Terms of Reference for the City Advisory Group: mandate, membership, and processes

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
CAG	City Advisory Group
NZC	NetZeroCities

Summary

The City Advisory Group, an integral component of the European Union's Cities Mission, serves as a vital and dynamic forum that brings together city leaders, the Mission Platform, and the European Commission. Its core objectives revolve around providing strategic direction and offering valuable feedback on Mission activities, thereby contributing significantly to Mission-related priorities.

Membership in the City Advisory Group is characterized by its inclusivity and a transparent selection process. To ensure a wide range of perspectives and effective time management, a rotational approach is employed, maximizing diversity among its members. The CAG's operational efficiency is further bolstered by the active involvement of the NetZeroCities strategic committee and the Mission Secretariat, ensuring robust governance structures.

Key governance aspects of the CAG include the appointment of a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, pivotal figures in guiding the group towards its objectives. It's important to note that participation in the CAG entails no legal or financial obligations beyond the commitment to upholding confidentiality agreements, fostering an environment conducive to trust and candid discussions.

Meetings of the City Advisory Group are convened two to three times annually, and a flexible hybrid approach is adopted to accommodate the varied schedules and needs of its members. The careful development of meeting agendas remains a priority, ensuring that discussions remain highly focused, thus promoting productive deliberations and meaningful outcomes.

Looking ahead, as the City Advisory Group continues to evolve and refine its processes, it underscores the European Union's resolute commitment to sustainable collaboration and the advancement of climate neutrality in cities. The anticipated further refinements highlight the EU's dedication to forging a prosperous and environmentally responsible urban future through collective efforts and shared expertise.

Keywords

1. **City Advisory Group**: a forum for city leaders to engage with both the Mission Platform and the European Commission on the Cities Mission.

2. **City Panels:** Specific groups within the NetZeroCities initiative designed to collect programmatic feedback and input from city staff.

3. **Mission Board:** A body of individual high-level experts established to oversee and guide the Cities Mission.

4. **Mission Cities:** 112 urban centres actively participating in the Cities Mission, working toward its objectives.

5. **Mission Secretariat:** The administrative body in the European Commission responsible for coordinating and managing the Cities Mission

6. **Mission Owners Group:** The Mission Owners Group is composed of services of the European Commission that are key for the implementation of the Mission. At the time of drafting, DG RTD, MOVE, ENER, CNECT, EAC, MARE, ENV, CLIMA, REGIO, GROW, HOME and JRC as well as CINEA, REA are part of the Group. The Mission Owners Group defines and proposes the research and innovation needs for the Mission, prepares the Mission's Work Programme particularly by co-creating the research and innovation projects to be put forward as part of the overall Horizon Europe Work Programme and discusses how other Commission instruments, policies and actions can contribute to the Mission objectives.

1 Mandate

The City Advisory Group will serve as a forum for city leaders, who have the authority to represent the Mission Cities, to engage with both the Mission Platform and the European Commission on the Cities Mission. Key objectives for the CAG are as follows:

- Represent the interests and voices of the 112 Mission Cities
- Provide strategic feedback on Mission activities from the perspective of city leadership
- Contribute input into development of Mission-related priorities that emerge through the work of the Mission Cities The CAG will have direct interactions with both the Mission Secretariat and the Mission Platform, NetZeroCities, in order to ensure appropriate space is given to relevant topics and discussions. The work of the CAG is complementary to the city panels as part of NetZeroCities, which are oriented toward specific programmatic feedback/input from City staff.

Initially, deliverable 11.11 was intended to feature HLAB, but it has been supplanted by the City Advisory Group, with the history of this evolution described in deliverable 11.12. The focus shifts to the evolution of the Climate-neutral and Smart Cities Mission, with a particular emphasis on the essential role played by the City Advisory Group. The narrative delves into the dynamic changes in priorities and the presentation of innovative solutions by cities actively engaged in the mission. It celebrates the collaborative endeavors of city leaders committed to advancing sustainable urban development and acknowledges the pivotal role that the City Advisory Group plays in achieving shared objectives.

2 Membership and composition

The nomination and selection process for membership in the City Advisory Group is a critical aspect designed to ensure diversity, inclusivity, and the effective representation of city leaders within the framework of the Cities Mission. It operates on the open Expression of Interest (EOI) principle, allowing city leaders to actively express their interest in participating in this advisory group.

