



**NET
ZERO
CITIES**

Open Call for Twin City Applications: Twinning Learning Programme Cohort 3 (2024) - NetZeroCities

Call Opens: 10 September 2024, 12:00 CEST

Deadline: 31 October 2024, 17:00 CET

Call ID: NZC-SGA-HE-202409

Publication Date: 10 September 2024

netzerocities.eu

Disclaimer

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History of changes

Version	Date	Item
A1.0	10 September 2024	First version published

All amendments to this Call Guideline, as well as any additional guidance and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), will be made available at the NetZeroCities Platform and NetZeroCities website.

To stay informed on the latest developments, we encourage applicants to check the website regularly. Changes to these guidelines will be detailed in the above table.

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Introduction to the Call for Twin Cities Cohort 3

1. Call Summary

This Call for applications to join the **Cities Mission Twinning Learning Programme** is for cities who wish to embark on an 18-month tailored learning programme for knowledge sharing and transfer of good practices, with specific Pilot Cities from Cohort 2 ([Oslo](#), [Trondheim](#), [Kosice and Bratislava](#) and [Pecs and Miskolc](#)) and [Pilot Cities Cohort 3](#), toward climate neutrality. **The Call will open on 10 September 2024 and applications will be accepted until 31 October 2024 at 17:00 CET.**

Cities are encouraged to apply to the Call for Twin Cities Cohort 3 if they meet **all the following three criteria**: cities that 1) are located within EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated Countries¹, 2) are not part of the EU Cities Mission² and not already a Twin City and/or a Pilot City³ in any cohorts of the Twinning Learning Programme and Pilot Cities Programme, and 3) have demonstrated commitment to achieving climate neutrality before or by 2050.

The Twinning Learning Programme aims to strengthen the capacities of Twin Cities through tailored learning exchanges with their paired Pilot City/ies across various learning modules (including online and in-person). To foster a two-way knowledge exchange, Twin Cities will also share their experiences and good practices in response to the challenges and learning needs outlined in the Pilot City Profiles. By the end of the learning phase, Twin Cities will be empowered to transfer learnings from their Pilot City counterparts into concrete actions to support their decarbonisation efforts and climate transition plans, materialised in a Twin City Action Plan.

A careful selection and matching process of Twin and Pilot Cities activities by NetZeroCities consortium partners will ensure that both Twin and Pilot Cities' learning needs are addressed throughout their participation in the Twinning Learning Programme, and that the programme reflects geographic diversity and city sizes, with the aim of maximising learning and scaling potential across the EU.

The learning programme will be facilitated by NetZeroCities consortium partners, with the primary role of fostering open and constructive discussions between Pilot and Twin Cities and to support the learning journey of Pilot Cities as they implement their pilot activities, ensuring that the participants make the most of the Twinning Learning Programme. They will also support the outlining of the Twin City Action Plans, enabling the monitoring of concrete results and impacts of the Twinning Learning Programme in Twin and Pilot Cities.

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

² These are cities that are not listed among the 112 cities participating in the [EU Cities Mission for 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030](#).

³ Refer to the [NZC website](#) to see Pilot and Twin cities that are already part of the Twinning Learning Programme and Pilot Cities Programme.

2. Background

The [Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission](#), in short the EU Cities Mission, aims to deliver 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030 and ensure that these cities act as experimentation and innovation hubs to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050. NetZeroCities supports the EU Cities Mission launched as part of the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme.

NetZeroCities helps cities overcome the current structural, institutional and cultural barriers they face to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. NetZeroCities 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 an online platform accessible to all cities.

NetZeroCities, a consortium of 34 partners across 27 European countries, manages the EU Cities Mission Platform and supports the [112 Mission cities](#) in drastically reducing their greenhouse gas emissions to achieve climate neutrality by 2030; it extends support to all cities in Europe committed to achieving climate neutrality, particularly through its online NetZeroCities [Portal](#) accessible to all cities.

NetZeroCities aims to enable European cities and citizens to show the way forward towards an inclusive, thriving, climate resilient and sustainable future. It 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. NetZeroCities 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 represent a clear and highly visible political commitment. This commitment extends not only to the European Commission, national and regional authorities, but also to the citizens they serve. These contracts outline the city's path to achieve climate neutrality by 2030 and are accompanied by a comprehensive action plan and investment strategy.

The Pilot Cities Programme, programmed September 2022 and May 2026 across three cohorts, supports large scale piloting activities to exploit, deploy, and scale research and innovation (R&I) and systemic solutions combining social, cultural, technological, nature-based, regulatory, and financial innovation, and new business and governance models to underpin the climate transition. The Pilot Cities Programme provides an opportunity for Mission Cities to put in practice elements of their Climate City Contracts and learn by doing so.

