



Roadmap to Regional Adaptation Board



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Introduction

Climate change is widely recognized among the **greatest environmental and societal challenges of our times**¹. In this context, **climate change adaptation** – along with mitigation – has emerged as a **key strategy to address climate impacts and enhance resilience**. The scope and urgency of climate adaptation pose new issues concerning modes of production, and circulation of knowledge needed to address climate risks and to strengthen the capacity of local communities to respond to them². Furthermore, the pressing need to accelerate towards more incisive adaptation actions at different levels has been accompanied by a growing demand for **broader participation in climate adaptation governance**³.

Building on this understanding, the climate crisis is seen to act as a catalyst for rethinking established practices and collaboration forms, opening windows of opportunity for novelty and experimentation, testing innovative strategies, governance mechanisms, and actions that support more systemic social and ecological transitions. Within this framework, **climate adaptation is conceived as a context-specific and place-based transformational process, shaped by lived experiences, cultural practices and collective forms of action, in which people are placed at the centre as active agents of change**. As such, adaptation unfolds within social-ecological systems and interacts with existing local challenges, dynamics and vulnerabilities across multiple domains and scales.

With this perspective, climate change adaptation shifts from a mere reactive response to environmental stressors to a **proactive process of system reconfiguration, becoming a device for territorial and social transformation**^{4,5,6}. Such transformations entail moving away from the status quo and reconfiguring social and ecological properties and functions. **They require introducing innovative and more collaborative climate adaptation governance structures, effective participation and communication strategies, inclusive process design**, and favourable institutional conditions able to influence underlying beliefs, values, and power relations^{7,8}.

Participation is key for effective and just climate adaptation governance and is widely recognised as an enabler for systemic and local transformational adaptation⁸.

In fact, participatory processes promote the **inclusion and integration of diverse types of knowledge and practices, improve the quality of decision-making, and enhance the acceptance, legitimacy, and ownership of the adaptation process and outcomes by local actors and communities**^{9,10}. Moreover, scholars agree that local stakeholders, due to their embedded knowledge and lived experiences, are **best positioned to interpret adaptation contexts**, foresee unintended effects of interventions, and co-develop responses that are better aligned with local conditions and needs^{8,9,11}. This is also highly connected with the established concept of climate justice which recognizes the **equal legitimization of all the social identities in the adaptation process, including more vulnerable and marginalized groups**¹².

While there is a strong ambition at a higher governance level to promote new forms and modes of governance, **on-the-ground experience at the local level reveals a discrepancy between what is considered desirable in terms of participation and its actual implementation**. Moreover, **many participatory processes fail to address existing power asymmetries and inequalities**¹³. Although several inspiring initiatives exist including many European initiatives promoting participatory approaches, it often remains difficult to establish and consolidate these processes and, it is even harder to make them replicable across different geographical contexts.



Regional Adaptation Board (RAB)



A **Regional Adaptation Board (RAB)** represents an **innovative and dynamic governance structure for place-based and locally led knowledge production, decision-making, and action on systemic and transformational climate change adaptation**. This collaborative governance arena brings together relevant stakeholders, from public authorities, businesses, civil society, and vulnerable groups, willing to engage and collaborate throughout the climate adaptation process - design, implementation, monitoring and impact assessment. **It aims to enable more inclusive, fair, and distributed decision-making and local action through new forms of bottom-up governance.**

The **number and composition of RAB members may vary across regions**. In all cases, the **selection should aim to embed the adaptation process within the local context as effectively as possible**, considering both the expertise of the actors involved and the programs or initiatives that are implicated in, or may be affected by, the climate impacts to be addressed.

Climate Innovation Hub (CIH)



A **Climate Innovation Hub (CIH)** is the **physical anchor through which the Regional Adaptation Board is grounded in the territory, and acts as the dedicated gathering and local collaborative centre for climate knowledge, experimentation, and community engagement**. The CIH functions as a hybrid and multi-purpose space, bringing together residents, researchers, associations, schools, local authorities and municipal officials to collaboratively design and **test solutions, evaluate nature-based and technological interventions, and translate insights into climate policies**.

The CIH **builds climate literacy and mainstream climate resilience into everyday local planning and community life, allowing RAB members and wider networks to actively shape and lead climate actions, making climate adaptation more accessible and participatory**. The CIH promotes green, resilient, and climate-friendly entrepreneurship, fostering action-research and technology transfer, thereby **strengthening local capacities for evidence based and participatory climate action**.

