First Community of Practice "Marketing Dialogue for Cities: Climate Projects" Event Report MOA for the Czech Republic

Subcontracting Czechia

Author: Kateřina Pavelová

This Report presents a summary of the 1st Community of Practice (CoP) event organised within the NetZeroCities City Expert Support Facility in the Czech Republic. The event took place on 3 June 2026 from 9:30 to 10:45 during the URBIs conference in Brno and focused on the cities' communication of climate projects.

Funded by the European Union

TABLE OF CONTENTS
Contents

SUMMARY

This document presents a summary of the first Community of Practice (CoP) event organised within the NetZeroCities City Expert Support Facility in the Czech Republic. The event was attended by 31 participants representing several Czech cities, including Pilsen, Ostrava, Brno, Jihlava, Pardubice, Liberec, Ústí nad Labem and Ostrov. It was conceptualised as a panel discussion titled "Marketing Dialogue for Cities: Climate Projects", bringing together four experts with experience in project implementation, marketing, communications and public administration. The discussion focused on the question of how cities can communicate climate change and climate-related measures in a way that does not discourage the public, but instead supports engagement and understanding. The panel explored practical approaches to communicating the need for and implementation of new measures towards the public, stakeholders and political representatives. Key topics included involving partners in climate projects, communicating "eco" topics in an accessible and engaging way, and addressing challenges such as negative reactions and online hate. The session provided a platform for cities to exchange practical experiences and highlighted communication, storytelling and stakeholder engagement as important elements for advancing climate-related projects and policies within local political and institutional environments.

SPEAKERS

The panel brought together four experts representing different perspectives on climate communication, project implementation and stakeholder engagement. Adriana Černá (Digital Strategist, People in Need) contributed insights from the field of strategic communication and public engagement. Soňa Andrášová (Head of the Climate Office of Bratislava) shared practical experience from the city level, focusing on climate governance, cooperation with stakeholders and communicating climate measures. Petr Krčál (Project Manager, SIT of the City of Pilsen) presented the perspective of a city organisation involved in innovation, data and implementation of climate-related projects. Eva Škorničková (Public Administration Marketing, LIFE COALA & MiSe Klima) contributed experience from regional cooperation, adaptation projects and communication approaches within public administration. Together, the speakers provided complementary perspectives on how cities can better communicate, implement and build support for climate projects.

AGENDA

The agenda of the event consisted of an introductory opening, the presentation of the panel speakers, the main panel discussion and a Q&A session with the audience. The session started with an introduction to the discussion by Beáta Hanousková (9:30–9:40), followed by the presentation of the panelists (9:40–9:45). The main panel discussion took place from 9:45 to 10:30 and focused on approaches to communicating climate projects,

stakeholder engagement and practical experiences from cities and related organisations. The event concluded with a dedicated space for questions and discussion with participants (10:30–10:45).

Main takeaways

The discussion highlighted several key takeaways related to effective communication and implementation of climate projects in cities. The main themes included the importance of reframing climate topics through concrete and understandable benefits for people, linking climate action with broader topics such as security, self-sufficiency and resilience, and developing approaches for managing crises, criticism and online hate. The panel also addressed the role of data in supporting evidence-based communication, the need to strategically communicate the value of soft projects towards stakeholders, and the importance of engaging the private sector in climate initiatives. Further topics included ensuring long-term care and sustainability of implemented measures, the difference between the underlying work of cities and their public/media image, and examples of good practice from Bratislava and Pilsen demonstrating different approaches to advancing and communicating climate-related projects.

Reframing of the climate topics

Terms such as “climate” or “Green Deal” are often perceived by the public as polarizing and ideological. People respond better to concrete and understandable benefits (e.g., the ability to sleep in a cooler apartment in the summer) than to abstract concepts such as climate adaptation. Communicating climate projects using language that resonates with people and focusing on concrete needs—such as quality of life, health, clean air, safety, or micromobility—is therefore more effective.

