

# Local climate policy and community involvement. Case study of strategic documents addressing Climate Change in 6 CEE countries

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**Abstract.** Climate change is widely regarded as one of the most pressing challenges facing societies worldwide. Governments and public institutions are employing various strategies to shape and address this issue. These include the development of strategic documents by international, national, regional and local authorities, as well as the implementation of legislation, incentives, education and information campaigns. The aim of this study is to collect public information on strategic documents on climate change in six Central and Eastern European countries between 2018 and 2022. In addition, this study aims to analyze the extent to which these cities have incorporated community participation into their local climate policies. In total, 25 public climate change policy documents were studied, focusing on those of Berlin (5), Bratislava (2), Budapest (1), Prague (3), Vienna (6), and Warsaw (8). Since some of these documents were written in the original language, they had to be translated before analysis. Although many cities recognize the impact of climate change on local communities and acknowledge their role as policy makers, community participation remains limited.

**Keywords.** Climate change, local climate policy, public policy documents, strategies, community involvement.

## 1. Introduction

Climate change is an urgent and complex challenge facing societies around the world. Governments and public institutions are developing various strategies to address this issue, including the creation of strategic documents, legislation, incentives, education and information campaigns.

The aim of this study is to investigate public perceptions of climate change strategy documents in six Central and Eastern European countries (Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Vienna, and Warsaw) from 2018 to 2022. In addition, this study aims to analyze the level of public involvement in local climate policies in these cities. A total of 25 strategic public documents were analyzed, focusing on five documents from Berlin, two from Bratislava, one from Budapest, three from Prague, six from Vienna, and eight from Warsaw. Some of these documents were written in their original language and required translation prior to analysis.

Although many cities recognize the impact of climate change on local communities and acknowledge their

role as policy makers, community participation remains limited. This may be due to a number of factors, including limited opportunities for public participation, insufficient resources and funding, and insufficient community knowledge or understanding of climate change issues.

Following this discussion, three main questions arise: (i) In what ways do local climate policy documents in selected cities from CEE address the concerns and needs of their residents? (ii) To what extent do these documents incorporate public participation and vulnerability considerations? (iii) how are climate change issues addressed and presented in public climate policy documents in these cities?

The first step of the study is to introduce the concepts that will form the basis of the analysis. These include the social constructivist approach developed by Carole Bacchi for problem analysis in policy analysis, the local context of strategic public policy documents, and climate change [2][3]. In addition, two approaches to working with people in problem

formulation will be explored: involving people in the preparation of the policy document or soliciting their feedback, or treating people as a target or vulnerable group of the policy. Next, the research methodology will be presented, followed by a chapter that provides an overview of the six cities and their respective policy documents.

This paper highlights the need for greater community participation in the development and implementation of effective climate policies, particularly in Central and Eastern European cities. By encouraging greater public participation and engagement, cities can develop policies that are more responsive to the needs and concerns of local communities, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable climate action.

## 2. Strategic Documents Addressing Climate Change

Climate change is an issue that is increasingly taking center stage in society. According to the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), widely considered the leading scientific authority on the subject, human activities have led to a global temperature increase of 1.1°C from 2011 to 2020, primarily due to greenhouse gas emissions [5]. The report also warns that adaptation measures that are currently effective and feasible could become less effective and less feasible as the Earth warms, resulting in greater damage and loss to human and natural ecosystems. To avoid maladaptation related to inadequate or ineffective adaptation strategies, flexible and long-term planning and implementation of adaptation strategies that benefit multiple sectors and ecosystems are critical.

Given these findings, it is imperative that public policy address and incorporate climate change into the programs and policies it designs for society. Strategic documents that provide guiding principles and directions play a critical role in this process and serve as the basis for the development of specific legal and sublegal standards and funding programs.

The importance of cities in addressing climate change is becoming increasingly important at both the international and academic levels. Climate change is a global problem that affects different regions of the world in different ways and therefore requires different solutions.

This study focuses on how residents of six major Central European cities are addressed in the context of climate policy. The goal is to determine the place of city residents in strategic climate policy documents and how the social dimensions of climate change are addressed. Although the study does not examine the social impacts or social sensitivity of climate policy in detail, it recognizes the concrete

impacts of climate change on the lives of all people and the importance of addressing those impacts. Analysis of public policy documents can provide cities and communities with ideas on how to address climate change, particularly its social dimensions.

The study presents the concepts used in the analysis of the documents, which contribute to a better understanding of how climate change finds its place in public policy and the implications for social work and social policy.

## 3. Methodology

The research used a multiple case study approach, defining each case as a local climate policy documented in the strategic documents of six Central and Eastern European capitals (Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Vienna, and Warsaw) for the period 2018-2023. The selection of cities was based on geographical and cultural proximity as well as feasibility. A four-year period was considered long enough to collect a significant data set indicative of climate policy characteristics.

Two strategies were used to collect climate change documents: (a) contacting local policy offices via email and (b) searching each city hall's website for the required documents. Some documents were not in English, so they were translated using the software DeepL, since the research team was Czech-Brazilian and the working language was English.

The research lasted four months, from January 2023 to April 2023. After some meetings of the research team, the research started at the end of January and in February 2023 the emails were sent to the staff of the Department of Environment and Climate Change on the websites of six Central and Eastern European capitals: Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Vienna and Warsaw. The main goal was to collect all strategic documents on climate change from these cities.

At the same time, the research team searched the websites of the city governments for the section on climate change and related documents. Initially, a Google search for the city's name was used in combination with the keywords "strategic documents" and "climate change" to access the city government's website and go directly to the climate change section. If this was unsuccessful, the search function on the local government website was used to find "climate change," "climate action," "climate," and the corresponding translation into the official language of the country. Although some websites offered the option in English, they were more complete in the original language.