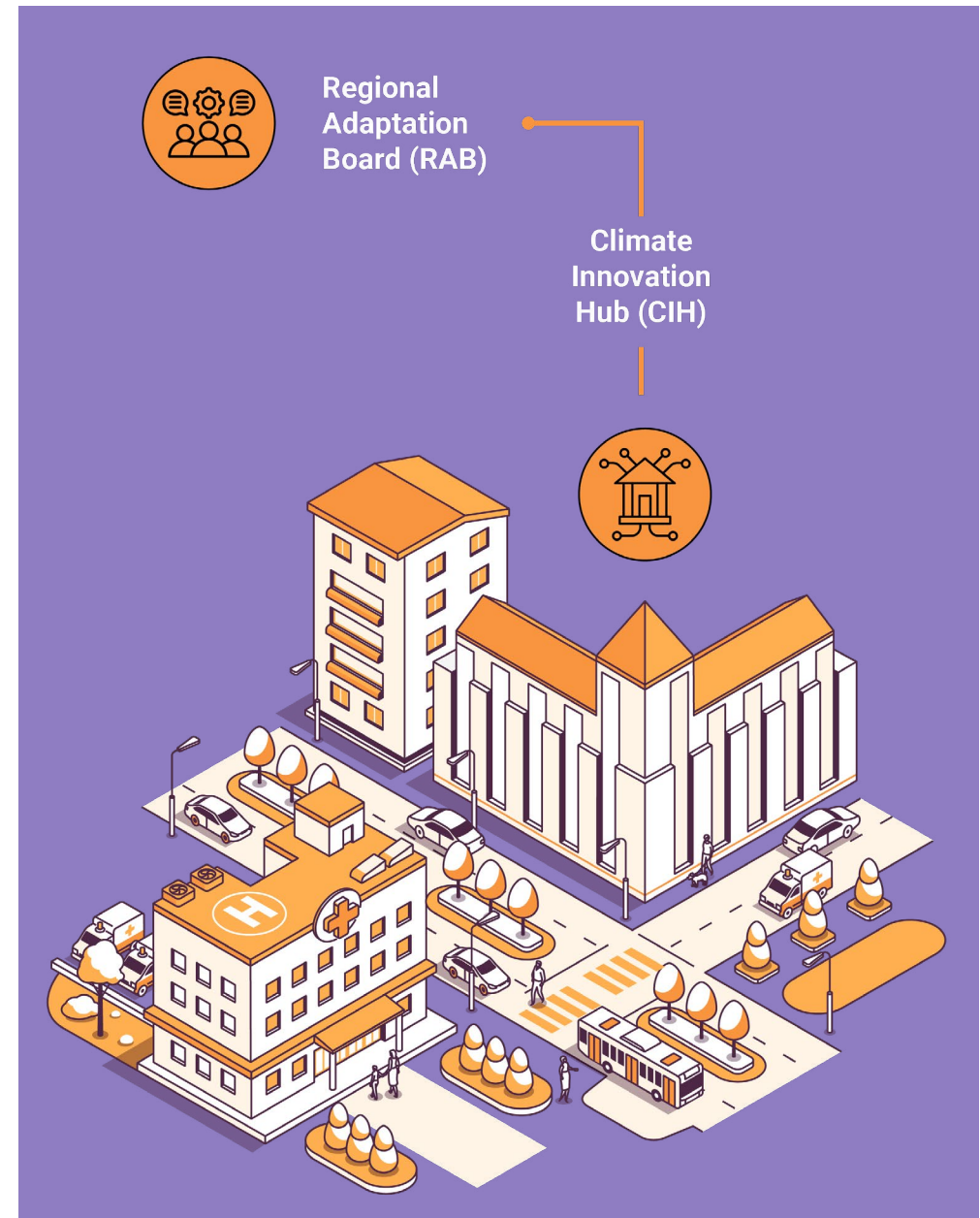
Why should you establish a RAB and a CIH?

The **RAB** and **CIH** act as **climate adaptation incubators for innovation and collaborative governance**: the **CIH anchors experimentation, learning, and innovation on the ground, while the RAB ensures collaboration, inclusion, and bottom-up decision-making**. This strengthens **local participation, empowerment, and ownership, driving systemic climate resilience and societal transformations**. Ultimately, this process aims to advance science policy integration and **strengthen local adaptation through participatory governance**.