The CTRL-F (Cross-border Technologies for Rapid Localisation of Fire) project which is implemented in Pilsen illustrates how climate-related benefits can be communicated through the lens of safety and resilience. The project combines a network of sensors and drones for early detection and localisation of forest fires and is primarily communicated through topics such as safety, crisis preparedness and protection of natural resources, which are often more immediately understandable for the public and decision-makers. However, environmental objectives are closely linked to it. Additionally, the possibility to use multispectral cameras on the drones allows identifying issues such as the spread of bark beetle and which also supports environmental protection.

Another example discussed during the panel was the communication approach used within the LIFE COALA and MiSe Klima projects, focused on strengthening the climate resilience of the Moravian-Silesian Region. The experience showed that moving away from communicating climate topics only through the term “climate” and instead framing them around the concept of a “more resilient region” makes the topic more understandable and relevant for the public.

It is equally important to design project communication with a long-term perspective and to present it in language that the public can understand. Although the general public does not directly decide on the implementation of projects, it can significantly influence their social acceptance.

Linking Climate to Security and Self-Sufficiency

In the current social climate (the war in Ukraine, military buildup, budget cuts), there is a growing demand for security, resilience, and self-sufficiency. It is strategic to link climate projects to these very issues—for example, preparing for blackouts or power outages is both a climate and a security issue.

Managing Crises and Hate Speech

When faced with negative reactions, it is important to remain calm and not view vocal criticism as an automatic reflection of public opinion as a whole. A large portion of the content there is generated by programmed bots and troll farms, especially on high-profile topics such as climate change, which does not reflect actual public opinion. For example, according to a 2020 study, a quarter of tweets about climate change at that time were generated by bots.

Preparing for crisis scenarios plays a crucial role—that is, thinking through possible objections in advance and preparing responses—which should take place even before the project is launched; see the detailed instructions on crisis communication and the crisis communication plan.

The goal of municipal communication should be to reach the so-called "gray zone" (the public that is not radically polarized). It is therefore important that any discussions with opponents take place with the awareness that this gray zone is observing it.

The Role of Data Versus the Opinion Level

Communication must be shifted from the level of opinions to the level of facts and figures. The success of shared e-bikes in Pilsen was cited as an example of negative comments on social media (opinions) being refuted by actual data on high demand (facts). Before launching the e-bike sharing program, a "vocal minority" appeared on social media, loudly claiming that the project wouldn't work and that it was a bad idea. However, the actual data after the launch showed the opposite: after six weeks, there were 100,000 rentals recorded—over 2,000 rentals per day—with more than 60,000 regular users, and each bike was used approximately 10 times a day, whereas the original expectation was around 3 uses per day. Now Pilsen is increasing the number of e-bikes from 300 to 450 due to high demand.

Bratislava effectively utilizes the city's vulnerability assessment (mapping risks of flooding, heat waves, and impacts on vulnerable groups) developed by the Bratislava Metropolitan Institute. The goal is to systematically incorporate this data into actual investment decisions.

However, the data must be interpreted correctly, because mere correlation does not imply causation (for example, air pollution in Prague versus high life expectancy due to better healthcare).

Strategic Communication of the Importance of Soft Projects to Stakeholders

Soft projects based on collaboration, knowledge sharing, networking, or capacity building are an important part of cities' integration into broader structures and their further development. However, their benefits are less tangible than those of traditional infrastructure investments, and therefore their importance needs to be communicated more effectively and strategically to policymakers and public administration officials, who often expect primarily visible results (e.g., roads or sidewalks).

The discussion highlighted that the value of soft projects lies not only in networking itself, but also in enabling cities to better understand their own strengths, identify gaps and learn from examples of good practice. The EUREKA project was mentioned as an example of such an approach, providing opportunities for exchange and inspiration among cities. One of the examples discussed was the concept of Climate Shelters – a network of places where people can seek relief during periods of extreme heat. For Pilsen, this example represented an important inspiration and an opportunity to recognise a missing element in the city's current approach, as similar solutions are still generally lacking across the Czech context.