The **Twinning Learning Programme** provides the opportunity for Twin Cities to follow in the footsteps of Pilot Cities, transferring and/or scaling approaches and solutions relevant to their context. The programme will guide selected Twin Cities in their learning efforts with Pilot Cities, with a practical focus on transferring the systemic transformation methodologies and innovative approaches demonstrated by pilot activities, to underpin the climate transition. 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 an Action Plan for Twin Cities outlining the learnings from the pilot activities and transferability of actions to their specific local contexts, through the twinning exchange.

3. Twinning Learning Programme – How cities will work in and through the programme

The Twinning Learning Programme is a structured and facilitated city-to-city learning programme on innovative climate action between Pilot and Twin Cities. It aims to enable a two-way knowledge transfer between Pilot and Twin Cities, focusing on climate-neutrality ambitions and practices tackling multiple emission domains and systemic barriers in a given local context. The specific objectives of the Programme are threefold:

- To enable learning and inspiration between Pilot and Twin Cities;
- To expand the learnings and knowledge transfer across different city departments and relevant stakeholders;
- To build long-lasting collaboration between Pilot and Twin Cities beyond the duration and scope of the Twinning Learning Programme.

The Twinning Learning Programme Cohort 3 will start in December 2024 and last for 18 months (until June 2026). The Programme is made up of three modules, namely **Getting started**, **Co-creating** and **Capitalising** (see Figure 1 below). The framework is built around dedicated milestones and deliverables that Twin Cities commit to submitting to NetZeroCities partners upon completion of each deliverable (See Section 4.2, *What you commit to*, for more information). It is designed as a facilitated process by NetZeroCities consortium partners, while leaving enough flexibility for cities to choose the focus for the knowledge transfer and shape the learning journey. Throughout the Programme, Pilot Cities will share their pilot activities' implementation experience and enable the transfer of innovative practices to Twin Cities while being inspired by good practices already tested in Twin Cities.

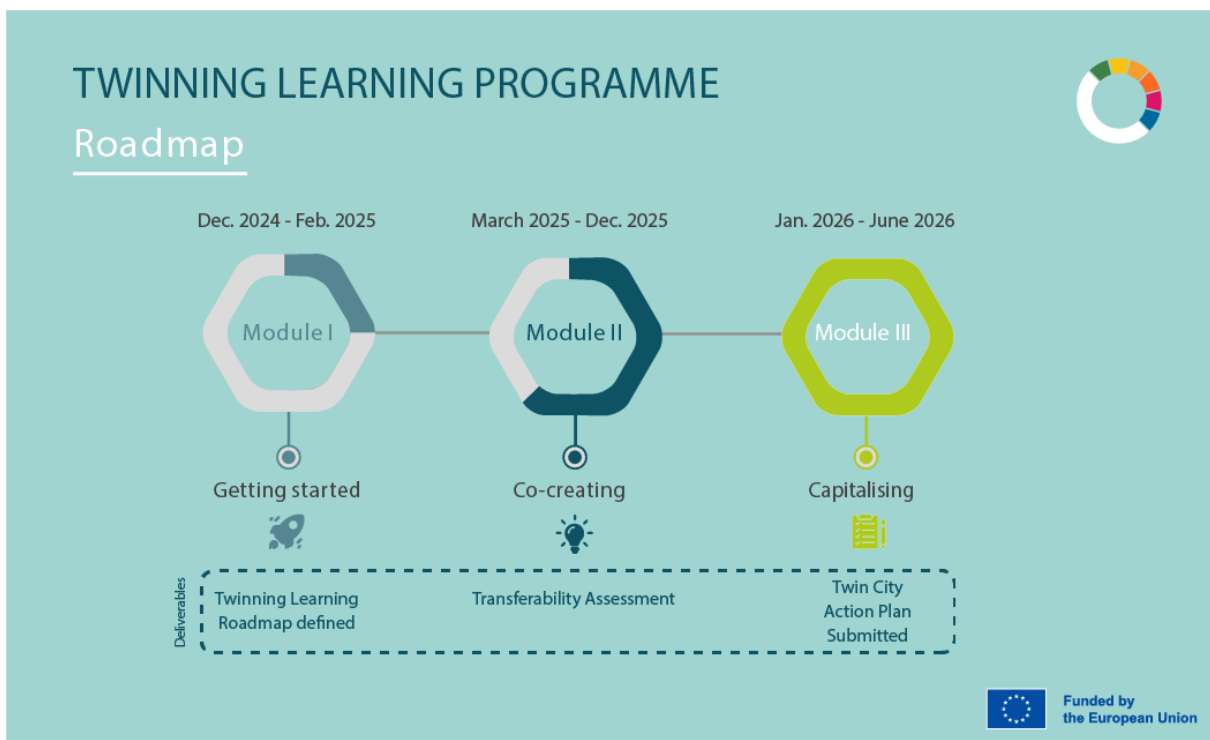


Figure 1: Twinning Learning Programme Roadmap (Cohort 3)

Module I: Getting started (Dec 2024 – Feb 2025) marks the beginning of the Twinning Learning Programme and focuses on building initial relationship between Pilot and Twin Cities and identifying their learning needs and interests. Module I incorporates two online sessions - a kick-off meeting of the

Twinning Learning Programme with all Pilot and Twin Cities and an online workshop to define the learning needs. By the end of this Module, cities will have designed their respective *Twinning Learning Roadmaps*, which include the transferable practices that the Twin City is willing to deepen knowledge from the pilot activity, to transfer in their local context and the Pilot City's learning interests based on the Twin City's best practices.