This **RAB Roadmap** is intended for municipalities, public authorities, and third sector organisations willing to **activate and establish inclusive, multi-stakeholder collaborations for local climate adaptation processes**.

Establishing the Regional Adaptation Board (RAB) within a Climate Innovation Hub (CIH) is key as the **two entities operate as complementary and mutually reinforcing structures**. The **CIH provides the practical and enabling environment where RAB members can meet, engage, and collaboratively lead the climate adaptation process**. Without the RAB, the CIH's knowledge and experimentation would risk remaining operational but not systematically connected to governance and decision-making. Conversely, without the CIH, the RAB would lack a structured space and collaborative physical platform to support its work and foster continuous and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

The **RAB Roadmap is designed to be applicable across different socio-economic and ecological contexts, geographies, and sectoral challenges, providing operational guidance** for actors interested in establishing collaborative governance structures and initiating participatory and inclusive locally led climate adaptation processes.



Together, a **RAB** and its **CIH** ensure that climate change adaptation processes and risk reduction strategies are:



Systemic: addressed across **governance levels, stakeholders, and sectorial value chains**, considering the **interrelations and interdependencies of socio-economic, technological, environmental and climatic components in each territorial system**, following a **Key Community Systems (KCS) approach**.

Locally led: led by **local actors who are empowered with decision-making authority at every stage of the adaptation process**, from design, planning and implementation, to monitoring, evaluation and learning.



Place-based: grounded in **local knowledges, needs, and context-specific conditions and priorities**.

Inclusive: **representative of multiple perspectives, experiences, and voices**, creating the conditions for the **effective participation of the most vulnerable and underrepresented groups**.



Innovative: resulting from **knowledge exchange, collective learning, and cross-fertilisation and collaboration among actors**, creating the conditions for an **innovative ecosystem**.

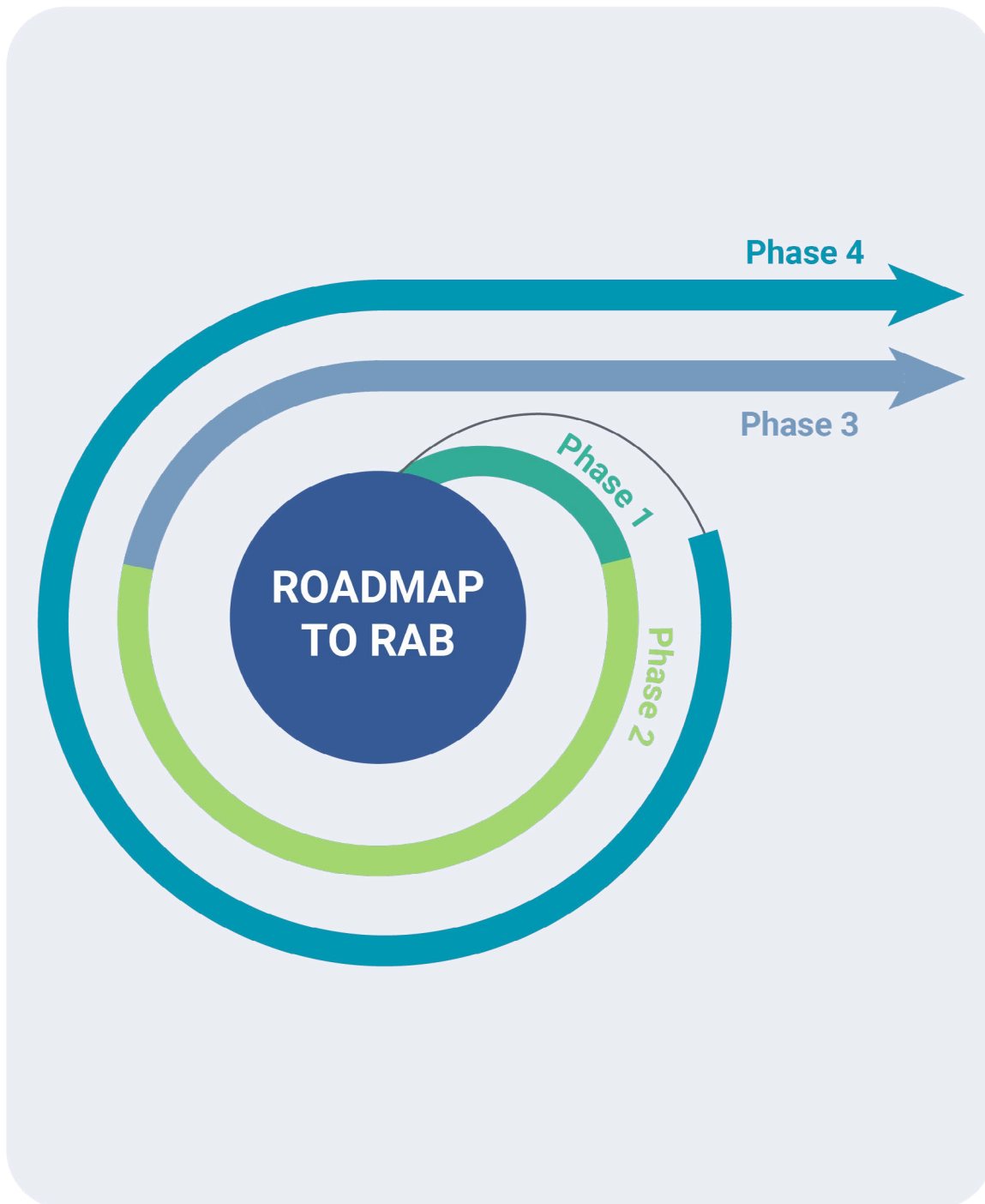
The Roadmap to the RAB: steps to establish a RAB and CIH

