

## FINLAND

# Climate change mitigation

### Location

Pirkanmaa province

### Programming period

2014 – 2020

### Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

### Measure

M07 – Basic services & village renewal

### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 166 278  
EAFRD 69 837  
National/Regional 96 441

### Project duration

2019-2020

### Project promoter

Pirkan Kylät ry

### Contact

[Heidi.hallongren@pirkankylat.fi](mailto:Heidi.hallongren@pirkankylat.fi)

### Website

[www.pirkankylat.fi](http://www.pirkankylat.fi)

Communities coming together to collaboratively develop locally suited, innovative actions to mitigate climate change in rural Finland.

## Summary

The Villages sequestering and storing carbon project is especially topical at the moment as countries implement the Paris Agreement and the need for action to mitigate climate impacts is desperately increasing. During the project, over 30 villages around the Pirkanmaa region planned and implemented their own climate actions using their expertise together with old traditions so as to create new events and know-how.



All villages showing an interest in tackling climate change were chosen to participate, with great diversity amongst those involved: some of them are located near growing urban areas, others are situated in sparsely populated and remote areas. All village gatherings, events and local community-led operations are aimed at tackling climate change, but each village adds its own flavour to its actions and sets its own targets. The main climate actions that villages have implemented in this project are sequestering and storing carbon by using wood for construction, making biochar and planting trees. Also, carbon emissions have been reduced at community level in various ways. Villages have, for example, organised events around environmental themes and local food circles, set up community gardens, developed recycling, composting and waste management, organised carpools and so forth.

## Results

There is a strong community engagement for combatting climate change through locally developed solutions to reduce carbon footprints and to sequester and store carbon. Awareness at the individual and community level has increased into how carbon flows within the system and which actions are possible to close cycles and reduce losses. All villages involved in the project have implemented their community-led design for experimental climate actions and are building these changes and system transitions into everyday life.

## Lessons and recommendations:

- ❑ Introducing climate contributions, impacts and possible opportunities to address them provides an important basis for individuals and communities to engage in a collaborative approach around climate change.
- ❑ Creating the space for communities to develop their own contextually appropriate solutions fosters social innovation and social capital.

## Context

Climate change has been identified as one of the main drivers of rural change. Thus, it is a strong motivator for rural residents to limit their carbon emissions and adapt their everyday lives to the changing climate conditions. Carrying out concrete actions together in the community may increase their effectiveness as well as foster social benefits. This project gathers people together to discuss the effective carbon-cutting changes that can be made in ordinary people's lives. Sharing information includes ways to reduce one's carbon footprint and how to potentially sequester and store carbon. Ultimately, it recognises that changes begin with small steps.

The project takes place in the Pirkanmaa province that is situated in the south of Finland. Pirkanmaa is the second biggest and fastest growing province in Finland. Climate change issues are highly prioritised at the provincial level as well as by municipalities. Several municipalities in the area are trying to reach carbon neutrality in the coming decades. The region has excellent resources to tackle climate change: universities, research facilities, etc. The capital of Pirkanmaa province is Tampere, the second biggest city in Finland after the Helsinki metropolitan area, but the province also has vast rural areas, including sparsely populated rural municipalities. The project is owned by the provincial village association Pirkan Kylät ry, which is responsible for organising the activities in coordination with the villages.

Therefore, the project brings new content to traditional village action – content that is central to the future of the village and is inspiring new actors to join. Local communities have substantial potential to find new ecological solutions within their carbon cycle for reducing losses and waste, as well as carbon sequestration and storage. Concrete environmental actions could even become a source of pride and attraction for the local community's image in the country.

Climate change, however, is a global issue and the need for change is global. Change starts from people's attitudes, knowledge and practical steps. Some of the challenges faced by communities relate to energy production, recycling, mobility and consumption. Building a society that contributes to meeting these challenges requires community action.

## Objectives

This project is activating the villages in the Pirkanmaa region to discover, develop and put into practice various strategies and actions to tackle climate change. The project aims to:

- Raise awareness and build the capacity of rural villages to understand their carbon footprint and the possible everyday local actions they could take to help reduce emissions, close carbon cycles and sequester and store carbon.
- Inspire and support the villages to not only implement climate actions but adopt them as part of the ordinary, everyday functioning of the communities that will flourish and continue to evolve in the future.
- Encourage and advise villages to find solutions that are suitable to their current situations and address their individual challenges.
- Promote the sharing of examples between villages involved in the project with other communities in the Pirkanmaa region and encourage them to join the transition towards renewable and low-carbon solutions.