Module II: Co-creating (March – Dec 2025) aims to expand and accelerate city-to-city learning by addressing the enabling factors and barriers for the transfer of solutions and approaches to the local context. Module II is structured around a mix of online and in-person activities, including two site visits (first site visit to the Pilot City and second site visit to the Twin City, where Twin Cities will be hosting their peer Pilot City representatives). It offers the visiting cities an opportunity to get a first-hand learning experience about the practical implementation of different solutions and approaches from the host city. Moreover, this Module will go beyond individual learning and involve the activation and engagement of the local ecosystem in each city. It will enable the Twin City to carry out a *Transferability assessment* – a practical exercise to explore the enabling conditions for transferring climate-related practices from the pilot activity to the Twin's local context and, consequently, assess their transferability potential.

Module III: Capitalising (January – June 2026) wraps up the learning experience between the cities by reinforcing the knowledge transfer and collaboration commitment in a *Twin City Action Plan*. This Module incorporates both online and in-person activities (a third site visit, back to the Pilot City), providing space and support for the Twin City to propose an Action Plan for transferring practices and reinforce continued collaboration and partnership between cities beyond the Twinning Learning Programme. Finally, the Twin City is expected to present the Action Plan to the Pilot City and to their own local ecosystem for climate action to share the learnings and provide concrete indications about future steps to transfer the learnings from the Twinning Learning Programme exchanges back into their cities⁴.

Each learning Module will be facilitated by NetZeroCities consortium partners. It will enable open and constructive discussions among Pilot and Twin Cities while supporting and accelerating knowledge transfer. Facilitators will ensure the quality and consistency of the Twinning Learning Programme. They will encourage the active participation of city representatives, collect input from the different exchanges and monitor the transfer of learning and good practices.

The Twinning Learning Programme aims to support local authorities in developing or deepening knowledge on innovative approaches to reach their climate neutrality commitments. Twin Cities are expected to have enhanced their capabilities after completing the Programme on the following three levels:

- At an individual level, with a minimum of two city representatives who will be participating in the learning programme for 18-month,
- At the institutional level within the administrative and governance framework of the municipality, sharing the learnings across different municipal departments,
- At a societal level, benefiting the local ecosystem by supporting climate neutrality actions on technology, innovation, learning and knowledge by bringing together different partners from universities to local businesses.

At the start of the Twinning Learning Programme, the participating Pilot and Twin Cities will receive the

⁴ Local ecosystems for climate action are generative relationships among different stakeholders based on trust, shared interest and shared accountability, key to achieve city climate goals. Local ecosystems are activated at local level among governments, civil servants, business, citizens, academia, and any other relevant stakeholders, with the objective to co-create a healthy, just and climate-neutral collective future for the city.

Twinning Learning Programme Handbook for Cohort 3 cities: an information pack explaining the learning programme in more detail.

4. Practical Matters

4.1. Who can apply

Local authorities (including small, mid- and large-sized cities, metropolitan areas, districts, any other public administration linked to the city) based within EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries⁵, who are not part of the EU Cities Mission, i.e. cities who are *not* listed among the 112 cities participating in the [EU Cities Mission](#), and who are not already Twin or Pilot Cities, can apply.

Twin City applicants must 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 demonstrating an existing climate neutrality commitment before or by 2050, in the application process.**

Twin Cities should ensure adequate human resources and time (a minimum of 12 hours per month) to engage in the 18-month Twinning Learning Programme and assign two (2) city representatives per Twin City, with at least a proficiency level of B2 English. At least one of the two Twin City representatives must be practitioners from the local administration (civil servant) and accompanied by a second representative (either practitioner or any other relevant stakeholder/expert affiliated to the local administration). These two Twin City representatives should be able to use the knowledge gained throughout the exchanges with their peer Pilot City/ies to institutionalise the learnings within the municipalities in their own local contexts. To ensure that Twin City participants gain the most from the in-person exchanges, travel costs will be reimbursed up to a given amount (see section 4.3). Further information on this will be made available to successfully selected Twin City applicants.

This Call is addressed to individual Twin City applications rather than to a group of cities applying together. The logic behind requesting individual Twin City applications lies in the impact of higher potential for learning and allowing Pilot Cities to focus on an individual city's learning needs.

For further information on eligibility, please see section 6.2. Stage 1 – Eligibility below.