This section outlines the **step-by-step methodology to structure and establish RABs within CIHs at the local level**. This Roadmap builds upon 4 main phases:

1. **Framing and trust-building,**
2. **Experimentation and dialogue,**
3. **Local action,**
4. **Monitoring, evaluation and learning.**

Each phase is composed of **actionable and replicable steps**, ensuring a **clear and structured pathway from stakeholder engagement and community building to locally led climate actions and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**. The following section describe each step in more detail, providing a **short introduction and practical guidelines tailored to support regions and cities in co-designing, implementing, and consolidating their own RAB**. Each of these resources is conceived to support interested actors throughout the entire process and facilitate a consistent application of the RAB Roadmap.





PHASE 1
Framing and
Trust-Building

STEP 1 Stakeholder mapping
and selection

STEP 2 Stakeholder
Engagement &
Communication

PHASE 2
Experimentation
& Dialogue

STEP 3 Inception
workshop

STEP 4 RAB activation and
community building

STEP 5 The RAB Governance
Structure

PHASE 3
Local action

STEP 6 RAB Activities

PHASE 4
MEL

STEP 7 Monitoring,
Evaluation, Learning

**STEP 1****Stakeholder mapping and selection**

Identify and select all relevant actors across key sectors to ensure a multi-stakeholder inclusive and representative ecosystem

WHY

The first step to establish a Regional Adaptation Board is **to map and select all relevant stakeholders** for your activities, based on the sectoral and hazard-related challenges you want to address. This is key to building a **multi-level and inclusive stakeholder ecosystem**

HOW**Stakeholder identification**

To **map initial stakeholders** it can help reflect on **these questions**: Which sectors are most likely to be impacted by climate change? Who is likely to be mostly involved, interested or affected? Who is often excluded from decisions over these topics?

To further expand your list, it can be helpful to **look at similar projects** in your region and see who is already involved or excluded, review and analyse related documents, leverage your network and consult with experienced actors.

Ensure you map stakeholders from multiple categories and roles and include representatives from social groups often excluded from decision-making processes on climate change.

Stakeholder analysis and selection

Once you have a first list of potential stakeholders to engage, you can further analyse them with an **Influence - Interest Matrix**, to assess their relevance in the project, and how they are positioned within the ecosystem of actors you are building for the RAB.

A "**Stakeholders Characterization Grid**" is provided to support your stakeholder identification and selection. The Grid is intended as a living document, to be regularly updated throughout your project activities.

For more detail on STEP 1 and to download useful resources, like the Stakeholders Characterization Grid please click on the following link or scan the QR code available on the Resources page of this booklet: systemicresilience.eu



STEP 2Stakeholder engagement
& communicationDesigning effective engagement and
communication for a participatory
climate adaptation process**WHY**

This step lays the **relational and trust-based foundation for the entire RAB process**. A well-designed strategy for stakeholder's engagement and communication is **foundational to ensure broad and meaningful participation in the climate adaptation process**.

Once stakeholders are identified, the **focus shifts to activating and engaging them**. This step involves **designing a strategy that ensures continuous and meaningful participation over time**.

