



Twins call and selection criteria

Deliverable D5.2





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Table of contents

1.	Call Summary	5
1.1.	Background.....	5
1.2	NZC Twinning Learning Programme – How cities will work in and through the programme	6
1.3	Who can apply	7
1.4	What do you commit to	8
2.	Call timeline.....	8
3.	Open call for Twin Cities	9
4.	Review Mechanism and Decision-making	10
4.1.	Overview.....	10
4.2	Stage 1 – Eligibility.....	10
4.3	Stage 2 – Quality evaluation	11
4.4	Stage 3 – Strategic Selection	12
4.5	Decision communication	13
	Annex 1 Application Form.....	12





Introduction to the Open call for Twin Cities – NetZeroCities

1. Call Summary

NetZeroCities Twinning programme is a tailored learning programme for knowledge sharing and transfer of good practices between selected NetZeroCities Pilot Cities and successful Twin applicants. The programme is composed of the open Twinning call and the Twinning Learning Programme.

The Open call for Twin Cities is scheduled to be launched on 3 May, closing on 30 June 2023, at 23.59 CEST, on [the NZC website](#). Any city that complies with the eligibility criteria can apply to this open call (see section - 1.3).

A careful matching procedure of Twin and Pilot Cities will ensure that Twin Cities' learning needs are addressed throughout the participation in the NZC twinning learning programme. Therefore, the selection and matching will be conducted by NZC consortium partners, ensuring participation in the selection process from a diversity of organisations, thematic NZC work packages, and city expertise. It will be based on the learning needs expressed by the Twin Cities in their applications, and successful pilot city activities selected in March 2023, as listed in the online catalogue of Pilot City profiles.

The Twinning Learning Programme will kick start in late September 2023 and has a duration of **20 months**. Its main aim is to strengthen the capacities of Twin Cities through tailored exchanges with their paired Pilot City/es in different learning modules (including online and in-person). To enable two-way a knowledge exchange, Twin Cities also can share their experiences and good practices, responding to the challenges and learning needs of Pilot Cities, as included in their online profiles. Twin Cities will be empowered to transfer their learnings into concrete actions to support their progress towards climate neutrality, materialised in a Replication Plan, at the end of the learning phase.

The learning programme will be facilitated by NZC partners, with the primary role to encourage open and constructive discussions between Pilot and Twin Cities and to support the work of Pilot Cities, ensuring that the participants make the most of the NZC Twinning Learning Programme. They will also evaluate the Replication Plan, enabling the monitoring of concrete results and impacts of the Twinning Learning Programme in Twin Cities.

The developed learning materials will be stored in the NZC Mission Platform and will be available beyond the end of the learning programme.

1.1. Background

NZC is a four-year project designed to help cities overcome the current structural, institutional, and cultural barriers they face to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. NZC recognises the need for cities to develop specific strategies that are tailored to suit local and regional contexts, and will support them by developing, promoting, and integrating new and existing tools, resources, and expertise into a one-stop platform accessible to all cities through an online portal (**Mission Platform**). The project tailors advanced capabilities related to systemic change, citizen engagement and democratic, participatory governance, capital and financial structuring, and social innovation, to ensure cities have access to expertise needed to address their challenges in becoming climate neutral.

The **NZC Mission Platform** provides support in the co-creation of Climate City Contracts with local stakeholders and citizens. Drawing up, signing, and implementing Climate City Contracts is a central feature of the EU Mission on 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030. While not legally binding,





these contracts constitute a clear and highly visible political commitment not just to the EC and the national and regional authorities, but also to their citizens and stakeholders. They set out plans for the city to achieve climate neutrality by 2030 and include an investment plan.

The **NZC Twinning Programme**, a component of the NZC project, will guide successful Twin Cities in their learning and replication efforts from Pilot Cities, with a practical focus on replicating the systemic transformation methodologies and innovative approaches demonstrated by the Pilot activities, to underpin the climate transition. Over their two-year journey (starting in June 2023), 53 successful Pilot Cities will implement systemic and locally designed innovative actions that span multiple areas, from buildings to waste, and different levers of change, to be activated in a coordinated way to make impact at sectoral or cross-sectoral level - political decisions that give a structure for changing cities, investments into change, regulation that triggers change, citizen engagement that demands change and technological, innovative, and holistic solutions that make implementation possible. Within the Pilot City Programme, Pilot Cities will be providing opportunities for Twin Cities to follow in their footsteps, replicating and/or scaling approaches and solutions relevant to their context.

