



# Report on three awareness campaigns

Deliverable D12.8

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
EU	European Union
NZC	NetZeroCities
WP	Work Package
T	Task

## Summary

This Report on Three awareness campaigns (D12.8) provides an overview of the communication activities carried out by Task 12.5 and WP12 partners to raise interest among European cities in the EU Climate Neutral and Smart Cities, and in the Mission Platform, managed by NetZeroCities, and to encourage them to join. It describes how the partners involved designed targeted awareness and communication campaigns, in close connection with T2.1 and T2.2, as well as with WP3 and WP4. It indicates the various means and methods used to implement these awareness-raising campaigns, key analytics on related social media activities, and provides links to the content produced, including numerous illustrations.

## Keywords

NetZeroCities, European Green Deal, EU Missions, Communication, Awareness campaign, Social media, Climate neutrality, Climate-neutral cities, Climate mitigation



## Introduction

To foster the success of the EU Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, and its Mission Platform, managed by NetZeroCities, it was of utmost importance to ensure a broad and sound communication towards the core target group of this EU Mission, namely European cities ready to embrace the ambition of becoming climate-neutral by 2030. A first objective for WP12 and especially T12.5 'Awareness Campaigns' partners was therefore to raise cities' awareness of the Mission and the NetZeroCities platform, encourage them to express their interest in becoming a Mission City and to apply for joining the Pilot Cities Programme. A second objective was then to give visibility to the 112 selected Mission Cities and to the first cohort of 53 Pilot Cities, to promote their engagement for climate neutrality in the view of broader replication by other cities throughout the project duration, including through the Twinning Learning Programme launched at a later stage and developed by WP5 (Replication and Upscaling).

These awareness campaigns were designed in close collaboration with WP3 (One-stop-shop Platform) and WP4 (Pilot Cities Programme) partners and resulted in the production of a variety of content, such as videos, web articles and content, press releases and social media posts, disseminated through the NetZeroCities communication channels and relayed by all consortium partners.

## 1 Preparing the awareness campaigns

The T12.5 partners, WP3 (One-stop-shop Platform) and WP4 (Pilot Cities Programme) partners convened in online meetings and workshops from October 2021 to May 2022. The primary objective was to collectively plan and design effective campaigns to communicate on the launch of the NetZeroCities platform and promote the first Call for Pilot cities scheduled for fall 2022. A second series of 4 online workshops with the same partners took place in January and February 2023. This round focused on preparing the announcement and promotion of the selected Pilots cities cohort 1.

As illustrated in figure 1, these workshops focused on:

- Reaching a common understanding among partners on the characteristics and components of the Platform and the future Pilot Cities Programme;
- Identifying both direct and indirect target audiences, including main beneficiaries, as well as multiplier organisations and initiatives with the potential to amplify the campaign's impact;
- Defining the awareness campaigns' elements: timeline and key dates, key messages and content tailored to the different audiences, as well as the most appropriate communication tools and channels;
- Integrating the campaign activities within the project's broader editorial content production.

Campaign materials themselves (mainly: web articles, newsletters, press releases, social media posts, direct emailing to Mission Cities, etc.) were produced with support from several WP12 tasks, especially T12.2 "Content production and media relations" led by ICLEI, and in alignment with the overarching T12.1 "Project communication" task, led by LGI.