- **Open Expression of Interest (EOI)**:

    - The open EOI process enables city leaders to signal their desire to be part of the City Advisory Group. Cities and their leaders can submit applications or expressions of interest that outline their qualifications, commitment, and vision for contributing to the group's objectives.

- **Transparency and Fairness**:

    - Transparency is a cornerstone of this process, ensuring that all eligible city leaders are aware of the opportunity and the criteria for selection. This approach fosters fairness and equitable access to membership.

- **Selection Criteria**:

    - Clearly defined selection criteria play a pivotal role in guiding the selection process. These criteria will encompass expertise in inclusivity, sustainable economic development, social equity, resilience, or leadership in driving positive change in cities, ensuring that members are well-qualified to contribute effectively.

    - Membership to the Board will be determined through a nomination and selection process, so Mission Cities lead on identifying and choosing their representatives to this group. Considerations will include representation of Mission Cities diversity (e.g., geography, size, culture, gender), degree of engagement and proactiveness,

expertise, and other factors. Terms will set to ensure inclusion and avoid excessive time demands, and to determine an appropriate approach to rotation of membership.
- The Board will be supported by the NetZeroCities strategic management committee in collaboration with the Mission Secretariat.

- Regional nominations will be included where cities within specific geographical regions will nominate candidates to represent their interests. This method will ensure that the board includes voices from diverse regions and will be able to address regional variations in climate challenges. The final selection to be done through the Mission Secretariat. It's important to note that the process and selection criteria may be subject to further refinement in the future.

- **Term Limits and Rotation**:

  - Given the duration of the Cities Mission, a rotation approach is essential. Staggered term limits for CAG members ensure that new voices and perspectives continually join the CAG while retaining the expertise of experienced members. This approach maximizes inclusion and prevents excessive time demands.

- **Consultation and Feedback**:

  - Before finalizing the selection, there can be a consultation process with relevant stakeholders, including Mission Secretariat, Mission Board and Mission Owners Group. This allows for broader input into the decision-making process and reinforces the collaborative nature of the Cities Mission.

- The open EOI approach for the nomination and selection process for the City Advisory Group ensures that city leaders actively participate in shaping the group's composition. It promotes transparency, inclusivity, and equitable representation, ultimately strengthening the group's capacity to drive progress toward the Cities Mission's objectives throughout its duration.

- Please note that the detailed process and selection criteria outlined here are subject to further refinement and adjustment based on valuable inputs and insights from the consortium, Mission Secretariat, and potentially the City Panel, among other stakeholders. This collaborative approach ensures that the final process and criteria will be optimized to meet the specific needs and objectives of the mission.

3 Governance

The group appoints a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson from among its members, with a minimum mandate duration of at least 6 months. Additionally, the NZC coordinator plays a pivotal role as the primary liaison between the CAG and the NZC Consortium.

It's important to note that membership on the CAG does not entail any legal or financial obligations on the part of its member organizations, except for the requirement to uphold individual confidentiality agreements and the potential for in-person participation in NZC meetings.

Furthermore, the CAG members collectively concur that their organization's name and logo may be utilized for NZC communication purposes, unless alternative arrangements have been specifically agreed upon.

4 Terms of Office and Meeting

The CAG would meet two to three times per year, upon agreement with membership of the Group once set up. Efforts will be made to align with other planned meetings and events to allow for potential in-

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person interactions, but it is assumed a hybrid approach would be required. NetZeroCities and the Mission Secretariat would facilitate agenda development, allowing for differentiation of topics relevant to the Commission and the Mission Platform. This differentiation would enable NetZeroCities to maintain its focus on execution of support to Mission (and all) Cities while also creating space for city leaders to speak together with Mission leadership.

5 Next steps

The composition, role, and operation of the group will be further clarified following the development of the City Advisory Group. The Board will be supported by the NetZeroCities strategic management committee in collaboration with the Mission Secretariat.

Timeline:

- **2023:**

- Q4: Begin the nomination process for cities to participate

- **2024:**

- Q1. Q3: Present the City Advisory Group framework to the Executive Committee (ExCom) and the Mission Secretariat.

    - : Receive approval from ExCom for the City Advisory Group framework

- Q2: officially launch the City Advisory Group at the next Cities Mission Conference and

- Q3: Hold the first City Advisory Group meeting

- Q4: Hybrid meeting

- **2025:**

Q1: Review progress