

background

This example is extracted from our Deliverable 1.1 (p. 42 – 47) “Social Innovations in Support of the EU-Missions” and the full version can be openly accessed here: <https://simissionfacility.eu/publication-announcement-d-1-1/>.

The deliverable focuses on the role and contributions of social innovation (SI) to the [five EU-Missions](#) (part of Horizon Europe 2021 – 2027): Beating Cancer, Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, Climate Change Adaptation, A European Soil Deal, and Restoring Our Oceans and Waters. To analyse these SI contributions to the Missions, an extensive literature analysis has been conducted to showcase the role of social innovation concepts within Mission relevant EU-funded projects. To complement this overview of EU Mission projects with cases of social innovations that contribute or could contribute to the EU Missions, the four social innovation databases (SI-databases) Social Innovation Match Tool, Social Innovation Driving Force of Social Change (SI-Drive), Critical Turning Points Database and Social Innovation in Energy Transition (SONNET) were reviewed additionally. Furthermore, mission-targeted projects are included as case studies in the deliverable to illustrate two examples of social innovation contributions for each of the five EU Missions.

The EU Mission on Climate Change Adaptation aims to make European communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Concretely, the Mission will support around 150 communities to achieve climate resilience by 2030. It will also contribute to the [European Green Deal](#) which describes the need to adapt to the inevitable and already felt effects of climate change

The mission means to build resilience in environmental, social, economic and political systems to achieve a transition towards a climate change resilient society. The adaptation to climate change involves preparing communities for its risks, aiming to ensure the establishment of climate risk profiles, warning systems, risk management plans and safe and accessible community infrastructure even in critical situations. Innovation is understood as a catalysator for systemic change and encompasses co-design, co-implementation and co-evaluation to achieve a wide impact.

To know more about this Mission, consult the [EU Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change Portal](#).

The following practical examples serve to demonstrate what role social innovation plays in the EU-Mission on climate change adaptation. Our goal with these examples is to make seemingly abstract social innovation (SI) concepts tangible through real-world cases. We aim to illustrate how social innovation (such as changes in practices and behaviours, the introduction of new ways of working and collaborating, and the reshaping of social and institutional relationships) can meaningfully contribute to achieving the EU Missions.

disclaimer

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SOCIAL INNOVATIONS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

To analyse the role of social innovation in EU Mission projects contributing to the EU Mission Climate Change Adaptation the projects listed in CORDIS and social innovations collected in the SI-Databases were scrutinised. The results of the sequential analysis of projects for the Climate Mission in CORDIS are shown in the following chart:

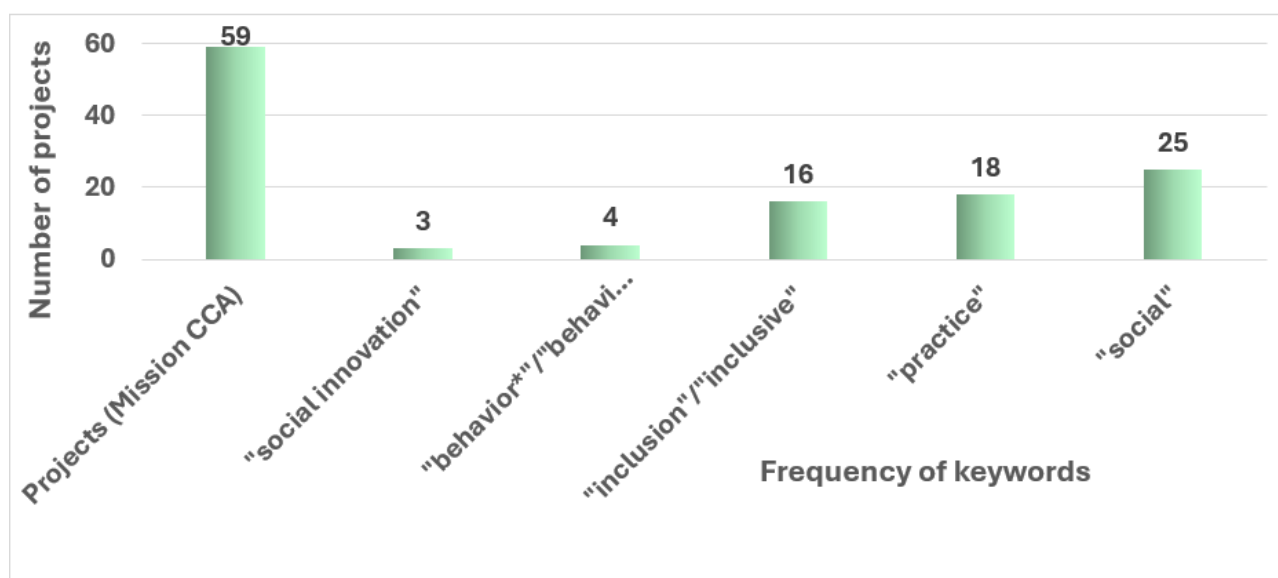


FIGURE 1 BAR CHART OF THE RESULTS OF THE SEQUENTIAL ANALYSIS OF PROJECTS FOR THE EU MISSION: CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN CORDIS

