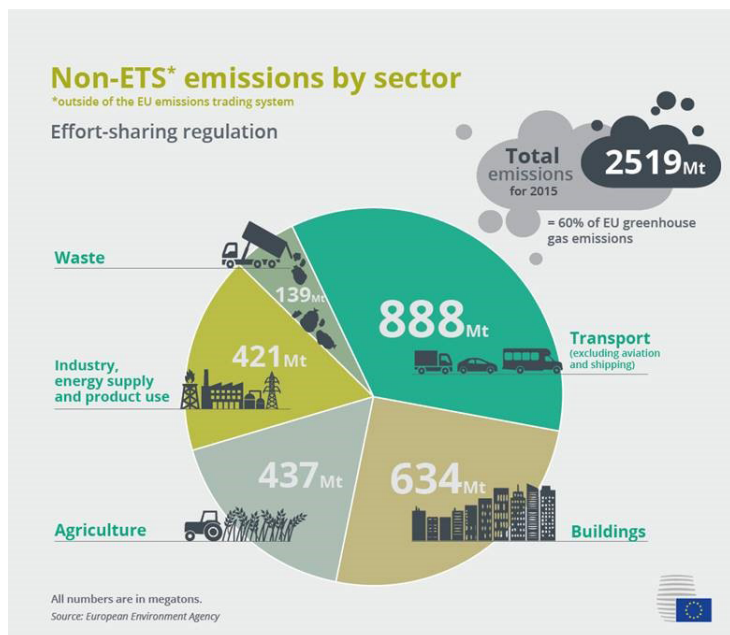
Achieving the EU's goals will require mobilising the right skills and knowledge, enabling the technical and industrial means, ensuring sufficient EU funding and private investments, and emphasis on research. The good news is that this is possible and good initiatives are already spreading quickly across Europe.

The good practices in this booklet show that change is already happening. They also show that it is possible to translate the challenging environmental and climate objectives set in Brussels into concrete actions at national, regional and local level by setting the right legislative framework, enabling conditions and empowering bottom-up actions.

# Accelerating emission cuts outside ETS

While the Emission Trading System (ETS) is often at centre stage of climate debates, close to 60% of the EU's domestic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come from sectors regulated under the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR). Most of these emissions come from three sectors: **agriculture** (17%), **energy use in buildings** (25%) and **transport** (35%).

EU leaders have committed to reduce ESR emissions by 30% before 2030 compared to 2005, which is a tremendous challenge but also an opportunity for growth and job creation. Reducing agricultural, building and transport emissions is crucial for EU's climate goals and luckily policymakers will not have to begin from scratch.



Source: European Commission

**The challenge of reducing emissions is formidable, but policymakers, private-sector actors and civil society need not start from a blank slate.**

Many good practices already exist within all sectors and can be adapted to national or local conditions, or serve as inspiration for developing new solutions. If harnessed and mobilised, these existing practices can function as a shortcut for climate action and accelerate the reductions necessary for achieving EU commitments.

## **Making good practices reality**

The EU's budget cycle, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2021-2027), will play a crucial role in addressing the climate emergency and enabling a socially just transition that leaves no one behind. The money is used to: build clean energy infrastructure and improve connectivity across the bloc (Connecting Europe Facility); invest in sustainable business models, transport and energy efficiency (InvestEU); fund agriculture (Common Agricultural Policy, or CAP); provide financial assistance to disadvantaged regions to improve and modernise their economy during the transition (Cohesion and Value); finance research and innovation (Horizon Europe).

The European Investment Bank has recently decided 40% of its funds will be dedicated to this topic: it will be financing NECPs measures, with specific focus on countries eligible for the Transition Fund.

Another key element for success is participation of civil society and local governments to the development of the plans as the uptake of local actions can be hampered by lack of public acceptance and poor coordination at municipal level. The Netherlands' NECP can be an inspiration in this sense as it has been drafted through a comprehensive participatory process that has already defined the location of needed infrastructures and investments.