HOW

Engagement is not a one-off activity but an ongoing process requiring time, trust-building, and adaptability. The aim is to move beyond simple consultation towards collaboration and empowerment, **enabling stakeholders to actively co-create solutions**. This type of engagement is not improvised and is not limited to the organisation of a few (disconnected) events. It is an **ongoing learning process that needs to be strategically designed and continuously monitored and adjusted over time, as a foundation for a successful participatory process**.

An effective and just engagement strategy should be:

- **inclusive** (accessible to different groups),
- **transparent** (clear rules and expectations),
- **adaptive** (able to evolve over time),
- **balanced** (avoiding overrepresentation of certain actors).

Communication also plays a key role and should be **clear, accessible, and tailored to different audiences**.

Building upon the "Stakeholders Characterization Grid" developed in step 1, the "**Stakeholder Participation Tracker**" serves as a **tool to monitor the engagement process throughout the whole development of the RAB**.

For more detail on STEP 2 and to download useful resources, like the Stakeholder Participation Tracker please click on the following link or scan the QR code available on the Resources page of this booklet: systemicresilience.eu

STEP 3

Inception Workshop

Initiating the RAB participatory journey:
building a shared vision and
common framing

WHY

The **Inception Workshop** marks the **first operational step of the RAB** and transforms a list of potentially interested people into an **active community**. This is the first face-to-face meeting that provides **the space for stakeholders to meet, connect, and develop a common vision**, ensuring that the engagement process begins with a strong foundation and a **shared sense of purpose**.

The main objective is **twofold**: to **introduce the role of the RAB & CIH and to create a space for stakeholders to align expectations, interests, and contributions**. This step is crucial to generate engagement and a sense of ownership.

HOW

During the workshop, a dedicated session can be organized focusing specifically on the RAB and CIH, as the **governance collaborative arena for locally led climate action**. Beyond presenting the RAB and CIH, **two structured participatory activities are conducted to collectively build the RAB ecosystem**.

Group Activity n. 1

In this activity, participants are asked to:

- **position themselves** within the **influence–interest matrix**,
- **express their willingness to engage**,
- **identify potential contributions**,
- indicate **preferred communication and engagement methods**.
- identify **missing stakeholders helping improve inclusiveness** and representation in next events.

Group Activity n. 2

Participants are asked to **identify potential spaces that could host the CIH, map and locate these spaces** (e.g. using a shared digital map), assess each option based on **accessibility, capacity, and available services, reflect on costs, availability, and long-term usability, and evaluate how suitable each space is for hosting RAB activities**.

For more detail on STEP 3 and to discover full instructions about both activities please click on the following link or scan the QR code available on the Resources page of this booklet: systemicresilience.eu

STEP 4

RAB Activation and
community building

Activation and community building

WHY

Following the first regional workshop, it is fundamental to **capitalise on the interest and participation generated, maintaining high momentum on the RAB and CIH process.**

HOW

This step ensures that the **RAB evolves from an initial network of interested local actors** into a more **structured and committed group** ready to **actively engage in participatory activities for adaptation**. This requires:

- **Reporting back on the output and results** to the participants. Sharing a concise summary of the discussion, key findings and next steps is essential to establish a two-way relationship with the stakeholders based on trust and responsibility;
- **Recognizing participants' time and contribution** acknowledging their effort and the value of their participation;
- **Reaching out** and inviting **missing stakeholders** identified from the first meeting and inviting them to join the process;
- **Reflecting on what worked and what did not**. Collect feedback from participants with structured tools (short surveys) or informal ways (follow-ups) to adjust engagement formats and timing while preparing the ground for future workshops and meetings;
- **Maintaining regular contact with participants** providing short updates and clarifying upcoming opportunities to engage;
- **Ensuring relevance to the local context**. Adapt dissemination and in-person communication styles (language, format, accessibility) to provide an easily accessible summary of materials used, information collected and outcomes;
- **Monitoring and reflecting on both participation and activities** using the **RAB supporting tool** (see step 7).

Ensure that during Regional Workshops and meetings, all **required information is collected and recorded in the Participation Tracker** (Tab 2 of the RAB supporting tool), as this constitutes a key milestone in the establishment of the RAB and provides the evidence base for subsequent steps. In parallel, **regularly update the RAB Activities Monitoring Sheet** (Tab 3 of the RAB supporting tool) by documenting all activities carried out by the RAB or in which the RAB is involved, following the instructions provided in the Grid directly. This tool is essential not only for tracking participation and initiatives, but also for enabling reflections and self-assessment within the RAB itself.

