



adelphi

MODERATOR'S CONCLUSIONS

City Partnerships and Bilateral Cooperation

International Conference on Climate Action (ICCA2015)

2 October 2015 – Hanover, Germany

The International Conference on Climate Action, which took place on October 1-2, 2015 in Hanover, Germany, (ICCA2015) highlighted local potential and achievements and supported mutual know-how-transfer on policies and their implementation. A dedicated workshop on the benefits and challenges of city partnerships focusing on climate action brought together representatives of cities from Germany, Poland and France (Arras and its twin city Herten, Essen, and Bielawa) and representatives of institutions (the German Federal Environment Protection, Climate Alliance and adelphi).

City partnerships can provide a useful platform to facilitate peer-to-peer learning, allow for the exchange of experience and know-how, and stimulate innovative ideas and solutions in the field of climate and energy.

Many city representatives are motivated to enhance and advance their climate and energy activities and have genuine interest in learning from cities in neighboring countries. Yet, while hundreds of city partnerships currently exist across Europe, the bulk of them are restricted to cultural exchanges, typically through school twinning. Issues related to climate and energy play often a marginal role and are considered in only a few partnerships.

The workshop followed a twofold objective:

- Learn from initial experiences made in France, Germany and Poland, and present two supporting programs (from Climate alliance and adelphi)
- Discuss how existing partnerships may be further supported and/or how new ones may be brought to life – either building on existing twin cities programs or by establishing brand new partnerships.

Presentations and discussions focused on identifying the benefits, obstacles and factors of success of such a cooperation format for local climate action.



Photo by IISD/ENB. From left to right: Kai Lipsius (City of Essen), Dr. Babette Nieder (Hertener Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH), Guillaume Coron (DREAL Nord-Pas-de-Calais), Anna Nowak (City of Bielawa)

What can be done via city partnerships?

During the workshop two types of bilateral cooperation were discussed:

- *Municipalities have similar projects under implementation or in planning.* Through the city partnership, local representatives can go through similar stages, discuss challenges and develop solutions that could be suitable to both cities.
- *Municipalities have faced similar issues (e.g. structural transformation of the local economy through the phase-out of coal), yet are at different stages.* In this context, pioneer municipalities can pass on valuable lessons learned to municipalities that are exploring solutions. Pioneers often have an interest in sharing insights into their successful initiatives and in taking on a mentoring role as it helps building support within the local community.

In both cases, activities can focus on process-related issues and soft skills that are necessary for the implementation of projects, and/or take the form of expert dialog on selected technical topics of common interest.

Benefits from bilateral cooperation on city level

City partnerships provide **fertile ground for project development**. The immediate benefit of such cooperation is the **mutual inspiration**. Through the demonstration of successful projects and exchange on the associated implementation processes, municipal representatives are encouraged to replicate activities in their local context. This demonstration effect goes beyond the municipal staff: it helps to make the case for the transition to a low emission economy to all stakeholders.

In some cases, city partnerships made municipalities aware of **additional funding sources**, as shown in the case of the city of Bielawa, Poland, that could access funds from the German Federal Environmental Foundation (DBU) to implement climate protection projects thanks to contacts and discussions with its German partner city Lingen.

While these benefits already represent a considerable added value for local representatives, participants agreed that city partnerships reach their utmost potential when supporting the **development of joint projects**. The German Federal Environment Agency (UBA) encouraged bilateral cooperation

projects to trigger investments on the local level in order to materialize progress made. While this implies the need for much greater financial and time resources, it also increases the chances for a solid, sustainable cooperation with tangible outcomes.

Enabling factors for a successful, sustainable partnership

Experience shows that establishing a city partnership heavily relies on political will. Typically, partnerships either build on pre-existing personal contacts and/or on cooperation in other policy areas that is expanded to climate protection following a political impulse, as in Essen and Grenoble. In the first case, transforming personal contacts to a formal cooperation can be challenging. **Committed municipal staff and political leaders** are the first essential enabling factor to building and sustaining such a partnership.

Having a **common ground** and a **good understanding of the administrative structures** of the partner country and city is the second important enabling factor – and at the same time often a challenge. There, facilitating institutions can play an important role in creating a common understanding by providing information and advice on the respective structures, as well as matching cities by identifying similarities in the projects in planning or under implementation.

Further, the **engagement of various stakeholders beyond municipal representatives**, e.g. citizens, local businesses, schools, energy companies, is key to a successful cooperation in the long-term. Study trips should not be limited to municipal representatives only. **Peer-to-peer exchange** on other levels, e.g. among local businesses, civil society, energy providers, is particularly beneficial, as highlighted by the city partnership between Grenoble and Essen. Such exchange helps rooting the cooperation project in the local community and enables a durable change in mentalities both necessary for the success of partnerships and for the ultimate goal of transitioning to a low emission economy.

Participants of the workshop highlighted that outreach to and involvement of **young people** – for instance via joint educational activities – may be particularly beneficial. It has the double function of creating awareness on climate and air pollution issues *in the short term*, as school projects often indirectly impact the pupils'

parents, and of potentially hindering young and qualified people from leaving the municipality because of lack of perspectives *in the long term* by developing with them a common vision and opportunities, particularly in regions affected by a structural transformation of their industry and energy systems.

Converting the try: open challenges and wishes for support

Some obstacles still need to be addressed. City partnerships often are evaluated against a timeframe that is too short for partnerships to bring about enough tangible benefits. This should be taken into account by supporting and funding institutions. Generally, securing funds to allow the cooperation to continue beyond the duration of the supporting programs is in many cases an issue. However, cities can team up to look for joint funding, e.g. on European level.

City representatives welcomed the facilitating institutions such as Climate Alliance and adelphi and identified following desirable forms of support:

- Further assistance in creating a common ground for cooperation. This includes identifying similar interests and projects in the pipeline to increase chances of good match.
- Translation services during peer-to-peer exchange, especially on technical issues to allow substantial dialog
- Assistance in the development of tangible joint projects
- Once a solid ground for bilateral cooperation has been created, initiate and support where relevant trilateral or multilateral cooperation.



[Photo by IISD/ENB](#)

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Information on the first project can be found here: <https://low-emission-project.de/en>