# Agriculture

## Key policies for agriculture and climate

- **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

The CAP is currently under reform but, according to the Commission's proposal, it will contribute to climate and environmental objectives primarily through environmental conditionality (GAECs), eco-schemes and Agri-Environment-Climate Measures (AECMs).

- **National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)**

The Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action requires Member States to develop a 10-year integrated NECP for 2021 to 2030, covering all sectors including agriculture.

- **Nitrates Directive**

Although focusing on water pollution, the Nitrates Directive contributes to reducing fertiliser use which drives nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) emissions.

- **European Green Deal (EGD)**

It remains to be seen how the CAP will be aligned to the EGD and particularly the Farm to Fork Strategy.

# Agriculture and climate in Southern Europe

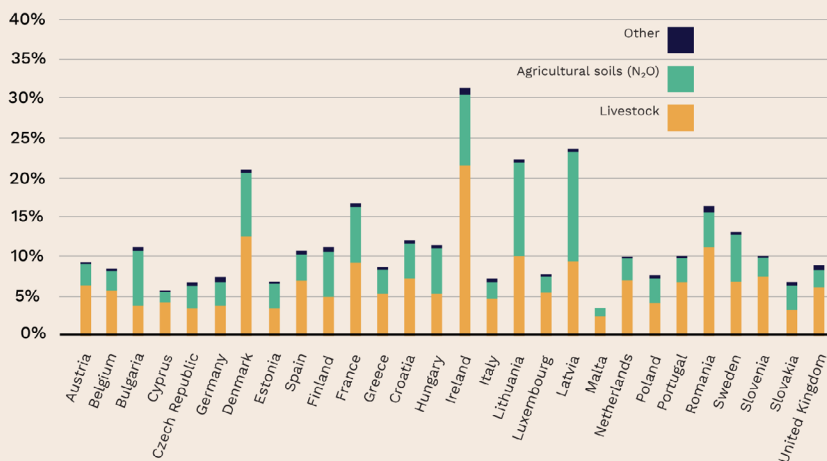
On November 6, 2019, regional stakeholders gathered in Madrid to discuss the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) as catalysts for climate action in Southern Europe. Experts from Spain, Italy and Portugal discussed opportunities and barriers for improving climate action in the agricultural sector.

Some of the topics discussed were:

- The growing dominance of large-scale industrial farms with large environmental and socioeconomic impact;
- Balance between regulation and incentives in promoting sustainability in a largely conservative sector;
- The complexity of agriculture's impact on climate and environment and the interlinkages with biodiversity conservation and other issues.



## GHG emissions [CO<sub>2</sub>eq] from agriculture per MS as percentage of total GHG emissions



# Green cover and pruning residues



## The practice

The practice of using green covers in permanent crops (vine, olives, orchards) is key for good nutrient management, soil protection, and soil carbon sequestration. Green covers include any vegetation covering agricultural soils between cropping to avoid soil erosion and nutrient leaching: intermediary crops, green manure and cover crops. Mulched pruning residues can further be distributed on the ground to slowly decompose thus adding nutrients and organic matter (i.e. carbon) to the soil.

## Main benefits

Green covers can reduce emissions of nitrous oxide from soil biological processes and increase organic matter in the soil, thereby storing carbon. Estimates suggest emissions savings of between 5.1 and 6.9 t CO<sub>2</sub>eq./ha/year from mitigated soil erosion alone. Increased soil fertility and stability, and better water retention, are associated benefits.

## Main challenges

Green covers depend on a change in how farmers think their farmland ought to look which requires improving the understanding of the benefits of green covers. The use of pruning residues can also be challenged by competition from other demands for biomass, e.g. bioenergy.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability





# Local stakeholder coordination for climate

## The practice

Integrating local stakeholders across the value chain of local food products has a large potential for mobilising communities for sustainability. In 2016, seven municipalities in Tuscany in Italy formed a “biodistrict” (Biodistretto del Chianti) to ensure the sustainable management of local resources, focusing on production and consumption of foods. Local farmers, citizens, tour operators, CSOs and the public sector cooperate in the project to guarantee the viability and sustainability all the way through the value chain of food products.

