

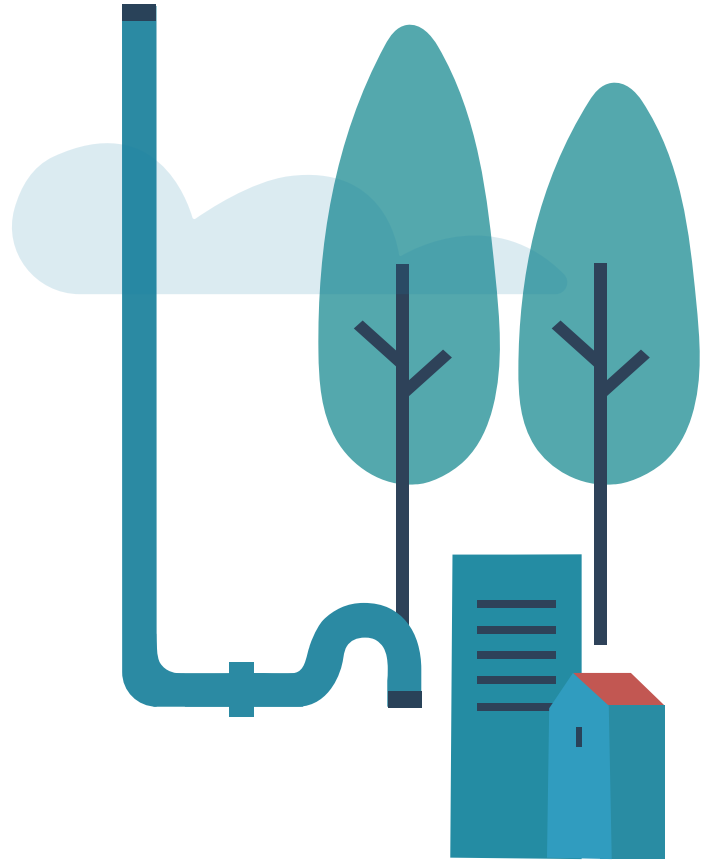
# Rotterdam

How to ensure a just transition  
towards climate neutrality?



# A city at the lead of building transition to reach climate neutrality

In the Netherlands, there is a long-lasting involvement in climate mitigation. The country committed to reducing by 49% its emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. To reach this goal, one thing is for sure: municipalities like Rotterdam have a lead role to play when it comes to the heat transition of the building sector. Since 2019, all Dutch municipalities must develop a gas phase out strategy, but Rotterdam started already before to tackle this issue to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. It makes sense for Rotterdam to develop such a strategy as cities are responsible for ensuring a good quality of life for its citizens, protecting them from climate change effects, and providing them with affordable and clean housing.



## The engagement of various stakeholders through coordinated groups

Rotterdam understands that its heat transition requires alignment and good coordination between the stakeholders involved. They created groups managed by the internal staff of the municipality and working at different levels. The first level is strategic as they develop an energy system vision in cooperation with district heating companies, public and private grid operators, and regional energy strategy actors. The second level is tactical to develop a city transition vision for heat, especially with housing cooperative. The third and last level is the operational one, where the group reflects on district-oriented projects with house owners, DH companies, and, of course, citizens.

## Phasing out of gas by mapping affordable alternatives per district

In Rotterdam natural gas was so far the dominant energy source for heating, just like at the national level. Around 75% of Rotterdam's buildings are connected to the gas grid. One of the clear priorities of the city is the affordability of potential alternatives for natural gas. While national and local subsidies will be limited, the city plans to invest in funding energy-savings and home improvement like insulation, to reduce natural gas consump-


tion. The construction of a "WHAT map" has been a key step to define the best alternatives with the lowest social costs for existing buildings, which is at the moment heat networks for most districts. The solution has also been chosen for its flexibility allowing future heat sources to be easily added, like potential heat waste from Rotterdam's harbor. Another complementary solution is electric heating with the use of heat pumps.



# Planning and communication as pillars of the transition roadmap

In the transition roadmap of Rotterdam, planning, and communication are two main elements. The “WHEN map” which allows anyone to follow the alternatives to gas by district is now translated into an interactive version available on the “Duurzaam010.nl” website. It is especially indicated by when district heating networks would be available in different districts. Rotterdam also focuses a lot on maintaining transparent communication about the Heat Transition Strategy, its adoption, and the decision-making process in general. The website mentioned above, free local papers, district communication, and social media are the main channels of communication between the municipality and the residents. The city aims at fostering actions taken by citizens. A supportive tool is also being developed to evaluate the impact of a switch to a district heating network on citizens’ energy bills.

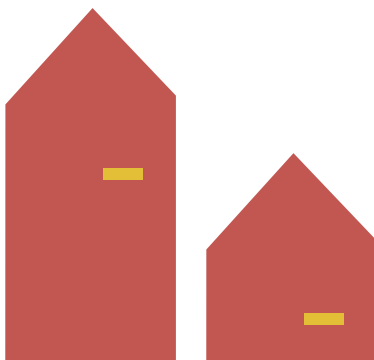
## Policy recommendations for a successful heat transition



Many barriers to heat transition have been identified in Rotterdam. The municipality has limited capacities against data unavailability, and more generally to fully manage the transition at the local level. Rotterdam formulates several policy orientations to overcome these obstacles. Some new national regulations, like the Municipal Instruments for Heat Transition Act, already provided authority for municipalities for their heat planning and transition. The implementation of strong legislation on the prohibition of oil and coal for heating will also support the process. In addition, the city is calling for more direct government investment instead of current subsidies in heat infrastructures to help the development of district heating and ensure a more public-owned approach and cost-based tariffs. These changes in the regulatory framework would foster the heat transition in Rotterdam while developing public support.

## Planning clarifies Rotterdam’s future

The development of the heating and cooling strategy has enabled Rotterdam to communicate and give clarity to the energy transition to stakeholders, particularly regarding the areas where district heating will be developed. From municipality departments to citizens and private stakeholders, the roadmap has brought information and explanations on the heating transition. For instance, the municipality explained the alternatives to natural gas in Rotterdam. Another benefit has been to broaden cooperation and collaboration between departments like spatial planning departments and housing ones, for the implementation.



# So, get in touch!

To a city wanting to do the same, Rotterdam would advise getting in touch with municipalities that are already advanced in their heating and cooling transition. Cities should also think of involving all the different stakeholders impacted by the transition, to take part and give support to the decisions. For Rotterdam, particular attention should be paid to the communication around the start of the implementation, as requirements can often delay it, after the plan has been adopted.

## Want to know more about Rotterdam?

➡ [Rotterdam Transition Roadmap](#)



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