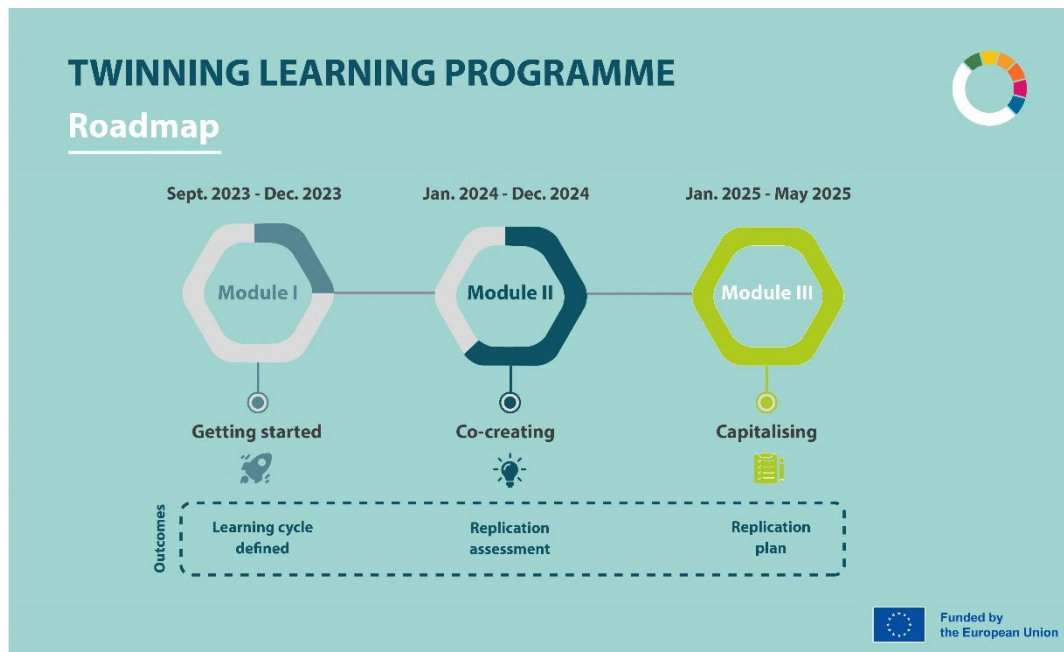
To that end, the Twinning Learning Programme will include identification of good practices, action-oriented goal setting, co-creation activities and site visits in Pilot Cities and Twin Cities, facilitated and structured learning exchanges, and supported development of a Replication plan for Twin Cities outlining the learnings from the pilot activities and transferability of actions to their specific local contexts, through the twinning exchange.

1.2 NZC Twinning Learning Programme – How cities will work in and through the programme

The NZC Twinning Learning Programme will offer a tailored learning programme to up to 60 Twin Cities for knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer exchange with their respective Pilot Cities. Each Pilot City will be paired with a maximum of two Twin Cities. The structured learning programme will kick start in late September 2023, for a period of **20 months**, working across thematic areas of the pilot activities and functional silos in support of transforming systems to accelerate climate neutrality in the sectors/domains of water, food, energy, industry, housing and deep building retrofitting, transport, and mobility.

The Twinning Learning Programme is made up of three modules, namely Getting started, Co-creating and Capitalising. The goal of these modules is to provide a framework for participating cities to enable the best possible knowledge transfer between cities. The framework is built around dedicated outputs and a facilitated process while leaving enough room for flexibility for cities to shape the learning journey. Selected Twin Cities will receive an infopack explaining the programme in more detail.





NZC partners will facilitate open and constructive discussions among Pilot and Twin Cities and support the knowledge transfer between cities. Facilitators will ensure the quality and consistency of the Twinning Learning Programme. This will not prevent Pilot Cities to be supported by additional facilitators on their own. A dedicated guiding toolbox will be prepared to orientate facilitators on how to best support the knowledge transfer process. They will encourage participation among Pilot and Twin Cities in their groups to take an active part in discussions, collect input from the different exchanges and monitor the transfer of learnings and good practices.

Within the context of the *NetZeroCities* the Twinning Learning Programme aims to support local authorities to develop or further develop innovative approaches to reach their climate neutrality commitments. Twin Cities are expected to leave the programme with enhanced capacities which empower them to replicate good practices from the pilot activities they were paired with. While this programme is aimed at local authorities participating in *NetZeroCities* project, the methods used in these guidelines are transferable to other cities.