## Main benefits

By taking a systemic community approach, potential trade-offs and conflicts can be identified and solved in dialogue between different stakeholders. It is more viable for local farmers to transition to organic and climate friendly agriculture if they know that they will be supported by other local actors such as supermarkets, restaurants, citizens, tourism agencies and authorities.

## Main challenges

It requires a comprehensive inclusive process to include and integrate the interests of multiple stakeholders. This is often time-consuming and requires adequate resources and knowledge.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability

# Compulsory farm nutrient management plans



## The practice

In Germany, drafting and applying nutrient balance sheets was made mandatory for large farms in 2018 and will be mandatory for small farms from 2023. The regulation provides a methodology for calculating the balance between nitrogen influx and outflow on farms. It promotes awareness-raising and data collection, but does not require mandatory action to address imbalances (nitrogen leakage and emissions). Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) is GHG 298 more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> and emissions are increased by excessive nitrogen fertiliser use.

## Main benefits

The practice promotes awareness of nutrient management at the farm level and helps identify sources of inefficiency. This can motivate farmers to improve their nutrient management for environmental and economic gains. The practice has an educational approach and thus stimulates deep attitude change rather than top-down regulation.

## Main challenges

The practice is not guaranteed to improve nutrient use efficiency, as it is not tied to mandatory actions. It will require advisory support and administrative resources to enforce.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability



# Establishment grants for agroforestry

## The practice

Establishing silvopastoral agroforestry (trees and livestock) has been subsidised in Ireland since 2014. A per hectare payment of up to 80% of investment cost for planting and fencing (up to €6220/ha) is offered. An additional payment of €650/hectare for maintenance is available up to 5 years after planting.

## Main benefits

Planting trees captures and sequesters CO<sub>2</sub> in both above- and below-ground biomass. They also bring benefits for soil conservation, biodiversity, climate change resilience, and water and nutrient cycles. In agroforestry, these benefits manifest in parallel to agricultural production.

## Main challenges

Agroforestry should be promoted through advisory services to stimulate engagement with the subsidy, as most farmers are not familiar with the production system.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability

# Protecting carbon-rich moors



## The practice

In Brandenburg state in Germany, an Agri-Environment-Climate Measure (AECM) has subsidised the preservation of water levels in moors with 387€/hectare/year since 2015. Most of the administrative burden of the practice has been carried by authorities to increase acceptability amongst farmers. Moors have carbon-rich soils, which release large quantities of CO<sub>2</sub> when they are drained and exposed to oxygen in the air.

## Main benefits

By preserving wet moors, 14-24 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>eq./hectare can be saved annually. Moors are also important for biodiversity, which is safeguarded by a pesticide and fertiliser ban through the subsidy. The practice also fosters acceptance and understanding for the importance of wetlands and peatlands, and can lay the ground for later rewetting of already drained areas to restore carbon sinks.

## Main challenges

Governing water levels can be administratively complicated as it usually involves several authorities. It should be coordinated by regional/national authorities to ease the burden on farmers. Many farmers are skeptical towards preserving or rewetting as the tendency has been of draining for generations.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability



# Land consolidation for ecosystem restoration

## The practice

In Lower-Saxony in Germany, climate and environmental concerns have been included as justification for land consolidation. Agricultural areas of low productivity and high nature value are bought by the state and taken permanently out of production to allow for ecosystem restoration and climate change mitigation.

## Main benefits

By obtaining the tenure rights of the area, the authorities can guarantee long-term sustainability of the consolidated areas. Climate benefits, biodiversity and other ecosystem services can be safeguarded permanently, and farmers can focus on more productive land for their production. Land consolidation procedures already are well-established in most countries.

