

SUMMARY

The 'People's Transition' is a community-development initiative led by the Think tank for Action on Social Change (TASC), and funded by the Allied Irish Banks (AIB). It does research on Irish communities' needs and seeks to identify how climate action can help address those needs through co-creation of local, climate-focused solutions.



CONTEXT

The 'People's Transition' works with communities across Ireland, listening to a range of voices, including under-represented and marginalised groups, to identify challenges and develop sustainable solutions that can reduce inequality.

In rural areas, the primary challenges include inadequate public transport, inequality in the agriculture sector, high fuel costs, and limited employment opportunities. The 'People's Transition' supports local communities in accessing the funding and knowledge necessary to plan and implement local projects that can respond to those challenges.

Theme(s): Democracy and participation, climate, nature and environment.

Country(ies): Ireland

Organisation(s): Think-tank for Action on Social Change (TASC), civil society organisation

Start & end date: 05/2022 - 06/2022

Budget: EUR 389 850

Funding sources: Allied Irish Banks (AIB)

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OBJECTIVES

- > Enable local populations to devise community-led, climate-action solutions that address their short and long-term needs, and build upon their strengths;
- > Facilitate the practical implementation of these solutions by sourcing expert advice, contributing to strategic planning, and supporting community organisations in accessing funding;
- > Build knowledge and capacity in local communities to enable community-led, local development and climate action.





ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

Each 'People's Transition' project has three phases: mapping, listening, and solutions.

- > In the **mapping** phase, TASC conducts desk research to understand the social, economic, and environmental characteristics of a specific geographic area, using sources such as the national census, academic and grey literature. Additionally, TASC identifies key stakeholders in the community, such as local development workers and activists, and establishes relationships with them.
- > In the **listening** phase, TASC facilitates focus groups, workshops, and surveys within the community to learn about people's experiences. TASC ensures the participation of marginalised groups, such as ethnic minorities, unemployed, disabled people, and migrants.
- > In the **solutions** phase, TASC analyses the collected data and co-creates plans for climate-action solutions with the community and experts. TASC also supports the community in completing funding applications.

Once the local 'People's Transition' strategy has been agreed, TASC appoints a project manager to oversee the strategy implementation and assembles an implementation steering committee comprising local businesses, civil society representatives, community members and decision-makers.



RESULTS

Since its inception in 2022, the primary achievement of the 'People's Transition' initiative has been the development of a **framework for designing and implementing policies that enable a just transition**, expanding the capabilities of individuals and communities.

By mid-2024, the initiative had **engaged nearly 2 220 local people**, including over 1 400 from rural areas, and **completed six pilots projects**.

One notable project, conducted in Enniscorthy, County Wexford, in 2022-2023, highlighted significant mobility challenges, particularly for older community members and disabled individuals. The hilly topography and lack of shared transportation options were identified as major barriers to accessing services. In response, TASC proposed a shared mobility solution, securing project funding through the Science Foundation Ireland. The CONUNDRUM project, in partnership with academics from Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin, works to co-create sustainable mobility options and develop a comprehensive transport strategy for Enniscorthy.

In Ardara, County Donegal, a pilot project in 2021 resulted in a positive shift in local attitudes and mindsets. During the listening phase, the community expressed the need for good training and employment opportunities, enhanced local democracy, and a greater say in decisions impacting their lives. They highlighted the importance of including women, young people, and older members in these discussions.

Two solutions were explored: a cooperative biochar facility and a large-scale, indigenous seaweed farm with a 30% profit share for the community. While these projects have not yet progressed due to current limitations in capacity, knowledge, and capital, the groundwork has been valuable for future development.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

Based on the implementation results in 2022-2024, **communities with strong local development organisations and civil society groups** have emerged as a key success factor. These groups must have the resources and capacity to support community-led climate action in their areas. In the absence of such a local infrastructure, it is less likely that the research will result in sustained action. Additionally, without organisational support, reaching community members during the listening phase becomes challenging.

Another lesson is the challenge of relying on community-led climate action in situations with deep structural inequalities, time-constrained communities, insufficient funding for projects and lack of political commitment. There's a danger that public authorities might shift its responsibility for significant policy changes onto these local initiatives instead.

Many of the challenges faced by rural communities, such as lack of housing, public transport, and employment, depopulation, and competition for land, require ambitious action from local and national governments. Therefore, the evidence gathered by the 'People's Transition' is used to advocate for policy shifts.

Despite these challenges, successful bottom-up approaches to climate action have proved effective in increasing public support and engagement by demonstrating tangible benefits for local communities.



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