



Rouen: A scientific approach to citizen engagement

Rouen, France

IN A NUTSHELL

In 2017, the Métropole of Rouen launched a climate action agreement called “Notre COP21” (“Our COP21”) to mitigate the city’s urban area CO₂ emissions. To this end, a local IPCC was set up, the Rouen Agreement for Climate was signed and an action plan was developed. This Territorial Climate, Air and Energy Plan (PCAET) contains a 73% GHG reduction objective by 2030. To achieve this, the Métropole of Rouen can count on the help of its citizens, from scientists to residents.

Local IPCC: local expertise to engage the citizens of Rouen

To tackle climate change, the Métropole of Rouen built its climate action plan on strong scientific foundations. Along with the local COP pact, a local IPCC was set up, featuring only local academics. Through a multidisciplinary approach (social and natural science), they aim to generate climate change expertise grounded on local knowledge.

With regard to citizen participation, the local IPCC led a social psychology study called “Representations and behaviours of local populations regarding climate change” in an effort to understand what levers of action could be used to engage the local population in this project. One conclusion of the study was that *“it may be more relevant to engage with people at the level of effects rather than causes, and even more so if the effects are discussed at a local level”*.

According to the study, policies may achieve more engagement if they focus on adapting citizens’ living spaces to local consequences of climate change, such as urban heat island mitigation, house retrofits, etc.

CITY NAME



Population:

112,321

Area:

21.38 km²

Signatory to the Covenant of Mayors since:

2013

CO₂ emission reduction target:

73% by 2030, neutral by 2050



Once people are familiar with such projects, they may be more keen to commit to other more cause-oriented projects such as decarbonisation of food or energy production.

Raising public awareness

In 2019, the Lubrizol chemicals factory in Rouen, a Seveso site, caught fire. The fire emitted an enormous, noxious cloud and pollutants were found in a large area around Rouen. This accident ignited a will to act and many citizens started to pay more attention to environmental issues. In the meantime, the city of Rouen was creating its Climate Plan (PCAET) and considering how to involve citizens. To reach everyone, Rouen chose an educational approach. A temporary workshop was set up in the Rouen city centre. Called “*L’atelier de la COP 21*”, it aimed to teach, raise awareness and demonstrate climate action in practice. An advantage of this approach is that it brings the issue to the heart of the citizens’ environment, creating a place for lively interaction, where people can have discussions and find out information about climate change.

In addition, multiple awareness campaigns were carried out in schools and almost 4500 pupils visited climate-related facilities (gardens, waste valorisation centres, energy production plants, etc.) to learn more about what is at stake.



KEY FIGURES

4340 pupils were made aware of climate friendly actions

35% of Rouen’s GHG emissions were emitted by industry

The territory produces only **9%** of the energy it consumes



FINANCING THE PROJECT

Financing source(s):

Metropolitan urban community
€1M in 3 years

I participate: citizen projects are funded 50% by the city and 50% through crowdfunding

Citizen participation: progress is difficult to assess

It is obviously difficult to measure the level of engagement in a population, because you can’t know which people are convinced and which ones aren’t. In Rouen, this has been one of the biggest challenges. For example, one project involving individual coaching for families was abandoned because it was too hard to find a reliable way to measure the results. One possible solution is to anticipate this issue and only work with measurable targets to determine whether a project is raising awareness and interest efficiently.

USEFUL LINKS

- ▶ [Rouen Territorial Climate, Air and Energy Plan \(PCAET\)](#)
- ▶ [Rouen Climate Agreement](#)
- ▶ [Local IPCC scientific committee](#)
- ▶ [Local IPCC social psychology engagement study](#)



CONTACT

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