## Main challenges

Land consolidation is a complicated procedure in administrative and social terms. It can take several years and specificities depend on national legislation.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability

# Buildings

## Key policies for buildings and climate

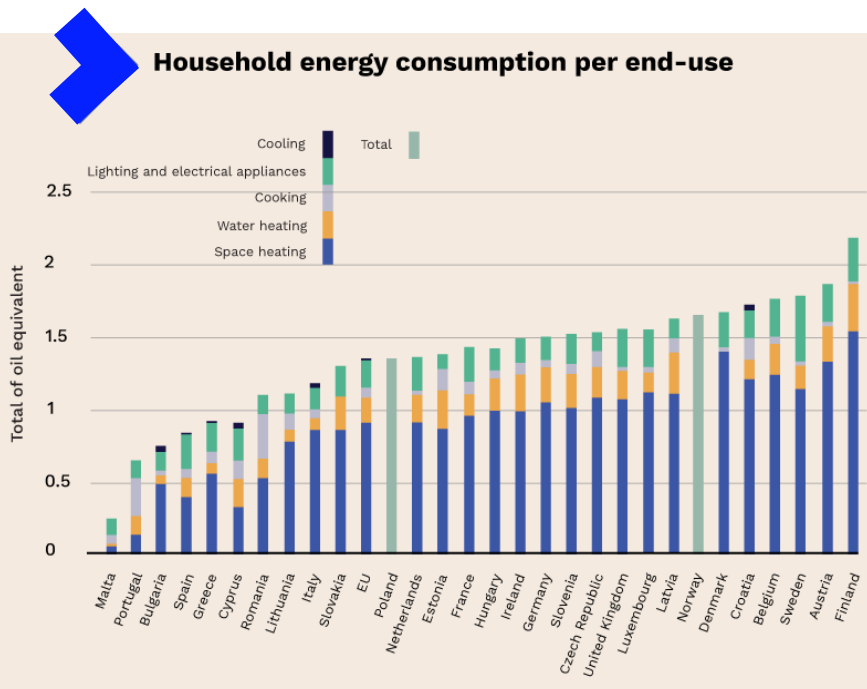
- **Energy Performance of Buildings Directive** The revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EU) 2018/844 includes measures that will accelerate the rate of building renovation towards more energy efficient systems and will strengthen the energy performance of new buildings, making them smarter.
- **National Energy Efficiency Action Plans (NEEAPs)** Before the NECPs The NEEAPs fulfilled the requirement laid down in Article 24(2) of Directive 2012/27/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on energy efficiency, whereby all member states of the European Union had to submit such plans every three years until 2020 and report annually.
- **The EPBD Buildings Platform** This is the central source of information on the EPBD. The platform comprises databases with publications, events, standards and software tools. Interested organisations or individuals can submit events and publications to the databases.

# Buildings and climate in Southern Europe

In the framework of this project, a breakout session on good practices on buildings took place in Madrid on 6 November 2019, discussing the opportunities and challenges for the uptake of these methods as mainstream practices.

Some of the topics discussed were:

- ESCo schemes shall be monitored by the authorities to avoid unfavourable conditions for vulnerable consumers;
- Upfront cost remains the main economical obstacle: innovative finance schemes are needed;
- Projects should find an external source of financing to scale up results of the pilot project and Return on Investment should be acceptable for all participants;
- Participation is key for social acceptance of the large scale interventions.





## The practice

In 2015, the town of Cornellà del Llobregat, Spain, decided to reframe its traditional popular public running event into a “Run for Energy” to create awareness of energy poverty among its participants and to collect funds for interventions in vulnerable households. The municipality transforms the energy used by runners into kWh for vulnerable households. The amount raised from this symbolic transformation is then allocated by the city to carry out energy audits in vulnerable households. The interventions consist notably of individual energy diagnosis and training, billing optimization and installation of low-consumption materials (e.g. insulation, LEDs).

## Main benefits

The city’s partnership with Ecoserveis, an association with experience in communicating energy poverty, further increased the impact of the ‘Run for Energy’ charity race: the action led to substantial financial savings (about €250 per household) and significant energy savings (e.g. 77,700 kWh in 2016).