4.2. What you commit to

As a Twin City you commit to the following elements of the Twinning Learning Programme:

- **Participation in the twinning exchange** (by signing a peer learning agreement at Director of the Department level). This is a two-way exchange in which **both Pilot and Twin Cities** commit to participating in and completing the three (3) learning Modules, as outlined in Figure 1, and attend two site visits to the Pilot City, while hosting their peer Pilot City representatives once, as planned in the learning programme.
- To prepare and submit the following deliverables related to the Twinning Learning Programme:
 - **1) Twinning Learning Roadmap design:** after the completion of Module I, Pilot and Twin Cities will submit their concrete climate-related learning needs or interests, outlined in the Roadmap. The Roadmap will be used as a thematic guideline for designing all other learning activities throughout the Twinning Learning Programme. The climate-neutrality solutions outlined in the Roadmap should be as concrete as

⁵ Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom

possible to allow for an effective and targeted learning process between the cities.

- **2) Stakeholder Engagement Plan:** in Module II, Twin Cities will prepare a list of, at least five, different stakeholders they have identified as crucial actors to be involved for the transfer of the selected practices from the Pilot City and the stakeholders' areas of influence or interest (justification for engagement), and an outline of the envisioned engagement strategy, approaches or methods, and timing.
- **3) Transferability assessment.** On completion of Module II, **Twin Cities** are expected to complete a transferability assessment of up to three transferable practices of their choice (embedded in the Twinning Learning Roadmap). The exercise is a criteria-based assessment designed to **help** cities understand if the chosen practices are transferable to the local context and identify potential barriers and risks for effective transfer to the local setting.
- **4) Twin City Action Plan.** On completion of the Twinning Learning Programme at the end of Module III and based on the learnings from the Pilot City/ies, the **Twin City** is expected to write an Action Plan on concrete actions that could be taken to transfer each of the innovative practices that they learned from the pilot activities, back to their own city context in order to reach climate neutrality commitments. The Action Plan should include:
 - Description of the planned action
 - Timeline
 - Responsible department or organisation
 - Internal [municipal] partners to be involved
 - External partners to be involved
 - Estimate of necessary resources/ funding
 - Milestone(s) for progress monitoring
- To set up an **internal info session with the Twin City Local Ecosystem:** The Twin City is required to organize an info session (online or hybrid event) for its local stakeholders to expand on the individual city representative learnings from the 18-month exchanges with the Pilot Cities at institutional and societal levels.

4.3. Available budget for the Twinning Learning Programme

Up to two representatives from the Twin Cities, participating in the 18-month Twinning Learning Programme, are eligible for reimbursement of their travel and hosting costs incurred during the 2 full days, three site visits, planned in Module II and Module III. Twin Cities will travel to their paired Pilot Cities twice and host Pilot Cities once. Cost categories covered are outlined in Table 1 below.

Type of Cost	Travel for Twin City representatives to Pilot Cities (max 2 travellers).	Hosting (only for Twin Cities)
Amount to reimburse	According to the European Commission official distance band and amounts calculator with an indicative amount of EUR900 envisaged per traveller/per trip.	Up to EUR700 per Twin City for hosting 2 full days site-visit, based on real costs.
Category	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel costs 2. Accommodation costs 3. Subsistence costs: local transport, meals 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Booking meeting rooms, 2. Catering/restaurant and, 3. Local transport costs for hosting the site-visits.

Table 1: Cost categories covered by the Twinning Learning Programme budget

As highlighted in section 4.1. *Who can apply*, each Twin City should be represented by two representatives from their local authority who will be responsible for the implementation of the Twinning Learning Programme modules, and who will participate in the site-visits to their respective Pilot City/ies.

Reimbursement of travel costs for more than two practitioner representatives from Twin Cities will not be covered by the Twinning Learning Programme. Therefore, if Twin Cities are willing to involve more than two city representatives during the two site-visits to their peer Pilot City/ies, the expenses of these additional representatives must be budgeted for by the Twin City.

The travel and accommodation cost reimbursements will be subject to providing original supporting documents. Exact guidelines and procedures will be shared with the selected Twin Cities.

Beyond the reimbursement of travel and hosting costs, no further budget is available, and no financial compensation can be granted to Twin Cities for the implementation of the Twinning Learning Programme.

4.4. How to submit an application

The application form is structured as a questionnaire to collect the information about the city, the motivation for applying to the programme and to assess thematic consistency and alignment with the Pilot City's activities.

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, particularly for [Pilot Cities Cohort 3](#) and four Pilot Cities from Cohort 2 ([Oslo](#), [Trondheim](#), [Kosice and Bratislava](#) and [Pecs and Miskolc](#)), to explore and gain full understanding of the different pilot activities, allowing them to tailor their application form to the objectives, addressed barriers, enabling opportunities, learning needs and description of the pilot activities.