For more detail on STEP 4 and on the RAB supporting tool and its tracker and monitoring sheet please click on the following link or scan the QR code available on the Resources page of this booklet: systemicresilience.eu

STEP 5

The RAB Governance Structure

Operationalising the RAB: co-designing collaborative governance for climate adaptation

WHY

To transition the RAB from an **initial network into a structured multi-actor collaborative arena for place-based, locally led climate adaptation.**

HOW

At this stage, the **RAB evolves into a structured governance mechanism.** The objective is to **define roles, rules, and operational modalities to ensure effective and sustainable collaboration.** This is typically achieved during the second workshop. Here the community and network of **active and committed stakeholders are invited to collectively discuss and define how the RAB should function in practice:** for instance, **what its mission is, who comprises its core and extended membership, how decisions are made and responsibilities distributed,** and how information circulates. By making these elements explicit, the RAB strengthens accountability, transparency, and shared ownership, preparing the ground for coordinated local climate action.

The operationalisation of the RAB is made possible through a group activity using the **RAB collaborative governance Manifesto as the co-design tool to support stakeholders collectively defining how their own RAB should function in practice.** In particular, this tool guides stakeholders in defining:

- the **RAB's identity and mission,**
- **membership and roles,**
- **decision-making processes,**
- **communication mechanisms,**
- **criteria for success and sustainability.**

The outcome is a **shared document that formalises how the RAB operates,** strengthening **transparency, accountability and ownership to share the Manifesto with all the RAB members** and it is expected to be shared with a wider network of interested stakeholders, utilising the identified preferred communication channels. The Manifesto becomes a **practical reference for the functioning of the RAB enabling coordinated and inclusive action in climate adaptation.**

For more detail on STEP 4 and on the RAB collaborative governance Manifesto please click on the following link or scan the QR code available on the Resources page of this booklet: systemicresilience.eu

STEP 6

RAB Activities

Local action and experimentation for systemic resilience

WHY

The RAB as a governance structure and collaborative arena exists to enable **place-based, locally led climate adaptation action** with the potential to improve **systemic climate resilience**.

HOW

Once governance is established, the **RAB moves into the implementation phase**. The **RAB acts as a collaborative platform**, facilitating coordination and integrating local and scientific knowledge. **Activities are often carried out through workshops and local initiatives**, with the **CIH providing a physical space for collaboration**. This step focuses on **activating concrete, locally led climate adaptation actions**.

The aim is to **translate the participatory process into tangible activities**, such as:

- **climate risk assessments,**
- **co-design of adaptation solutions,**
- **implementation of measures,**
- **capacity-building initiatives,**
- **trainings.**

All activities should be systematically tracked using the dedicated tool to monitor outputs and impacts (**Records of Activities** - Tab 3 of the **RAB supporting tool**).

For more details on STEP 6 and the RAB Collaborative Governance Manifesto, please click on the following link or scan the QR code available on the Resources page of this booklet: systemicresilience.eu

STEP 7**Monitoring,
Evaluation, Learning**

Tracking progress, reflecting and learning to strengthen the RAB effectiveness, inclusivity and sustainability

WHY

A **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)** system is crucial to continuously assess how the RAB is functioning, **ensuring that activities remain aligned with project objectives, stakeholder expectations, and the evolving needs of the local context**. A MEL approach enables the systematic capture of results, the collection of feedback, and continuous learning from experience, identifying and mitigating potential obstacles and bottlenecks. By incorporating monitoring and reflection into your activities, **RAB members can improve the effectiveness and impact of their collaboration, ensuring the RAB remains an open, adaptable and inclusive collaborative governance arena, fostering a culture of evaluation and learning.**