## Main challenges

For such activities, there are challenges in connecting two apparently distant topics and in monitoring the benefits of the action in the mid-term.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability





# District heating working on locally sourced biomass

## The practice

The town of Tralee is the seventh largest in Ireland and lies in a mostly rural area. A brownfield project was initiated to heat both public and private dwellings with a district heating system that would dovetail its benefits with targeted energy refurbishment interventions. A 1MW plant was installed, using 115T/y of locally sourced woodchips from plantations, to replace oil-fuelled heating boilers. A second phase with a co-generation capacity of 20MW is under evaluation.

## Main benefits

Linking renewable energy and building retrofit led to important environmental and economical savings. Thanks to the plantation, local farmers had a 25% increase in their income. 90% of the fuel cost remains in the local community.

## Main challenges

For a project like this, the challenges lie in engaging with end users, finding kick-off funds and coordinating the supply-side of fuel.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability



## The practice

The town of Kępice, Poland, built a small social housing lot using low-consumption materials and low-cost building techniques. The town decided that the new premises should be as energy-efficient as possible. Locally-engineered, low-cost, super-efficient materials were applied, along with photovoltaic roofs. The building time was reduced and the overall cost of the social housing was comparable with the average for the area.

## Main benefits

Besides greatly reducing the tenants' bills – the buildings energy demand is down to 15 Kwh/m<sup>2</sup> – the building process managed to make use of locally-engineered materials, promoting local economy and research and development.

## Main challenges

Projects like these require innovative materials and processes, which are not available everywhere, and, in this instance, only small-scale dwellings were built.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability



# Ambitious standards in social housing

## The practice





In the Navarra region of Spain, the regional government has adopted the Passive House scheme as a compulsory measure for refurbishment in social housing neighbourhoods. Saving up to 75% on the existing building stock can greatly contribute to peak shaving in summer when cooling needs become a major energetic concern in Spain. The measure could also provide several other benefits such as increasing the employment rate in the building sector and rural development.

## Main benefits

The program targeted primarily low-income families and has achieved remarkable results in this field. Overall the measure allows for much lower bills for the tenants, therefore saving on welfare state and empowering lower income people.

## Main challenges

Finding kick-off funds can be difficult. Passive Housing requires an all-round improvement of skills in the construction sector.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability
			

# Universal Energy Income from Photovoltaics



## The practice

The region of Puglia, Italy, has come up with a complex scheme that will enable low-income families to make use of RES systems (Photovoltaic panels, Solar thermal collector or micro wind turbines, on a case-by-case basis) with no upfront cost for the end-users. The system gives families access to self-produced energy, while the income of the electricity fed back into the grid through the metering system adds to a revolving fund that will be used to install more systems.

## Main benefits

The project links renewable energy to welfare policies and, more specifically, to energy poverty, so it has a clear potential for dissemination. It can easily be implemented either with national or EU structural funds.

## Main challenges

It can be a challenge to define a clear legal framework. Finding kick-off funds can be difficult.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability



# Energy renovation of a former industrial neighbourhood

## The practice

The Delicias neighbourhood in Valladolid, Spain – built in the 1960s and 70s to house the workers of a newly-settled Fasa factory, currently Renault –was targeted in this Horizon2020 project. Here, 19 communities, a fourteen-story tower and all common areas have been transformed with biomass district heating, wall insulation, a photovoltaic facade and the renovation of public spaces with LED lighting. It merges European and local funds with private equity from the owners.

## Main benefits

The demand for heating in the neighbourhood is estimated to decrease by 40%, and a decrease of total energy demand is expected to be between 40 and 50%. The final energy savings will be an estimated 159,830 kWh/year, 17% provided by photovoltaic. Thanks to the project, 954.36 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>/year are saved. This project has exponentially improved the comfort of homes and the quality of life of its occupants.