Building internal capacity for managing climate projects

The discussion highlighted the importance of dedicated internal capacities within cities and their organisations for successfully developing and implementing climate-related projects, particularly international projects. Participation in such projects requires people who can continuously focus on project preparation, coordination, administration and communication with partners. Without dedicated project management capacities, it is challenging for cities to identify opportunities, apply for funding, manage partnerships and ensure effective implementation.

The discussion further emphasised that developing strategies alone is not sufficient if there is no capacity and ownership within institutions to move them forward. Experiences from the LIFE COALA project showed that climate adaptation strategies can remain only on paper unless there are people within institutions who are motivated and able to support their implementation. Strengthening internal capacities, including having dedicated people who can coordinate and drive climate-related activities, is therefore an important prerequisite for cities to actively engage in international cooperation, translate strategies into practice and advance climate-related initiatives.

Private Sector Engagement

The Moravian-Silesian Region (LIFE COALA / MiSe Klima project) successfully offers sponsorship opportunities to companies, identifying tailored environmental projects for them (in collaboration with CTP Invest, Radegast, Amazon, and others). A key factor in the success of privately funded adaptation projects is often the specific individuals within institutions who are interested in implementing change.

Bratislava has launched the Mayor's Climate Challenge, in which companies voluntarily commit to reducing energy consumption in specific buildings and installing solar panels. In 2026 alone, 16 companies have already joined the program, and savings have been achieved through the installation of new solar panels.

Sustainability and Maintenance of Implemented Measures

Follow-up maintenance for projects (typically tree planting) is often overlooked, and there is usually no money left in the budget for it, which results in the saplings drying out. A solution that is beginning to be adopted is to purchase the saplings along with a five-year maintenance plan and a replacement guarantee.

Reality vs. the Media Narrative

According to sociological data (e.g., the Ecological Transformation Barometer), 62% of Czechs feel threatened by climate change, and half believe that inaction will cost more than investing in the transition. The problem, however, is ecological fatalism: only 36% believe that the future is in their own hands. In reality, the debate has moved forward within communities, even though the media and political landscape sometimes give the impression that we're going back 10 years. It's crucial not to let ourselves be discouraged by radical individuals in political office.

Example of Best Practice – Bratislava

The success of the city's involvement in the Climate-Neutral Cities initiative stemmed from the mayor's strong mandate and the city government's willingness to undergo transformation. The Climate Office integrated previously unaddressed policy areas (e.g., urban energy). The Freedom square was cited as a good example of several successful adaptation projects, as it helps cool the city during the summer. Communication of climate issues here focused on so-called co-benefits (what the project brings to residents and the city). One example is a program focused on changing mobility patterns around schools, where the issue of emissions is linked to

specific impacts on children, health, independence, and the quality of the environment around schools. A systematic approach, long-term coordination, and the development of capacity within the city were essential for effective communication.

Example of Best Practice – Pilsen

The City of Pilsen's Information Technology company (SITMP) serves as a technical partner with staff dedicated to European projects. It is able to operate very quickly without a lengthy bureaucratic approval process. The city benefits from the generation of large amounts of data and engages the public (so-called "citizen engagement") —for example, children at suburban camps used thermal cameras to map heat islands in the city square. Pilsen combines safety and environmental protection in its projects (the Sparrow project for emergency services, or a drone network for detecting forest fires and bark beetles in the Šumava National Park). In many climate-related projects in Pilsen, the climate benefit is not always the main focus of communication, but it is present within the broader objectives of the projects—for example, in the areas of mobility, safety, or the use of technology.

Conclusion

The 1st Community of Practice event represented a successful kick-off of the project activities, creating a space for knowledge exchange, discussion and sharing of practical experiences among participating cities and experts. The event received positive feedback from participants, who appreciated the opportunity to discuss common challenges and approaches to communicating climate projects. The main takeaways from the discussion, together with relevant materials and links, will be shared with all participants, ensuring that participating cities have access to the key insights and resources from the session and can use them in their further work on climate-related communication and engagement.