The analysis of project objectives shows that many projects in the Climate Mission structure the research and innovation process in line with a social innovation-orientation. For example, they design project activities in an inclusive way, engaging with all relevant actors. Nevertheless, social innovation in this way runs the risk to become instrumentalised to legitimise the implementation of changes in the built environment, changes in practices, social relations, forms of organisation or institutional arrangements beyond the design of the research and innovation process remain an exception. In this chapter, the two EU Mission projects *MountResilience* (<https://mountresilience.eu/>) and *Adaptation AGORA* (<https://adaptationagora.eu/>) exemplify how social innovations can contribute to a re-organisation of the planning and decision-making process and provide solution to the task of climate change adaptation themselves.

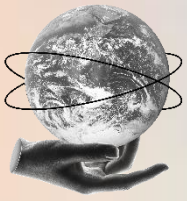
The project *Mount Resilience* shows that tailored strategies for various demo regions show sensibility for the context-dependency of social innovation. This enables a systematic approach considering a wide range of possible solutions. Local councils, formative evaluation methods and a will for experimentation ensure the constant reflection of these strategies. The project *Adaptation Agora* engages vulnerable groups and neglected regions. Their focus for climate justice and social equity shows the need for community-based soft adaptation solutions in cities. Methods of citizen engagement support visible progress of a tangible implementation process. Moreover, the project has shown that digital education tools and platforms support sharing knowledge as well as accessibility and visibility of information for vulnerable groups especially affected by climate change.

The analysis of the SI-databases suggests that social innovations seldom focus on direct adaptation to climatic changes. Many social innovations collected in the SI-databases rather address mitigation than adaptation, focusing e.g. on cooperative and renewable energy production as the SONNET database and many cases collected by SI-DRIVE show.

However, the Climate Mission also calls for co-creating shared visions towards climate change adaptation and enabling conditions to deal with climate risks. Ecovillages like the *Global Ecovillage Bergen* in the Netherlands (Critical Turning Points) are intentional communities that are actively designed for climate change adaptation, low-carbon solutions and participation. Inhabitants of ecovillages build resilience actively by reducing dependency on centralised infrastructures and restoring ecosystems (Yalciner et al. 2025). Ecovillages show further synergies towards the other four EU Missions by resilient and participative urban planning (Cities Mission), regenerative agriculture or blue economy (Soil and Ocean and Waters Mission) and promotion of healthy lifestyles and quality of life (Cancer Mission).

Another example from the SI-databases are integrated circular economy approaches like the planned *Circular Economy Centre of Excellence Mall* in Longford, Ireland (SI Match) that could support the EU Mission in many ways. By reusing materials, supply chain

disruptions by extreme weather events could be reduced while the reduction in resource use goes hand in with other approaches of Nature Based Solutions like the promotion of sustainable forests or water management (Çetin and Kirchherr 2025; Stefanakis et al. 2021). Moreover, the local embeddedness of both examples enhances innovation capacity and social resilience of the local communities overall.



About the Project: MountResilience (09/2023 - 02/28) aims to increase the adaptation capacity of mountainous regions and communities and close the gap in shortcomings of planning and implementing adaptive measures. Together with 47 partners, transformative solutions aiming to strengthen climate resilience are developed and tested. Each of the six demonstrator regions thereby tackles a regional climatic challenge such as decline in snow cover and frequency, which causes difficulties for reindeer herders, winter tourism or agricultural practices respectively. The chosen challenges emphasise that successful adaptation planning should follow a systematic and long-term oriented approach taking into account a variety of environmental, social and economic factors and engage with a variety of stakeholder groups. Four replicator regions adapt solutions in a targeted, context-sensitive manner.



Meeting of the local council in Gabrovo, Bulgaria

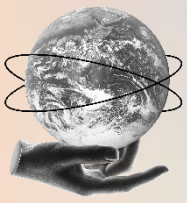
The Role of Social Innovation: By focussing on transformative adaptation, MountResilience aims to strengthen the adaptation capacity of mountainous regions systematically and sustainably. To this end, the project established local councils in all demonstrator regions connecting a diverse set of actors. A monitoring and evaluation process employing formative evaluation allows for expert-guided reflection throughout. Blind spots and further relevant stakeholders for the development of place-based solutions may be identified through this. This reflexive approach ensures that the implementation of technological innovations and nature-based solutions integrates social innovations, experiments with new adaptation practices, and takes into account the perspective of vulnerable groups.