## Main challenges

It is not always easy to win the confidence of tenants and owners. Providing matching funds once the H2020 project is over could prove difficult.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability

# Transport

## Key policies for transport and climate

- **CO<sub>2</sub> standards for light duty vehicles** Vehicle standards are the main means by which the EU aims to reduce emissions from the transport sector. As per the agreement by the EU co-legislators, light duty vehicle emissions must be reduced by 15% in 2025 and by 37.5% in 2030, compared to a 2021 baseline.
- **CO<sub>2</sub> standards for heavy duty vehicles** These vehicles represent more than 25% of total transport emissions, and these will be regulated for the first time from 2020. Similar to the measure for light duty vehicles, trucks must reduce emissions by 15% and 30% in 2025 and 2030 respectively, compared to a 2019 baseline.
- **National measures** for the decarbonisation of transport include:
  - Zero and low emissions zones;
  - Increases in fuel taxes;
  - Lower speed limits;
  - Investment in public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure;
  - A shift in freight from road to rail.
- **Other EU legislations** for the decarbonisation of transport include:
  - The Renewable Energy Directive;
  - The Clean Vehicles Directive;
  - The Energy Efficiency Directive;
  - The Eurovignette Directive (road charging);
  - The Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Directive.

## Change 1990-2016 — Change in total greenhouse gas emissions from transport





Low Emission Zones (LEZs) encourage the use of cleaner, more fuel-efficient vehicles by applying charges to deter highly polluting vehicles. Such a system encourages collective mobility (through train and bus use or carpooling) and allows for more space to become available for cycling and walking infrastructure, bus lanes, and green spaces. The charge issued to vehicle users in these zones could be further differentiated to promote the use of cleaner vehicles, through higher charges for more polluting vehicles. There are several examples of good-practice LEZs in Europe, such as Madrid and London.

## Madrid Central LEZ

### The practice

Madrid Central is a Low Emissions Zone implemented in some parts of the centre of Madrid. It covers 472 hectares and eliminates the traffic in the inner belt of the city, with some exemptions. Based on their environmental and climate performance, certain vehicles can access the area without restriction.

### Main benefits

The plan aims to reduce traffic by 37% compared to 2018 rates, leading to a 14% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and 38% reduction in NO<sub>x</sub> emissions. Moreover, the measure reduces noises and improves the city environment. The practice is easy to implement and replicate in other cities and it promotes the use of cleaner vehicles and of other modes of transport, such as public transport, walking and cycling.

### Main challenges

Political will is needed to implement such a measure and sometimes citizens can be against it.





## London LEZ and ULEZ

### The practice

The city of London has two schemes in place: the low emissions (LEZ) zone and the ultra low emissions zone (ULEZ). The LEZ operates in the majority of the area of Greater London and its aim is to discourage the most heavily-polluting diesel vehicles from being driven into London. The ULEZ operates in Central London and it includes all vehicles. Respectively, diesel vehicles and all vehicles must pay a charge to access the LEZ and the ULEZ.

### Main benefits and challenges

The benefits and challenges are similar to the ones stated above about the Madrid Central LEZ. Benefits include cleaner air, less congestion, and less noise - as well as its replicability. Challenges include some citizen opposition and the need for political willingness to set and run such a scheme.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability

# The electric vehicle capital of the world



## The practice

The city of Oslo established 400 public charging points on the streets between 2008 and 2011. The programme expanded in 2012 after its success, and by late 2014 there were 900 charging points installed. This was accompanied by measures to increase the private charging points to be set not only in public areas but also in garages, shopping centers, apartment buildings and workplaces. These are partly funded with public resources. It has also been complemented by incentives to promote the use of electric vehicles, such as tax exemptions, free passes on toll roads, access to bus and taxi lanes and free parking in public parking spaces.

## Main benefits

It tackles greenhouse gas emissions, air quality and noise pollution. It's simple and easy to replicate.