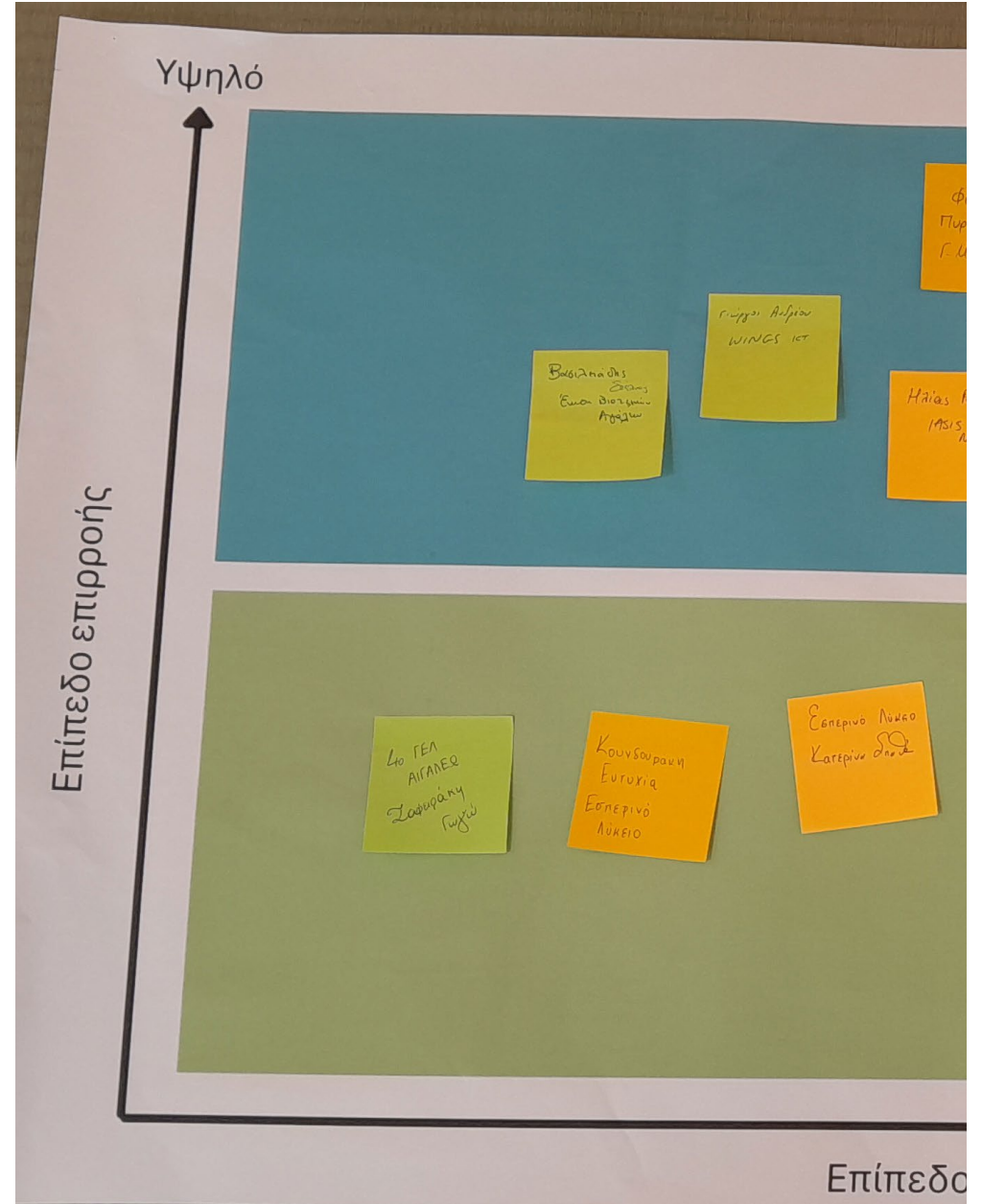
HOW

A MEL system for the RAB serves **two complementary purposes**:

1. **Track RAB participation and project activities**: throughout the implementation of the project activities, RAB members should **systematically track the implementation of their activities, document participation levels and engagement efforts**, and the initiatives emerging from the collaboration, using the **provided RAB supporting tool** (Tab 1, Tab 2, and Tab 3).
2. **Internal reflections on RAB process and collaboration**: throughout the implementation of the project activities, RAB members are encouraged to **periodically dedicate some time to reflect on how the collaboration is evolving, whether the process is achieving its goals, and whether the governance structure is inclusive, collaborative, and effectively contributing to locally led climate action.**

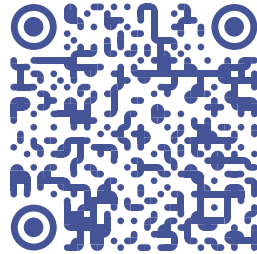
For more details on STEP 7, discover and download the RAB Supporting tool please click on the following link or scan the QR code available on the Resources page of this booklet: systemicresilience.eu





Resources

Scan the QR code to discover all the resources cited in this document



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