The completion of the Twin Cities application form, in line with the Pilot City profiles, will enable NetZeroCities consortium members to pair the Twin City with the relevant Pilot Activity, should the applicant progress to Stage 3 of the evaluation process (see Section 0 below).

The following pre-submission checklist supports the prospective Twin City applicant to develop a good quality application:

Checklist	
Read this Call Guideline document carefully and consider the questions from the Twin City application form (see Annex 1).	
Confirm that you are eligible to apply to the Call for Twin Cities Cohort 3. See section 6.3	
Assess that the city has sufficient time and human resources to actively participate for the full 18-month duration of the Twinning Learning Programme.	
Carefully read through the online catalogue of the Pilot Activities Cohort 3 as well as select Pilot Activities from Cohort 2 (Oslo , Trondheim , Kosice and Bratislava and Pecs and Miskolc) and establish which 5 pilot activities are relevant to your local context and climate action priority areas, where you share similar challenges, and with whom you would want to exchange knowledge and experiences.	
Attend the information session webinar for the Call for Twin Cities Cohort 3. See section 5 (Call	

Timeline) below for the date and registration link.	
All applications should be submitted in English. Exceptions can be made for supporting documents, such as formal council resolutions, city climate plan, etc. – these documents could be written in one of the official languages spoken in the country from which the application is submitted.	

Once you have followed the suggested steps as shown in the checklist, **please submit your Twin City application using the EU Survey online application form found on the [NZC Twinning Learning Programme webpage](#).**

Please note that only one application may be submitted by each eligible local authority. If several applications are received by the same local authority, the Twin City Team will select the first one submitted.

Furthermore, applications should be submitted by a city representative- external consultants are advised to refrain from drafting and submitting applications on behalf of the city they work with.

If you experience any technical difficulties when submitting your application, please contact twincities@netzerocities.eu.

5. Call timeline

Date/Time (CET/CEST)	Item	Link applicable (if applicable)
30 August 2024	<p>Publication: Online catalogue of Pilot City Profiles</p> <p>The online catalogue showcases Pilot Cities' focus and context and provides Twin City applicants the opportunity to gain a full understanding of the Pilot City/ies activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot Cities Cohort 3 • Pilot Cities Cohort 2: Trondheim, Oslo, Pecs and Miskolc, Kosice and Bratislava. 	
10 September 2024	<p>Twin City Call Cohort 3: Call Opens</p> <p>On Tuesday, 10 September, the Open Call for Twin Cities Cohort 3 will go live. Cities will be able to access the application link and fill in the information, up until the submission deadline as stated below.</p> <p>Publication: Call Guidelines</p> <p>The guidelines for the Call, including eligibility, quality assessment, and selection criteria, will be published both to the NZC website and Mission Portal.</p>	<p>NZC website</p> <p>NZC Mission Portal</p>
18 September 2024	<p>Twin Cities Call 3 information session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wednesday, 18 September, from 14:00 – 15:00 (CEST), Twin City applicants will be able to join an information webinar that will provide guidance and support for prospective applicants on the Twin Cities Call 3 and the Twinning Learning Programme. 	Register here
31 October 2024 (17:00 CET)	<p>Call Closes</p> <p>The formal deadline for submission of Twin City applications is on Thursday, 31 October 2024 (17:00 CET). Applications received after this date will not be accepted. No extensions can be granted, and modification of your application after submission is not possible. We suggest setting your own internal deadline ahead of this date.</p>	NZC website
November 2024	<p>Evaluation and Selection</p> <p>Applications will be checked against Eligibility criteria (Stage 1) and quality evaluation (Stage 2).</p> <p>Applications passing the threshold score in the quality evaluation will proceed to final selection and matching (Stage 3). More information about these Stages can be found in Section 6 of this document.</p>	N/A
Early December 2024	<p>Decision Communication</p> <p>Formal outcomes will be sent to applicants.</p> <p>Successful Twin City applicants will receive the Twinning Learning Programme Handbook for Cohort 3 cities, along with a Peer Learning Agreement which, upon signature, will officially endorse them as Twin Cities.</p>	Email
mid-December 2024	<p>Public announcement of the Call outcomes and selected Twin Cities Cohort 3</p> <p>Start of the Twinning Learning Programme Cohort 3</p>	NZC website

6. Review Mechanism and Selection Criteria

6.1. Overview

The call will follow a three-staged evaluation and selection process as outlined below:

- Stage 1: Eligibility criteria**
 The eligibility check is where pass/fail requirements related to the conditions of the call are assessed by the NetZeroCities consortium members. Applications must pass all eligibility criteria to proceed to Stage 2.
- Stage 2: Quality evaluation and scoring of eligible applications.**
 The cross-partner evaluation panel, comprised of members from the NetZeroCities consortium, will evaluate the overall quality of the application and score against the individual assessment criteria outlined in section 6.3 below. The maximum score available is 21 points, and applications that meet the minimum threshold score of 11 points will proceed to stage 3. It's important to ensure that the answers provided are clear, complete, detailed and consistent.
- Stage 3: Strategic Selection and matching**
 A selection committee panel will select up to 26 Twin Cities to be paired with Pilot Activities, based on their mutual climate-related thematic interests in the different emissions domain(s), related challenges, learning needs and exchange of good practices (as outlined in section 6.4).