## Activities

Initially, the villages involved in this project organised climate events, where the village communities discussed appropriate climate actions for their villages. Topics discussed included the condition of the village house and its heating system, how waste management and recycling work, village transportation (to where and how people move) and types of accommodation and their carbon footprints. Identifying where the carbon flows within these cycles and how it can be stored in the area, as well as opportunities and the potential of the area to contribute to the bio-economy were also discussed. Additionally, easy and more demanding ways to reduce each individual's carbon footprint were highlighted.

The agenda for the climate events was the same in all villages, but the actions and experiments undertaken were different. The goal was to launch at least one or two concrete, low-carbon experiments in each participating village. These experimental actions could be versatile and could be about, for example, improving the local waste management and recycling, planting trees, developing renewable energy from local resources, replacing the old oil heating system of the village house with a more environmentally friendly alternative, establishing local sharing economy schemes and so on.

In deciding on the actions to be carried out in each village, these were approached through many different angles by questioning: How could the village environment be best used economically? For example, through tourism, local food or natural products? Is it possible to create new jobs in the villages through emphasising the bioeconomy and circular economy? Is it possible to store carbon and maintain the village landscape at the same time? Is fully climate-neutral housing feasible?

During the project, several free events, seminars and workshops were organised for anyone interested on various topics, such as how to make biochar at home, how to make beeswax fabric wraps as well as information on solar energy, energy consumption and saving energy. A village school tour called “The Climate Heroes” was organised for children. It introduced the carbon footprint concept and everyday climate acts through interactive lectures where the children were able to test their knowledge in action. They were also given a Climate action video challenge, where the best videos were awarded and published on YouTube.

All actions carried out in the villages during the course of the project will be described from design to implementation and also evaluated in terms of their effectiveness. The aim of the evaluation is to identify good practices and bottlenecks in the implementation and transferability of the actions. For example, what is the potential of climate mitigation actions and experimental culture from the rural development perspective? Tools will be developed to promote and support low-carbon and resource-efficient social innovations that can be implemented in other rural areas.

### Main Results

The project is aiming to achieve the implementation of many different types of climate actions that continue and still develop in the villages after the end of the project. It is hoped that these will spread beyond to all villages in the Pirkanmaa region so as to become part of the everyday actions in the village communities. After this project, villages will hopefully be on their way towards a full renewable and low-carbon transition.

Initially, 30 villages were targeted for involvement in the project, but over the course of the project, another five villages joined in. As each village has undergone awareness raising, brainstorming and design of one-two experimental climate actions tailored to their specific context, the project has resulted in between 35 to 70

locally implemented actions aimed at reducing emissions, closing carbon cycles, reducing waste and sequestering and storing carbon. They have designed new initiatives, such as producing biochar from branches and other biomass (garden waste), local food circles, community gardens, carpooling systems and flea markets. They have even introduced geothermal heating in public facilities. Events on various environmental themes were organised while systems for recycling, composting and waste management are being improved. Some of the villages are even experimenting with new kinds of communal living in modern eco-villages.

At the regional level, there are many cooperating partners. Climate actions concern municipalities, organisations and associations from different perspectives. The Carbon Neutral Municipalities network (HINKU) offers networking potential and also cooperation with other publicly funded projects on climate change, dealing with forest usage, energy efficiency, etc. This allows for synergy in the regional approach towards tackling climate change. Some of the municipalities are working in cooperation with the villages to reinforce their work.

### Key lessons

The Villages sequestering and storing carbon project offers people in rural areas tools to fight climate change. By reducing our carbon footprint in everyday life through collective actions aimed at reducing climate impacts and sequestering and storing carbon, we can tackle climate change at both the individual and community level.

Tackling climate change from a locally and community-led approach gives new perspectives on village development and renewal. Gathering people together around climate actions that offer the potential for new bioeconomy and circular economy opportunities as well as enhance villages’ attractiveness promotes a strong sense of community and strengthens social capital.

This project and the climate actions carried out in the villages are transferable to other regions in Finland and could also be replicated abroad. The collaborative and cooperative process is the foundation for communities to then determine what strategies will work for them, contributing to ownership of the ideas and buy-in to carry the solutions forward. Climate change is a global issue and all actions to slow it down are needed. Daily activities have a huge potential when considered collectively and there is a need for targeted measures to promote and support efforts in rural areas.

#### Additional sources of information

n/a

\*This project has been categorised under ‘Climate change mitigation’ by the nominating National Rural Network