## Main challenges

It requires big investments to set up the scheme and citizens have to do their bit by purchasing electric vehicles.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability



# The Venice integrated mobility plan

## The practice

The Urban Mobility Plan is expected to change the way people move in Venice, favouring public transport and cycling. In a few years the first two lines of electric trams and over 100 km of safe bike lanes have been installed. The Venice administration also built new “park and ride” facilities. The Plan aims to further reduce the carbon footprint of the city’s transport sector through a combined set of measures ranging from the tramway and electric vehicle charging station infrastructure to interventions such as bike and car sharing schemes.

## Main benefits

It tackles both climate change and air quality, making the city more livable (considering as well the impacts in air quality of the cruise ships coming to Venice). It reduces noise and encourages a healthier way of living. It can also be easily replicated.

## Main challenges

It requires continuous monitoring and data collection to implement up-to-date measures. This requires political willingness, which could be threatened in case of changes in local government.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability

# Velocità: better use of bike share systems



## The practice

The project set out to raise awareness of bike sharing schemes (BSSs). VeloCittà targeted the problems identified in five cities with BSSs. The lessons from this project showed that successful BSSs: are affordable, easy to use, accessible and flexible; keep awareness campaigns targeted; boost safety; solve problems when reported by the users; and are part of an integrated mobility network with other transport options (bus, metro, etc).

## Main benefits

BSSs lower pollution, reduce congestion, improve health and well-being and the image of the city. Bike sharing can be easily integrated into public transport networks. It has a high replication potential: the project has developed implementation guidelines.

## Main challenges

Requires good integration and coordination of public and private actors, and willingness from citizens to make the shift from cars to bikes.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability



# Green your move (GYM)

## The practice

GreenYourMove (GYM)'s main objective is the development and promotion of a journey app to minimize GHG emissions in Europe. GreenYourMove develops a transport planner with a routing and ticketing system, that considers all kinds of urban public transportation. The user receives alternative routes combining more than one transport modes if necessary. The routes are the most environmentally friendly ones, since emissions are calculated for different scenarios.

## Main benefits

It provides a helpful tool for people wanting to reduce the environmental footprint of their travel. It is very accessible (to everyone with a smartphone) and provides information for an informed decision. Use of the app may also improve air quality and less congestion.

## Main challenges

It requires keeping the information up to date, therefore data has to be continuously monitored.

Economic viability	Public acceptability	Non-GHG co-benefits	Easy replicability

# More resources for climate action

**There is an increasing recognition of the need for climate action across sectors amongst various levels of stakeholders. For further information, the following sources may be a good start:**

## **Agriculture**

- **[Cutting emissions from farming](#)** The project targets climate ambitions of the CAP and provides good practices and policy recommendations.
- **[Ten Years for Agroecology in Europe](#)** The project features several reports on achieving carbon neutrality through agroecology.

## **Building**

- **[The European Portal for Energy Efficiency in Building](#)** The online resource portal kicked off by the Intelligence Energy Europe program in 2007 and now sharing knowledge and best practices.
- **[The world green building council](#)** The leading organisation that promotes innovative efficiency solutions and policies worldwide.

## **Transport**

- **[Low emission mobility strategy](#)** The EU's declaration of intentions to reduce emissions in transport.
- **[Directorate General for Climate Action](#)** Description of EU Commission actions and policies to tackle emissions from the transport sector.





The impacts of climate change are already being adversely felt across the globe. Tackling this challenge within Europe and beyond will require substantial reductions in carbon emissions across all sectors of the economy, alongside a rapid transition to a zero-carbon energy mix. The past years, European Union member states each developed National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) spelling out how they aim to deliver their 2030 climate and energy commitments.

PlanUp tracks the development of National Energy & Climate Plans in five EU Member States: Spain, Italy, Poland, Romania and Hungary. To support rapid decarbonisation in Europe the project promotes good practices in the transport, agriculture and building sector and fosters dialogue on low-carbon policymaking between local, regional and national authorities, civil society organizations and academia.