The **expected results** of the NZC Twinning Learning Programme are:

- To identify replicable factors and mechanisms within Pilot Cities which have led to successful implementation of their activities, to accelerate the transition towards climate neutrality before or by 2050 in Twin Cities.
- To disseminate the process and lessons learnt through the NZC Mission Platform services.

To foster long-lasting connections between Pilot and Twin Cities, enabling a broader community of practice beyond the scope of the learning programme.

1.3 Who can apply

This call is open to cities based in EU Member states or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries¹.

¹ Iceland, Norway, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Israel, Moldova, Switzerland, Faroe Islands, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Tunisia, Georgia, Armenia.





The definition of the persons or categories of persons which are eligible to apply: local authorities or city administrations.

Any city can apply, selected as one of the [100+12 Mission Cities](#) or not. The strategic selection will ensure geographic coverage from different EU member states and H2020 Associated Countries, size and city diversity.

Twin Cities should ensure adequate human resources and time (**a minimum of 12 hours per month**) to engage in the 20 months period Twinning Learning Programme and assign between 1-2 (recommended) city representatives per Twin City, with at least **a proficiency level of B2 English**. To ensure that Twin City participants gain the most from the in-person exchanges, travel costs will be reimbursed up to a certain amount. Further information will be made available to successful Twin City applicants upon successful selection.

Twin City applicants should also be supported by an enabling environment, allowing the transfer of learnings from the innovative pilot activities to their local context. This support is based on the applicant city's demonstration of existing climate neutrality commitment before or by 2050.

Unlike the previous open call for Pilot Cities, the twinning call is addressed to individual Twin City applications rather than to a group of cities applying together. The logic behind an individual twinning application lies in the impact of higher potential for replication, also allowing Pilot Cities to focus on individual city learning needs.

1.4 What do you commit to

As a Twin City you will engage in the twinning learning programme, committing to the following elements from the learning sequence:

- **Participation in the twinning exchange** (by signing peer learning agreement). This is a two-way exchange in which **both Pilot and Twin Cities** commit to completing and participating in the steps as outlined in Twinning Learning Programme and both visit and host a visit in their city.
- **Preparation of a transferability assessment**. On completion of the twinning exercise, the **Pilot and Twin Cities** are expected to complete a transferability assessment of other learnings, good practices and/or policies that could be taken up in their own context^[1]
- **Preparation of a replication plan**. On completion of the twinning exercise, the **Twin City** is expected to write a plan on concrete actions that could be taken to implement innovative approaches to reach climate neutrality commitments, in their own city. This report should include:
 1. a statement of the problem and the likely solutions;
 2. an assessment of the feasibility of the pilot activity in their local context.
 3. an action plan for developing or further developing a similar project as in the Pilot City

2. Call timeline

Date/Time (CEST)	Item	Link (if applicable)
March 2022	Announcement of the Twinning programme in the publication of Pilot Cities call outcomes	NZC website
April 2022	Early announcement of the Open Call for Twin Cities	NZC website
Wednesday 3 May 2023 (12.00 CEST)	Call opens At 12.00 CEST hrs on Wednesday 3 May, the NZC Open Call for Twin Cities will go live. Cities will be able to access	NZC website





	the application link and fill in the information, up until the submission deadline as stated below.	
Wednesday 3 May 2023	Publication of online catalogue of Pilot City Profiles	NZC website
Friday 30 June 2023 (23.59 CEST)	Call deadline Formal deadline for full submission of the applications. Proposals received after this date will not be accepted. No extensions can be granted and modification of your proposal after submission is not possible. We suggest setting your own internal deadline ahead of this date.	NZC website
July 2023 – August 2023	Review and selection Applications will be checked against Eligibility criteria (Stage 1) and quality assessment (Stage 2). Shortlisted applicants from stage 2 may be interviewed to better understand their local context and learning needs. Applications reaching the highest scores against specified criteria will proceed to final matching (Stage 3). More information about these Stages can be found in section 4 of this document.	N/A
September 2023	Decision and Communication Formal outcomes will be sent to applicants, along with feedback	Email
September 2023	Publication of the Call outcomes and selected Twin cities	NZC website NZC Platform

3. Open call for Twin Cities

The application form is structured as a survey to collect the information about the city and alignment with the Pilot City Programme. Twin City applicants should demonstrate motivation to actively seek to adapt and replicate innovative pilot activities based on interactions with the selected Pilot Cities, through the twinning learning programme.



