



EUROPEAN UNION



EU MISSIONS

ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE



September
2025

Transforming an outdoor space into a climate-resilient community space

A homeowners' association transformed a paved courtyard into a green oasis in Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Community collaboration in Amsterdam's Nieuw-West: redeveloping a paved courtyard to reduce heat and improve drainage.

Key Learnings

- **Collaboration improves climate change adaptation:** Creating climate-adapted buildings or gardens can be a complex task, especially when involving multiple homeowners. Collaboration and learning from each other can greatly speed up the process. In addition to extensive consultations, an advisor facilitated a number of stakeholder meetings.
- **Cooling and collecting rainwater in a densely built-up district:** A garden reduces temperatures during heatwaves and enables rainwater to infiltrate the ground during heavy rains. Intermediate Bulk Containers collect excess water and make it available during dry periods.
- **Targeted financing** supports community-led adaptation initiatives, engage citizens and increases climate resilience. Various subsidies and facilities in Amsterdam encourage residents to make their surroundings more climate-resilient and greener. Measures range from financial contributions and covering implementation costs to free advice and installing nature-inclusive measures in public spaces.

About the region

Amsterdam is the Netherlands' capital and has a population of about 918,000 ([2023](#)) and 2.5 million in its broader metropolitan area ([2025](#)). Covering an area of about 219 km², an iconic canal system, flat polder landscapes, and proximity to the North Sea characterise the city. Notably, the city sits about 2 meters below sea level, making it particularly susceptible to climate-related hazards such as sea-level rise and flooding. Amsterdam's Nieuw-West district is an expansion of Amsterdam's western neighbourhoods in the 1950s. Sloterplas Lake and Rembrandt Park characterise the district, providing green and blue infrastructure in the area.

Climate Hazards

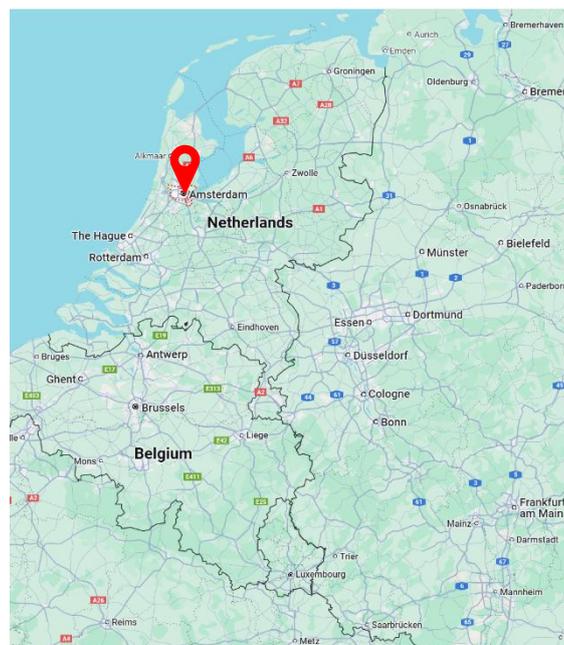
Droughts, Extreme Heat, Flooding, Storms

Sector

Water Management, Biodiversity protection, Buildings, Urban

Key system

Water Management, Ecosystem and Nature Based Solutions, Health and Wellbeing



Climate Threats

Climate change is already affecting Amsterdam with heavy rains and sea level rise, causing flooding, and extreme temperatures, leading to droughts and tropical nights with temperatures above 25°C. Due to its high building density with large areas sealed, heavy rains can cause severe flooding, because the water cannot naturally percolate into the ground. In 1953, a flood in the Netherlands almost killed 2,000, and in response, Amsterdam and the rest of the Netherlands created an advanced flood control system over the past five decades. As 26% of the country lies below sea level, meaning large parts lie in flood-prone areas. Despite existing measures, meteorologists from Utrecht University warn that Amsterdam must increase its investment in flood prevention.