All the documents found were downloaded to a shared folder on Google Drive, and a spreadsheet was created to capture all the information obtained. The team created six columns in the spreadsheet: capital, document, description, link to Google Doc, document code, notes, and contact. The purpose was to enter the name of the capital, followed by the name of the

document in English or in the original language, then a description with the language, page number, and publication date. Next, a link to access the document in the team's Google Drive was added, along with a document code. A code system was set up for the documents, combining the first two letters of the city's name with the document number in chronological order. The code section was followed by comments after an initial reading.

Once all relevant documents were collected and compiled into the spreadsheet, the team began their analysis. They began by reading each document thoroughly to determine if vulnerable groups and potential climate change adaptation measures were mentioned.

The team used qualitative methods to analyze the data. The qualitative analysis included a more in-depth examination of the documents to identify common themes and patterns in the data. The team's main goal was to look for mentions of vulnerable groups and possible climate change adaptation measures.

After analyzing the data, the team produced a report summarizing their findings. The report included an overview of each city's climate policy, a description of the adaptation measures mentioned in the documents, and an analysis of the extent to which vulnerable groups were considered in the policy.

Therefore, the data is presented in a tabular overview in the following section.

## 4. Table Overview

As mentioned earlier, the first step of this research was to find the strategic documents related to climate change in six different cities. In total, 25 documents were collected for the analysis, considering only the documents for the period 2018-2022: 5 for Berlin, 2 for Bratislava, 1 for Budapest, 3 for Prague, 6 for Vienna, and 8 for Warsaw. Some of them were written in the original language of the country, so they had to be translated in order to be analyzed, as it was explained.

**Tab. 1** - Table Overview CEE Strategic Documents Addressing Climate Change 2018-2022.

City	Code	Year	Document Name (English)
Berlin	Be1	2019	BEK 2030 Berlin Energy and Climate Protection Programme 2030
Berlin	Be2	2021	Everything in the Green Zone! Action Guide Climate Neutral Events in Berlin
Berlin	Be3	2022	Climate Protection and Development Planning

Berlin	Be4	2022	Recommendation for the further development of the Berlin Energy and Climate Protection Program 2030 - 2022 to 2026
Berlin	Be5	2022	Participation process for the further development of the Berlin Energy and Climate Protection Program 2030
Bratislava	Br1	2020	Atlas of Vulnerability and Risk Assessment of Adverse Impacts of Climate Change on the Territory of the Capital City of the Slovak Republic Bratislava
Bratislava	Br2	2021	Action Plan for Adaptation to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change on the Territory of the Capital City of the Slovak Republic Bratislava for 2017-2020
Budapest	Bu1	2022	Budapest climate strategy and sustainable energy and climate action plan
Prague	Pr1	2020	Capital city of Prague climate change adaptation strategy
Prague	Pr2	2021	Prague Climate Plan 2030
Prague	Pr3	2022	Circular Prague 2030 - Prague Strategy Transition to a Circular Economy
Vienna	Vi1	2018	Urban Heat Island Strategieplan
Vienna	Vi2	2019	ClimateReview Vienna 2019
Vienna	Vi3	2022	Climate Protection Program of the City of Vienna (KliP Vienna) Progress Report 2021
Vienna	Vi4	2022	Smart Climate City Strategy Vienna
Vienna	Vi5	2022	Vienna Heat Action Plan
Vienna	Vi6	2022	Vienna Climate Guide
Warsaw	Wa1	2018	Strategy of Integrated Territorial Investments for the

			Warsaw Functional Area 2014-2020+ (WOF ZIT Strategy) 2018
Warsaw	Wa2	2018	The #Warsaw2030 Strategy
Warsaw	Wa3	2019	The climate change adaptation strategy for the city of Warsaw by 2030 with the prospects until 2050
Warsaw	Wa4	2021	Strategy of Integrated Territorial Investments for the Warsaw Functional Area 2014-2020+ (WOF ZIT Strategy) 2021
Warsaw	Wa5	2021	Environmental protection program for the City of Warsaw 2021-2024
Warsaw	Wa6	2022	Green Vision of Warsaw
Warsaw	Wa7	2022	Food policy of the capital city of Warsaw
Warsaw	Wa8	2022	Programme for sustainable mobility by 2026

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## 5. Results and Conclusions

### 5.1 Results: notes about the table overview

After the research team went through all the documents, it was possible to determine which country was reporting climate change in a different way, and also their approach was not necessarily what was expected.

Thus, the three questions posed at the outset were (i) in what ways do the local climate policy documents in the selected cities of CEE address the concerns and needs of their residents; (ii) to what extent do these documents take into account public participation and vulnerability considerations? (iii) how are climate change issues addressed and presented in public climate policy documents in these cities?

Another article with more detailed information on each document will be published. However, at first glance, not all of the documents included specific actions for residents, nor did they include public participation in the development of the documents.

Most documents viewed the main goal as carbon neutral and did not necessarily include the problems that climate change poses for residents, particularly vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, pregnant

women, children and others.

### 5.2 Conclusion

It is evident that significant progress still needs to be made to ensure not only the active engagement and involvement of local communities in the development and formulation of strategic plans to address the pressing issue of climate change but also to incorporate effective adaptation measures into these frameworks.

While it is undeniable that achieving carbon neutrality is of great importance, equal weight must be given to the impacts that climate change is already having and will continue to have on local communities, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Therefore, it is imperative to take a holistic approach that considers the integration of robust adaptation strategies and meaningful participation of local communities to effectively address and mitigate the broad and diverse challenges of climate change.

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## Annex

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