The output of this stage is the resulted Twin-Pilot City pairs of the Twinning Learning Programme. Pilot Cities will be consulted and informed about the state of the matching process, while ensuring that the Twinning selection and matching process is 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. Decision as to whether an application is accepted or rejected will be communicated to the applicant.

6.2. Stage 1 – Eligibility

Eligibility criteria are used to ensure applications submitted under the call meet mandatory requirements as set out in the Grant Agreement (HORIZON-RIA-SGA-NZC-101121530). **Applicants must pass on all eligibility criteria**, otherwise they will not proceed to Stage 2 of the process, and they will be rejected from the call outright. The pass/fail eligibility criteria for this call are:

#	Eligibility criterion	How demonstrated	How assessed
1	Local authority must be within either an EU Member State or an approved Horizon Europe Associated Country, on the day 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 achieve climate neutrality before or by 2050. Provide formalised evidence (City Council Resolution, Strategy, Action Plan or equivalent adopted by the City Council and/or other initiative they signed up to e.g. Covenant of	Pass/fail

		Mayors 2050 targets).	
3	The applicant city is not part of the EU Cities Mission and not already a Twin City or Pilot City	As compared with the NZC Mission Platform for Twin Cities from Cohorts 1 (2023) and Cohort 2 (2024) of the Twinning Learning Programme, and Pilot Cities from Cohort 1 (2022), Cohort 2 (2023) and Cohort 3 (2024) of the Pilot Cities Programme.	Pass/Fail

6.3. 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 21 points. The threshold score to pass the Stage 2 Quality Evaluation and proceed to Stage 3 is 11 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 few shortcomings are present.
3	Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

*The threshold score may be adjusted by the NZC Twin City team depending on the number and quality of applications received.

Alignment with the NZC Pilot City Programme			
#	Criterion	How demonstrated	Maximum score
Learning needs			
1	Emissions domain(s)	The applicant city selects the emissions domain(s) relevant to their city's climate action priority areas and learning needs from the Twinning Learning Programme.	No score
2	Selection of pilot activities, in order of preference	The applicant city ranks the top five (5) pilot activities, as listed in the application form, best aligned to their city's climate action priority areas and learning needs from the Twinning Learning Programme.	No score
3	Motivation for selection of Pilot City activities.	The applicant city clearly explains their motivation for why they want to learn from their top five (5) preferred pilot activities, as ranked, concretely referencing their city's key climate action priority areas, learning needs and selected emission(s) domains, while drawing links to the selected pilot activities.	3 points
4	Current climate actions and projects in planning or implementation to reach climate neutrality	The applicant city identifies and describes current and/or planned climate actions and projects relevant to their city's climate action priority areas, selected emission domains and pilot activities, and explains how they will build on this work through the Twinning Learning Programme.	3 points
Drivers and barriers			
5	Lever(s) of change	The applicant city selects up to 3 lever(s) of change, in line with their learning needs from the Twinning Learning Programme.	No score

6	Enabling conditions in the local context to achieve the city's climate actions.	The applicant city lists and explains the top 3 enabling conditions from the local context that supports the city to achieve its climate commitments and priorities.	3 points
7	Barriers in the local context preventing the achievement of climate commitments	The applicant city lists and explains the top 3 barriers relevant to planning and implementing the city's key climate action priority areas and achieving its climate commitments.	3 points
Stakeholder engagement			
8	Stakeholder engagement strategy, approaches, and practices to implement climate actions.	The applicant city identifies 3 specific stakeholders/stakeholder groups that are relevant to their key climate action priority areas and describes how the city plans to or is already engaging stakeholders, and what the stakeholder engagement approaches and practices are.	3 points
Good practices			
9	Good practices to share with the Pilot Cities	The applicant city identifies and describes up to 3 good practices they would like to share with the selected Pilot City/ies and links them with the learning needs from the online Pilot city profiles.	3 points
Local ecosystem activation			
10	Share knowledge and learnings across the city to mobilise the local ecosystem for climate action.	The applicant city outlines how they plan to share learning outcomes and knowledge acquired from the Twinning Learning Programme across city departments and with relevant stakeholders in their city.	3 points

6.4. Stage 3 – Strategic selection and matching

A NetZeroCities cross-partner selection panel will be set up to review and agree on the selection and matching proposal. This stage constitutes a contextual judgment that considers the climate-related thematic priorities and learning needs from the Twin City, and those of the Pilot City, to ensure an optimal pairing with their pilot activities, as well as the pilot activities ranked by the 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.