Climate-proof courtyards reduce the flood risk and cool the neighbourhood

In the Nieuw-West district of Amsterdam, a homeowners' association decided to transform a fully paved courtyard into a climate-resilient meeting place. Working with city authorities, the [Dutch Water Authorities](#), experts, and local residents, they created a green oasis that helps lower neighbourhood temperatures and reduce flood risk by replacing pavement with permeable, planted surfaces. The courtyard, partly paved, suffered from heat stress, poor drainage and an increased risk of flooding during heavy rains, making it an unpleasant place to spend time and discouraging social interaction in the neighbourhood.

Three members of the owner association established contact with the City of Amsterdam, reaching out via e-mail to the network organisation ([Amsterdam Weerproof](#)) and asking for help. They visited a neighbourhood event and found out more about free advice and financial aid.

After several meetings, the members decided to submit a plan to the [Amstel Gooi and Vecht Water Authority](#) in order to secure partial funding. The [Green and Water Subsidy](#) is a funding scheme that supports resident initiatives wanting to green their living environment and adapt their neighbourhoods to climate change.

After the water authority approved their grant application, the owner association redeveloped the courtyard by engaging the members to remove the paving and plant grass, shrubs and trees.

A hired local expert provided guidance throughout the de-paving and planting activities, ensuring that the redesign supported effective climate change adaptation. Water infiltration areas collect the water during heavy rain and let it gradually seep into the soil, improving the microclimate during hot periods and keeping the soil moist for the plants to thrive.



Figure 1: Local residents de-paving the courtyard. Image Credit: [Amsterdam Weerproof](#).

Two Intermediate Bulk Containers collect a large amount of rainwater and provide the garden with water on dry days. Residents can relax under the planted trees during hot days.



Figure 2: Intermediate Bulk Containers at the courtyard. Image Credit: [Amsterdam Weerproof](#).

The project team selected drought- and heat-resistant plants, providing habitat for birds, bees and butterflies. This improves the living environment for the residents and biodiversity in the neighbourhood.



Figure 3: Several plants increase biodiversity at the courtyard and in the neighbourhood. Image Credit: [Amsterdam Weerproof](#).



Figure 4: Drought resistant plants in the garden. Image Credit: [Anne Gehring](#).

In addition to transforming the courtyard, the municipality, at the residents' request, created façade gardens along the outside of the homes. Along with enlarged tree pits to form small gardens beneath the trees.



Figure 5: Water infiltration areas below a window reduces collects water and reduces the heat on hot days. Image Credit: [Amsterdam Weerproof](#).

Collaboration improves climate adaptation

By working together, the residents created a climate-adapted living environment. The collaboration between the Homeowners Association, the Water Authorities, the city and the local residents resulted in effective climate change adaptation benefitting the entire neighbourhood. The measures reduce the heat in the area, lower the risk of flooding, and create a new meeting point where residents can enjoy the outdoor space.

“We felt it was important that the collective supported this initiative. We invested a lot in making the urgency and importance of a climate-adaptive garden clear. Visualising the plan and taking a step-by-step approach also helped in this process.”,

Anne Gehring

Summary

The Homeowner Association's initiative redeveloped the courtyard by engaging citizens to remove the paving and plant grass, shrubs and trees. The project demonstrates the power of collective action in tackling climate adaptation. Collaboration between the association's members, the water authority, and the municipality has delivered a future-proof space that benefits the entire neighbourhood.

Further information

- <https://weerproof.nl/project/vve-maakt-haar-tuin-klimaatbestendig/> (in Dutch)

Contact

Amsterdam Weerproof
info@weerproof.nl



**Funded by
the European Union**

Disclaimer

This document reflects only the author's view and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

Acknowledgement of previously published material and of the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation or both.

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged and the original meaning or message of the document is not distorted.

The European Commission shall not be liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse. The reuse policy of the European Commission documents is implemented by Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

All images © European Union, unless otherwise stated. Image sources: © goodluz, # 25227000, 2021. Source: Stock.Adobe.com. Icons © Flaticon – all rights reserved.