Tailored questions are included in the application form to collect relevant information needed for evaluating the involvement of Twin Cities in the Twinning Learning Programme and their motivation to be paired with the proposed thematic areas of the different Pilot activities. Twin City applicants should use the online catalogue of Pilot City profiles, to explore and gain full understanding of the different pilot activities, allowing them to tailor their application form with the Pilot City Programme. However, the information available in the Pilot City profiles is by no means exhaustive as additional and alternative options may arise during the twinning learning journey (this is particularly the case in the last four sections of the Pilot City profiles – transferable features, components of transferable features, barriers when replicating and Pilot Cities’ learning needs).

The completion of the Open call for Twin Cities application form, in line with the Pilot City profiles, will enable NZC consortium reviewers to pair the Twin City/es with the relevant Pilot City/es.

4. Review Mechanism and Decision-making

4.1. Overview

The call will follow a three-staged process with each application being assessed for:

- Stage 1: **Eligibility criteria** – where pass/fail requirements related to the conditions of the call are assessed by the NZC consortium. Proposals must pass all eligibility criteria to proceed to Stage 2.
- Stage 2: **Quality evaluation**

Stage 2.1 **Assessment** – where a score (0 to 3) is made against the individual assessment criteria by a cross-partner evaluation panel. The evaluation panel will include city climate experts and NZC consortium representatives. Applications that reach the highest points for each of the criteria groups (identified in the table under section 4.3) will proceed to stage 3.

Stage 2.2: **Interview with shortlisted Twin Cities**. If further information needs to be clarified from the Twinning call application form, the shortlisted Twin Cities will then be interviewed by members of the cross-partner evaluation panel, to better understand their local context and learning needs.

- Stage 3: **Strategic Selection** – where a selection committee panel will select a total of 50 to 60 Twin Cities to be paired with Pilot Cities, based on their mutual thematic interests in the different emissions domain(s), learning needs and exchange of good practices (as outlined in section 4.4).

The output of this stage is the resulted Twin-Pilot pairs of the Twinning programme.

Pilot Cities will be consulted and informed about the state of the matching process, while ensuring that the Twinning selection and matching process are based on quality and transparency.

All submissions will be assessed fairly and transparently in the scope of the eligibility criteria and the assessment of quality criteria.

Decisions as to whether an application is accepted or rejected will be communicated to the applicant.

4.2 Stage 1 – Eligibility

Eligibility criteria are used to ensure applications submitted under the call meet mandatory requirements as set out in the Gran Agreement. Applicants must pass on all criteria, otherwise they will not proceed to the next Stage of the process and be rejected from the call outright. The pass/fail eligibility criteria for this call are:





#	Eligibility criterion	How demonstrated	How assessed
1	Municipality/local authority must be within either an EU Member state or an approved H2020 Associated Country, at the point of the submission deadline	As compared with official, online EU/EC information at the time of submission.	Pass/fail
2	Climate neutrality commitment	Applicant city outlines commitment to climate neutrality before or by 2050 with a formalised evidence (City Council Resolution, Strategy, or equivalent adopted by the City Council and/or)	Pass/fail
3	Capacity to engage in the twinning learning programme	Applicant city declares to have capacity to engage in the twinning learning cycle	Pass/fail

4.3 Stage 2 – Quality evaluation

Assessment

The assessment criteria for this call are set out below. Each criterion is scored, on a scale of 0 to 3, by a NZC cross-partner evaluation panel. The score across all categories is totalled to produce a ranked list of proposals. The maximum available score is 18 points.

Scoring table

Score	Description
0	Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1	Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
2	Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
3	Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Alignment with the Pilot City Programme			
#	Criterion	How demonstrated	How assessed
Learning needs			
1	Selection of pilot activities, in order of preference	Applicant should rank up to 5 pilot activities from the proposed list, based on their city learning and interests from the twinning programme	No score
2	Emissions domain(s)	Applicant should rank the emissions domain(s) based on their city learning needs and interests from the twinning learning programme	No score
3	Reasoning for selections of Pilot City activities and identified emissions domains?	Applicant should demonstrate motivation to learn from the above-mentioned pilot activities and link it to the emission(s) domains.	0 Weak identification of motivation 1 Some identification of motivation 2 Good explanation of the motivation 3 Excellent explanation of the motivation
4	Link to a specific project and/or climate plan that the applicant is currently developing/implementing	Applicant should demonstrate evidence that the ranked pilot activities and emissions domain(s) will help their city to achieve a particular project or plan, through the twinning learning programme	0 weak identification of evidence 1 Some identification of evidence 2 Good explanation of the evidence 3 Excellent explanation of the evidence