To ensure the highest potential for learning opportunities and uptake of lessons learned, the strategic selection takes into consideration the following criteria (in order):

- Score in quality evaluation (see section 6.3 Stage 2 – Quality evaluation)
- Clear link between the Twin City's motivations, identified barriers and climate projects/good practices and the Pilot Activity of first choice
- Geographic diversity – based on data gathered at the application stage (best possible representation of geographic diversity)
- Diversity of city size – based on data gathered at the application stage (best possible representation of city size)

6.5. Decision communication

The NetZeroCities Twin Cities Team will aim to communicate final outcomes to applicants from December 2024. 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 December 2024.

7. Data and feedback

7.1. Your Data

All applicants will be required to accept EIT Climate-KIC's [General Terms and Conditions](#) which also includes, in particular, our [Privacy Policy](#), [Acceptable Use Policy](#) and [Cookie Policy](#) and warrant and represent that they have the authority to agree and accept these on behalf of the named organisation. The public sharing of data may include, but is not limited to, EIT Climate-KIC making the outcome of this call for proposals available on its website in relation to statistics on number of proposals, per country, (i.e., aggregated Call data). Information on each activity selected, including data on each participant and twin pairing as well as other project data, may also be made available for publication purposes. Personal data provided may be processed, including sharing with other organisations, by EIT Climate-KIC and certain sensitive data elements will be visible to other NetZeroCities Consortium partners. The applicant warrants and represents that in providing personal data in connection with the proposal, the data subjects have consented to the provision of this personal data and the processing of it by EIT Climate-KIC in the manner indicated in accordance with our Privacy Policy, and that the organisation provides the personal data in accordance with applicable law. Applicants shall comply with applicable data protection legislation including but not limited to the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and any national implementing laws, regulations, and secondary legislation, in each case as amended, supplemented, or replaced from time to time.

7.2. Feedback

Once the Twin City applicant has received the formal communication outlining the final outcome of their application, the applicant has up to 5 calendar days to request further feedback into their application.

The feedback request should be sent to NetZeroCities Twin Cities team at twincities@netzerocities.eu. NetZeroCities maintains a fair assessment procedure to avoid potential conflicts of interest and ensure fair treatment among applicants.

Annex 1: Application Form template

Contact point(s) for the Twinning Learning Programme Cohort 3

The contact points should be the specific names of persons who will be the main points of contact for communications around the programme and who will be actively involved in the implementation of the programme. *(The contact points should be city representatives- external consultants are advised to refrain from submitting applications on behalf of the city they work with).*

Primary contact

First Name – Last Name

Function

Email

Phone number

Secondary contact

First Name – Last Name

Function

Email

Phone number

Local authority details

City (Please provide the official name of your city in English)

Local authorities must not already be part of the EU Cities Mission, i.e. not listed among the [112 cities](#) participating in the EU Cities Mission and not already part of the [Twinning and Pilot Cities Programme](#).

Only one application may be submitted by an eligible local authority. If several applications are received by the same local authority, the Twin City Team will select the first one submitted.

(e.g. Brussels Capital Region)

Type of authority

What type of authority is the subject of the application?

- City authority
- Metropolitan authority
- District
- Other (please detail)

Country

Applicant cities must be within either an EU Member state or an approved Horizon Europe Associated Country, as compared with official, online EU/EC information at the time of submission.

City department (or equivalent)

Please list participating city departments (or equivalent) committed to and relevant for the Twinning Learning Programme (e.g. environment/climate department, transport department, etc).



Size of city

- Less than 50,000 inhabitants
- Between 50,000 – 100,000
- Between 100,000 - 250,000
- Between 250,000 –500,000
- More than 500,000

Tell us more about your city’s climate commitments

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

- YES
- NO

Mandate to act: Please outline your city’s demonstrated climate commitments, its associated target date and describe how this has been formalised. (max. 300 words)

Please upload a document and/or add a link demonstrating this formalised evidence (e.g. City Council Resolution, Strategy, Action Plan or equivalent adopted by the City Council and/or other committed initiative e.g. Covenant of Mayors 2050 targets). *Supporting documents could be submitted in one of the official languages of the country.*

Alignment with the Pilot City Programme

In the framework of the [Pilot Cities Programme](#), we will pair your city with one of the select Cohort 2 Pilot Cities ([Oslo, Trondheim, Kosice and Bratislava](#) or [Pecs and Miskolc](#)) or [Cohort 3 Pilot Cities](#) based on their pilot activities and your learning priorities, to exchange on similar climate thematic areas and emissions domain(s). We will use the information in this questionnaire to 1) evaluate your application as part of Stage 2 quality evaluations, and 2) match your city with the most relevant Pilot City for your local context and learning needs, should the application proceed to strategic selection and matching (Stage 3). **Therefore, it is important that the answers provided are as accurate and concrete as possible.**

Learning needs

Q1 Emission domains. 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 (3) relevant emission domain(s)** that reflect the climate action priority areas and learning needs of your city for 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)

Q2 Pilot activities selection. From the list of Pilot activities, **please rank, in order of preference, five (5) Pilot Activities that align best with your city’s climate action priority areas and learning needs.** We will consider the top 5 as your city’s preferred Pilot Activities. (Please use the Pilot City profiles, linked above, to explore and gain a full understanding of the Pilot Activities before making your selection).

