

Barcelona, Spain

# Barcelona plans for an environmentally just future

Climate action plans represent the motivation and priorities for a city's actions on climate adaptation and mitigation. Barcelona published its new Climate Plan in 2018 with a strategic focus on environmental justice and citizen co-production. This sets the stage to implement inclusive climate actions that not only address climate challenges, but also socio-economic inequality, providing benefits for all Barcelona residents.

Co-production as part of the Barcelona Climate Plan.



## What are the key lessons learned?

Studies undertaken prior to the development of the Climate Plan 2018-2030 have shown the uneven distribution of the impact of climate change among the population. The 2016 Barcelona Health Survey, for example, found that over 10% of the population in Barcelona experiences energy poverty [1]. Other studies showed that elderly people, young children, and women particularly suffer from the impact of heat and rising temperatures. Similarly, certain neighborhoods and geographic areas are more severely impacted by the effects of climate change than others.

In order to address these uneven impacts, Barcelona decided to put climate justice at the core of its new Climate Plan, concentrating on inclusive actions that serve all Barcelona citizens, but particularly focusing on those most vulnerable.

Under these five areas of action, the Plan lays out 18 lines of action under which there are 242 direct actions.

While the theme of climate justice runs through all of these 18 lines of action, the People first area sets out very specific lines of actions to address the uneven impacts:

- 🚩 **Taking care of everyone** focuses on improving and adapting services, facilities, and homes with special care for those most vulnerable to climate change.
- 🚩 **No cuts** aims to prevent gas, water, or electricity supplies from being cut off, especially for the most vulnerable groups.
- 🚩 **Preventing excessive heat** concentrates on creating a network of places to take shelter during high temperatures to protect the health of the most vulnerable groups in the city.

The five areas of action in the Plan reinforce this focus on climate justice: (1) people first, (2) starting at home, (3) transforming communal spaces, (4) climate economy, and (5) building together.

While the city of Barcelona receives some funds from the European Union and some from private funders, most of the climate actions within the plan are paid for via the city's budget. The Climate Office in charge of developing the plan involved four departments: the Sustainability Office, the Social Rights Office, the Energy Agency of Barcelona, and the Resilience Department. In addition, other departments were involved on a subject matter basis where the individual departments fund the actions outlined in the Plan.



Barcelona's Climate Plan encompasses both climate mitigation and adaptation. To mitigate climate impacts, the city commits to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% per capita by 2030 (compared to 2005 levels) and to be emission-neutral in 2050. Climate adaptation is, among others, tackled with a proposal to increase total urban green space by 1.6 km<sup>2</sup> (or 1 m<sup>2</sup> for each current resident). The Climate Plan is one of the first action plans in the world to comply with the Paris agreement.



Barcelona's Climate Plan is structured along four themes: mitigation, adaptation and resilience, climate justice, and citizen action. Putting climate justice and citizen action at the core of its plan ensures that actions are not only addressing climate change, but are focused on issues like social inequality and vulnerable populations. The City believes that the transition to a zero-emission city will only be possible if social cohesion and social justice are enhanced. Therefore, the investments laid out in the plan will create new economic opportunities for the most vulnerable citizens and neighborhoods.

Case Study Type:  Plan	Primary Sector:  Urban Planning
ICA Pillar:  Policy	Primary Impact:  Quality of Life & Urban Livability

## How might these lessons be used in your City?

### Build a plan that supports everyone, and focuses on those most vulnerable to climate change

Most climate action plans today focus their actions on mitigation and adaptation. Themes like climate justice and citizen participation are however still relatively new. If these themes are integrated into climate action plans, they are often buried somewhere in individual actions. Barcelona took a different approach: climate justice and citizen action build, with mitigation and adaptation, the four overarching themes of the new Climate Plan 2018-2030. This sets the tone to put those population groups and neighborhoods most impacted by climate change at the center of Barcelona's Climate Plan. The following three examples demonstrate how this is translated into specific actions.

#### Climate Shelters

The climate shelters effort is an action included under the “preventing excessive heat” line of action. The City aims to ensure that 100% of the population is within a 10-minute walking distance of a climate shelter by 2030. In order to achieve this, the city is currently undertaking a data gathering exercise, mapping all potential shelters including parks with enough shade, air-conditioned malls, civic centres, public libraries, etc., and their accessibility (e.g., operating hours, geographic location, available facilities, access for those with limited mobility). Once mapped, the city will assess the gaps in coverage and will decide where new shelters might be created. In order to make the information about these shelters available to those most vulnerable to heat like the elderly people, the city will use its network of health centres and other social organizations, but also private businesses like pharmacies or neighborhood shops and mobile shelters.