Drivers and barriers			
5	Enabling conditions in the local context to achieve the climate-related objectives	Applicant should explain what are the enabling conditions to achieve their climate-related plans and if these are linked to systemic transformation	0 weak explanation of enabling conditions 1 Some explanation of enabling conditions 2 Good explanation of enabling conditions and existing systemic transformation 3 Excellent explanation of enabling conditions and existing systemic transformation
6	Barriers in the local context to achieve the climate-related objectives	Applicant should explain the barriers that could prevent them from achieving their climate-related plans and if these are systemic	0 weak explanation of barriers 1 Some explanation of barriers 2 Good explanation of barriers and linked to systemic transformation 3 Excellent explanation of barriers and linked to systemic transformation
7	Lever(s) of change	Applicant should rank the different lever(s) of change, in line with their learning needs from the twinning programme	No score
Stakeholder engagement			
8	Existing stakeholder engagement plan	Applicant should have in place a stakeholder engagement plan on climate neutrality	0 lack of stakeholder engagement plan 1 Minor stakeholder engagement plan with less than 3 stakeholders identified 2 Good stakeholder engagement plan with less than 5 stakeholders identified 3 Excellent stakeholder engagement plan with more than 5 stakeholders identified
Good practices			
9	Good practices to share with the Pilot cities	Applicant should identify and explain at least three good practices they would like to share with the Pilot cities and link them with the challenges from Pilot city profiles	0 weak identification 1 Some identification and explanation 2 Good identification and explanation 3 Excellent identification and clear explanation, linking them to the challenges from Pilot cities
Expectations from the twinning programme			
10	Successful twinning experience	Applicant should elaborate on what would be a successful twinning experience for their city	No score

4.4 Stage 3 – Strategic Selection

A NZC cross-partner selection panel will be set up to review and agree on the matching proposal. This stage constitutes a contextual judgment that considers and prioritises the criterion identified by the Pilot Cities for an optimal pairing with their pilot activities as well as the pilot activities ranked by successful





Twin City (having received the highest scores of applicants in Stage 2) while avoiding a concentration of interests among a limited set of Pilot Cities.

Strategic selection takes into account (in order):

- Geographic diversity
- Diversity of city size
- Diversity of focus on different pilot activities
- Score in quality evaluation (see section **4.3 Stage 2 – Quality evaluation**)

4.5 Decision communication

NetZeroCities will aim to communicate final outcomes to applicants mid-September 2023. The final communication will indicate whether their application was successful and if so, the Pilot City that they will be paired with. The Twinning Learning Programme is expected to kick start in late September 2023.

Annex 1: Application Form

APPLICATION FORM

Primary contact

First Name – Last Name

Email

Function

Phone number

Secondary contact

First Name – Last Name

Email

Function

Phone number

Local authority details

City

Please provide the official name of your city in English

Only one application may be submitted by an eligible city

(e.g. Brussels Capital Region)

Country

Cities/districts must be within either an EU Member state or an approved H2020 Associated Country, as compared with official, online EU/EC information at the time of submission.

City department (or equivalent) engagement

Please list participating city departments (or equivalent) committed to and relevant for the twinning learning programme.



Size of city

- Less than 50,000 inhabitants
- Between 50,000 – 100,000
- Between 100,000 - 200,000
- Between 200,000 – 250,000
- More than 250,000

Tell us more about your city

Are you a Mission City?

- YES
- NO

If your answer to the previous question was “NO”, did you submit an Expression of Interest to become a Mission city?

- YES
- NO

Are you a signatory to the Covenant of Mayors?

- YES
- NO

Is your city committed to climate neutrality before or by 2050?

- YES
- NO

Mandate to act: Please outline your city’s demonstrated climate commitment, its associated target date and describe how this has been formalised (**evidence of this commitment through a City Council Resolution, Strategy, or equivalent adopted by the City Council and/or**).