Please note 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 preferred options.

Q3 Motivation for selecting the Pilot Activities. Please explain your city’s motivation to learn from each of the top five (5) pilot activities you selected in Q1 above, following your order of preference as ranked above.

Make sure to draw direct links between each pilot activity and your local context, using concrete examples related to your city’s key climate action priority areas, climate work and learning needs in line with the selected emission domains and common challenges of the selected Pilot activities. (*We want to understand why it will be beneficial for your city to be paired with the selected pilot activities*).

1st choice Pilot Activity (max. 150 words)

2nd choice Pilot Activity (max. 150 words)

3rd choice Pilot Activity (max. 150 words)

4th choice Pilot Activity (max. 150 words)

5th choice Pilot Activity (max. 150 words)

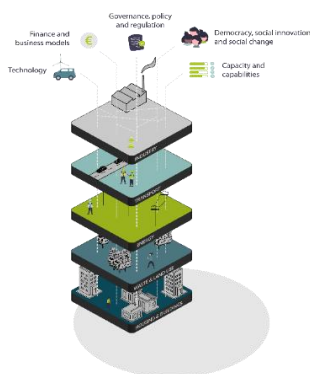
Q4 Current climate actions and projects to reach climate neutrality. List and describe current climate actions and projects that your city has in planning or implementation stage relevant to the city’s key climate action priority areas, and the emission domains and pilot activities selected above.

(We want to understand how participating in the Twinning Learning Programme can contribute to and progress the city’s planned and/or current climate work. Please, focus on relevance and depth rather than on quantity).

(max. 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” to achieve climate neutrality, by addressing embedded structural barriers and challenges at local level and 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/infrastructure, data and digitalisation, and procurement.



Q5 Please select up to three levers of change, that align with your city’s learning needs from the Twinning Learning Programme:

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

Q6 List and explain the top three enabling conditions from your local context that currently exist in your city and/or administration that support your city to progress in the key climate action priority areas and achieve its climate neutrality commitments (e.g. *political support from the Mayor, socioeconomic context, citizen acceptance, high employment rate in decarbonisation sector, etc.* Please be as specific and concrete as possible.

(max. 300 words)

Q7 List and explain the top three barriers from your local context, that your city and/or administration is facing relevant to planning and implementing your city’s key climate action priority areas and achieving its climate neutrality commitments. (e.g. *natural, technological, sociocultural, institutional, etc.*) Please be as specific and concrete as possible.

(max. 300 words)

Stakeholder engagement

Q8 Identify the top three stakeholders/stakeholder groups that you are engaging or planning to engage in addressing your city's key climate action priority areas **and describe the current stakeholder engagement approaches and/or practices** that your city uses in this area. (e.g. these could refer to the methods of engagement of local business, research communities, citizens, etc). Please be as specific and concrete as possible.

(max. 300 words)

Good practices

Q9 Please identify and describe up to three good practices that you would like to share with the selected Pilot City/ies. These should be related to the learning needs, available at the bottom of the online profiles of the Pilot Cities. (Links for easy reference: [Pilot Cities Cohort 3](#) and [Trondheim, Oslo, Kosice and Bratislava](#) and [Pecs and Miskolc](#))

(max. 300 words)

Local ecosystem

Q10 Please outline how you are planning to share your city's learning outcomes and the knowledge acquired from the Twinning Learning Programme, widely across your city (i.e. across the different departments, with the relevant stakeholders in your city, through forums or working groups, etc.).

(300 words)

Declarations

Capacity to engage in the Twinning Learning Programme

The Twinning Learning Programme is designed to allow transfer of knowledge from the pilot activities to your city through reflective and participative exchanges based on dedicated modules, in online and in-person format, structured in three phases: Getting started, Co-creating and Capitalising. **The Twinning Learning Programme Cohort 3 will run for a period of 18 months, with a minimum time dedication of 12 hours/month.**

With this in mind, I hereby declare that the applicant city has the capacity to dedicate time and human resources to actively engage in the planned exchanges and commits to completing the full learning cycle of the 18-month Twinning Learning Programme. This also includes ensuring that the city representatives involved in the learning cycle possess an adequate command of English.

- YES
- NO

GDPR

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 Learning 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 NZC consortium partners.

I consent to be contacted for other capacity building and learning opportunities arising for non-Mission Cities in the framework of the NetZeroCities project.

- YES
- NO

Disclaimer: The NetZeroCities project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe under grant agreement No 101121530 (HORIZON-RIA-SGA-NZC). The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.