More information: <https://mountresilience.eu/>



Camilla Chlebna, Centre for Social Innovation (photo: Camilla Chlebna)

A focus on transformative adaptation ensures long-term orientation and institutionalisation that goes beyond immediate, isolated climate response activities.



About the Project: With a focus on involving different societal segments, including areas and community groups that are often overlooked in climate change adaptation, *adaptation AGORA* (01/2023-12/2025) set out to promote democracy, climate justice, gender equality, and equity. Having citizen empowerment at its core, the project designed a citizen engagement process to improve decision-making processes and thereby fostering the adaptive capacity of local communities. To this end, the project designed different community engagement workshops and focus groups in four pilot regions with the aim to identify fruitful soft adaptation measures that citizens can apply themselves. Based on these local experiences, *adaptation AGORA* built a digital living environment providing access to the digital educational tools developed within the project. These tools include insights into the set-up of a citizen engagement process, as well as online academies conveying information on the interpretation of climate data and strategies to deal with disinformation campaigns.



Participatory activities conducted in the pilot regions (photos: Pierluigi Giorgi)

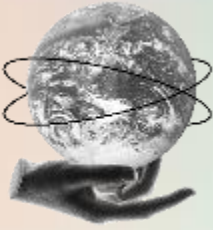
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION: Since its kick-off in January 2023, *adaptation AGORA* has been convening workshops and focus groups to understand citizen engagement in climate change adaptation in four pilot regions. The project focuses on the necessities of diverse communities for an equitable adaptation. For example, the project created formats to engage workers, students and multicultural groups. Thereby, social innovation does not only play a role in engaging new stakeholders in climate change adaptation and designing the planning process according to principles of just transition, but also in sharing knowledge and experiences with new adaptive practices that are crucial to deal adequately with climatic risks such as heat waves.

More information: <https://adaptationagora.eu> & <https://voicesofclimateadaptation.dataclime.com>



The adaptation AGORA consortium (photo: Pierluigi Giorgi)

Social innovation plays a pivotal role in creating soft adaptation measures, which are crucial to enhance the adaptive capacity of local communities.



The following social innovations identified in the SI-Databases serve as an example of how broadly existing social innovations can contribute to the Climate Mission Change Adaptation:



Global Ecovillage Bergen

Ecovillage Bergen (Netherlands) is a grassroots sustainability initiative founded in 2011, inspired by the global ecovillage movement. The group emphasised building a cohesive community and adopted sociocracy as its governance model. Throughout, the initiative experimented with alternative governance, collective ownership, and translocal networking. Since 2013 the group has acquired a piece of land, which they are actively turning into an ecovillage for approximately 80 people. From a social innovation perspective, Ecovillage Bergen represents an experimental reconfiguration of social practices and organisational forms related to housing, land use and community life. Through collective ownership structures and shared governance, the initiative challenges dominant models of individualised housing and property ownership

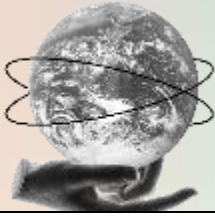
More information: <https://www.ecodorpbergen.nl/>



Circular Economy Centre of Excellence Mall

Envisioned as a multi-million investment comprising a 25,000-30,000 square foot facility in Longford, Ireland, the Circular Economy Centre will operate as a multi-faceted, closed loop operation incorporating an Education and Training Centre, a Repair and Upcycling Workshop Hub, a Pioneering Circular Economy Retail Mall. Inspired by successful European models, the “Mall” will create circular economy activities in Longford and regionally, thus nurturing and encouraging small businesses/social enterprises and the creation of retail job opportunities. The Centre seeks to transform consumption and production practices by embedding repair, reuse and upcycling into everyday economic activity and therefore can be considered a social innovation.

More information: <https://edilongford.ie/revamp/>



VER – Viveiro de Emprego Regenerador

Established in 2021 under the framework of Portugal Social Innovation, *Viveiro de Emprego Regenerador* aims at capacity-building programmes for unemployed and low-skilled people for integration into local green jobs focussing on reforestation, soil regeneration, and biodiversity actions. VER is motivated by the belief that climate change adaptation can be community-driven and inclusive, creating healthy local ecosystems of actors and nature. In the sense of a social innovation it establishes new organisational arrangements that connect local authorities, environmental actors, training providers and vulnerable groups, fostering inclusive governance and collective responsibility for climate adaptation.

More information: http://inovacaosocial.portugal2020.pt/project/ver-viveiro-de-emprego-regenerador/?doing_wp_cron=1764941821.7426669597625732421875

contact

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