The twinning learning programme is designed to allow transfer of knowledge from the pilot activities to your city through reflective and participative approaches based on dedicated modules, in online and in-person format, structured in three phases: Getting started, Co-creating and Capitalising. **The twinning Learning Programme will run through the period of 20 months, with a minimum time dedication of 12 hours/month.** Does your municipality have the **capacity to dedicate time and human resources** to the exchanges that we have planned?

- YES
- NO

Alignment with the Pilot City Programme

In the framework of the Pilot City Learning Programme, we will pair your city with one of the selected Pilot Cities based on their pilot activities and your learning priorities, to exchange on similar emissions domain(s). Please be as accurate and concrete as possible, we will use this information to evaluate your application and pair your City with the most relevant Pilot City for your local context and learning needs.

(INTERNAL - Hyper-link to Pilot city profiles)

Learning needs

Q1 From the list of selected **Pilot activities**, please rank up to five in terms of your city learning priorities. Please, notice that your selection will serve NetZeroCities partners as a guidance in the matching process, but this will not guarantee that you will be paired with one of the selected options. (You can use the *Pilot City profiles* for your reference)





To include, list of pilot activities

Q2 Pilot activities will explore and test pathways to accelerate change towards 2030 climate neutrality goals across the following key emissions domain(s). Please, select **up to three** relevant emission domain(s) for your city learning needs from the Twinning Learning Programme:

- Consumption of electricity generated for buildings, facilities, and infrastructure
- Consumption of non-electricity energy for thermal uses in buildings and facilities (e.g., heating, cooking, etc.)
- Industrial process emissions
- Multi-sector waste management and disposal
- All vehicles and transport (mobile energy)
- Land use (including agriculture, forestry, and other land uses)

Q3 Please, explain how your previous selections (in terms of pilot activities and emission domain(s)) could support your city to progress towards climate neutrality before or by 2050?

Q4 If your previous answer was related to a particular project and/or climate plan that your city is currently implementing or in the development phase, please, elaborate further. Text (300 words)

Drivers and barriers

Pilot Cities will implement systemic innovative actions based in a multi-lever approach. Their aim is to pursue “systems innovation” addressing embedded structural challenges at local level by acting on the interdependence between multiple levers of change – such as capacity and capability building; culture, participation and social innovation; governance, policy and regulation; finance and business models; technology

Q5 What are the **enabling conditions** that would allow your city and/or administration to reach its climate neutrality commitments before or by 2050? (e.g. socioeconomic context, citizen acceptance, high employment rate in decarbonisation sector) Are these related to systems transformation using a portfolio approach in your municipality? Please, elaborate further. Text (300 words)

Q6 What are the **barriers** that your city and/or administration is facing, in view of achieving its climate neutrality commitments before or by 2050? Are these rooted in multiple complex systems made up of different elements – natural, technological, sociocultural, institutional, etc? Please, elaborate further. Text (300 words)

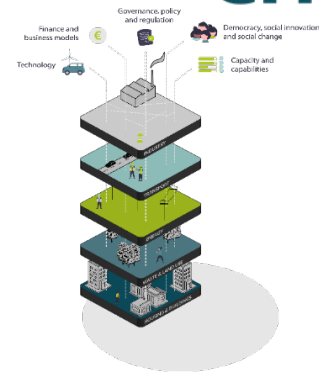




Q7 Please select up to three levers of change, following your city learning needs from the Twinning Learning Programme:

To add picture

- Technology/infrastructure
- Governance and policy
- Social innovation
- Democracy/participation
- Finance & funding
- Learning and capabilities



Stakeholder engagement

Q8 Does your city have in place an existing stakeholder engagement plan on climate neutrality? If so, please, elaborate and explain who they are (*These could refer to engagement of local business, research community, citizens, etc.*) (500 words limits)

Good practices

Q9 Please identify **at least three good practices** that you would like to share with the Pilot city? Ideally, these should be related to the learning needs and/or challenges from the Pilot city profiles (e.g. successfully implemented project in data collection and monitoring) (300 words limits)

Q10 Please, explain briefly what would be a successful twinning experience for your city? (300 words limits)

GDPR

Q11. I consent to NetZeroCities using the information submitted in this questionnaire for internal Twinning application purposes, reports and for project activities aimed to support the Twinning programme.

- YES
- NO

Please note that no personal information will be used in any project reports or activities. The personal information collected in this questionnaire is for the Twin City call purposes only and managed by the partners on the NetZeroCities consortium.





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