#### Social Superblocks

Barcelona has had success with mobility superblocks that establish a new way of organizing the city. These superblocks redefine street networks, prioritizing people over vehicles by providing different street typologies and introducing diverse facilities like resting places and space for social interaction. Similarly, Barcelona is implementing an action for social superblocks. This action falls under the line of action “taking care of everyone” and aims to dispatch home care workers in smaller groups and smaller areas to be able to provide services on a more flexible basis. By the numbers, Barcelona has nearly 4,000 home care workers that will be dispersed in neighborhood teams of 10 to 14 workers who will care for 50 to 70 dependant neighbours (especially elder people) who live within a small area (2 to 5 minute walking distance, up to 500m). The intention of the social superblocks is to create a tighter sense of community as social service recipients see the same faces on a regular basis and can develop trust with the social workers in their area. The social superblocks do not match the boundaries of the mobility superblocks, but instead are based on an



analysis of the socio-economic status of the population. In low-income neighborhoods where the need for social workers is greater, there will be smaller social superblock boundaries than in higher income neighborhoods. Further, this new organization of services at a small scale is able to integrate more agents for more innovative services, since proximity allows creating new interactions based on trust and complexity. For instance, local shops can deliver goods and take waste away as a service and therefore increase the use of multiuse packaging.

**Energy Advice Points**

The City Council has spearheaded Energy Advice Points, specialist offices where the public receives information and assistance for exercising their energy rights, avoiding a supply cut or re-establishing supply, and reducing energy expenditure. This action falls under the “no cuts” line of action in the Plan. With the goal of zero energy poverty by 2030, this program also aims to educate the public on energy consumption, energy efficiency, and energy bills through a set of tools and best practices. The City Council has created and shared an energy calculator which allows individuals to evaluate how much energy they are consuming and how it might be reduced. They’ve created energy efficiency best practice guidance for implementing changes within the homes to reduce energy consumption and costs. They are also beginning to work with residents on better understanding their energy bills and to ensure that there are no cuts in their power or water services. This program is centred around empowering the citizens of Barcelona to better understand energy and ultimately make more sustainable decisions, such as installing renewable energy sources for their buildings. At the beginning, vulnerability was the target of the Energy Advice Points, especially to provide information and help in regards to energy rights and citizens’ access to basic services. Recently, the success of these help desks led to the expansion of the program to include more energy-related issues such as providing support to citizens to apply for financial aid when undertaking energy upgrades. The outcome has been very positive as 23,000 people attended Energy Advice Points events in 2017.

**Coordinate your efforts across city departments and ensure actions are implemented within each department’s budget and plan**

This Climate Plan is not Barcelona’s first attempt to tackle the issue of climate change. It is based on nearly 35 previous plans that are related to climate mitigation and adaptation and therefore builds on existing efforts. This means that the Climate Office in charge of developing the new Plan worked hard to coordinate with the different departments and ensures that each action is integrated in the strategic plans and budgets of each department responsible to implement that action. This also required lobbying across the different departments. Ultimately, those responsible for the development of the Climate Plan met with over 130 city administrators from individual departments to put the Plan together.

# Climate justice at the heart of the planning process



**Reduce emissions by 45% by 2030**



**No cuts to energy services**



**Sheltering networks for excessive heat**



**Climate office**

Establish City administration to monitor and implement the Plan



**Department coordination**

Integrate each action into strategic plans and budgets



**Community outreach**

Work with NGOs, community organizations and private businesses



**Mitigation and adaptation**

Planning and coordinating a more climate resilient city



**Climate justice**

Enriching climate plans by prioritizing vulnerable people



**Citizen action**

Making a climate commitment while promoting co-production

The development of the Plan also included an extensive community outreach process. The Climate Office was aware that those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change might not necessarily be the ones taking part in participatory planning processes. It therefore worked closely with non-governmental organizations, social associations, and private businesses, who already work with those vulnerable groups, to identify their needs and target their actions. The participatory process ran from July to December 2017 where 92 different people from different organizations participated in an introductory session, a face-to-face session on action proposals, a public open session, and a final session to present the Climate Plan in February 2018. A digital platform has been used for further engagement<sup>[2]</sup>. Throughout the process, nearly 112 contributions were made and 85% of them were accepted into the final Plan.

### Project milestones



### Get organized to implement the climate action plan and monitor its success

In order to implement the Climate Plan, one line of action focuses specifically on how to organize the city in order to successfully implement the plan. This includes the establishment of a climate office within city administration to monitor the implementation of the Plan, the establishment of internal coordination mechanisms for ensuring that information is shared across city departments, and the establishment of necessary external communication and coordination with key city players and the community. One particular community group that was instrumental to the development of the Plan was the Citizen Council for Sustainability, founded in 2001, and its network of more than 1,000 organizations (schools, companies, universities, etc.) with the aim of creating citizen-initiated climate action projects.

To measure the success of implementation, the plan also outlines indicators to be monitored for each line of action. As part of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy agreements from 2017, Barcelona must monitor and report progress related to climate action. Driven to track and assess the progress of the Plan, the city is evaluating various indicators including impact, action, resource, environment, perception, and performance indicators. The city will publish annual progress reports sharing with the community the impacts to date and a new perspective on what's left to do.

### Monitor implementation to meet targets

It remains to be seen how successful the city of Barcelona is in addressing social inequality and environmental justice issues, but the fact that the city has recognized the importance of these issues and has put them at the forefront of its Climate Plan is a critical step forward. Closely monitoring the implementation of this plan, the city will be able to continue targeting its efforts and adjust its actions to create a more equitable city.

### References

- 1 [https://www.aspb.cat/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Informe\\_Salut\\_2016.pdf](https://www.aspb.cat/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Informe_Salut_2016.pdf)
- 2 <https://www.decidim.barcelona/processes/placlima>