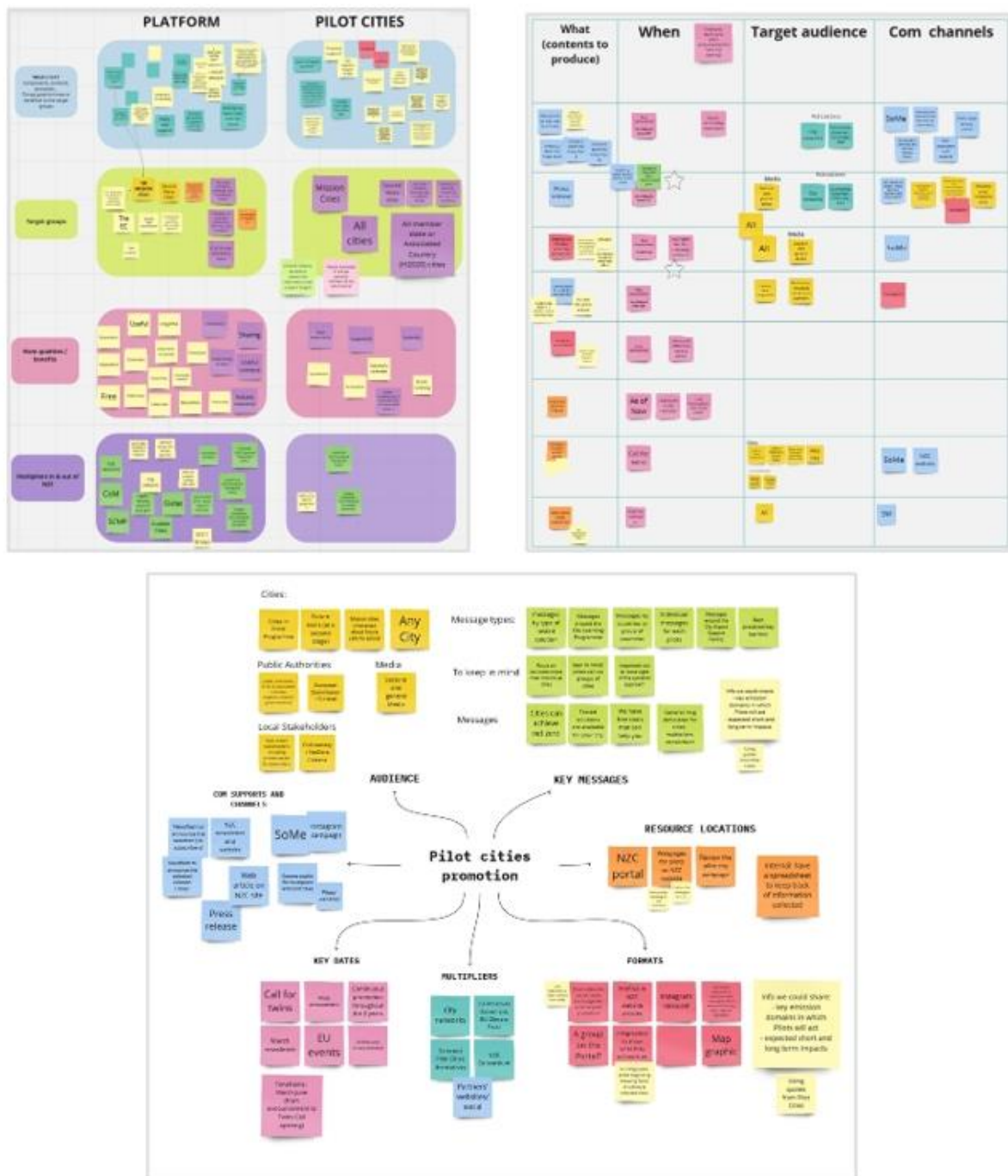


Figure 1 : Campaign Preparatory Workshops

## 2 Animated videos

In 2022 and 2023, as part of 12.5, ICLEI produced a series of four animated videos of 2-3 minutes, aimed at raising awareness of NetZeroCities as Mission platform for the Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission as well as some key concepts related to cities' journey to climate neutrality. They are published on the NetZeroCities YouTube account<sup>1</sup>, and regularly published on social media.

The first video, posted in June 2022 "*Discover NetZeroCities, Managing the Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission Platform*"<sup>2</sup> presents the project, its global context, and how it supports cities in achieving climate neutrality.

The series continued with three additional videos focusing on key concepts of the climate transition, for which NetZeroCities provides tools, methodologies and services to cities. Each video features real life examples from cities, in order to illustrate the concepts presented in a tangible, easy to grasp way.

The three videos were each accompanied by a related 'Spotlight Series' web article (developed under T12.2), providing deeper insights and linking to relevant resources on the NetZeroCities portal and knowledge repository:

- Video "*Creating an Ecosystem for Change: The NetZeroCities Approach to Social Innovation*"<sup>3</sup>, March 2023  
Related Spotlight series article: "*Cities as Ecosystems for Social Innovation*"<sup>4</sup>
- Video "*Using Systemic Innovation to Radically Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions*"<sup>5</sup>, May 2023  
Related Spotlight series article: "*Why Climate Neutrality Requires Systemic Innovation*"<sup>6</sup>
- Video "*Climate Neutrality and the Future of Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement*"<sup>7</sup>, August 2023  
Related Spotlight series article: "*Climate Neutrality and the Future of Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement*"<sup>8</sup>

The video animation was outsourced to an external service provider specialised in the field, resulting in engaging, high-quality content. As of September 2024, these four videos have accumulated over 5,500 views on YouTube, and they are often reused on social media to increase outreach.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.youtube.com/@netzerocitieseu](https://www.youtube.com/@netzerocitieseu)

<sup>2</sup> <https://youtu.be/GvAxPiJZEZE>

<sup>3</sup> <https://youtu.be/YhEIDbP8Ibg>

<sup>4</sup> <https://netzerocities.eu/2023/03/17/spotlight-series-cities-as-ecosystems-for-social-innovation/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://youtu.be/ZowLHQhooY4>

<sup>6</sup> <https://netzerocities.eu/2023/05/31/spotlight-series-why-climate-neutrality-requires-systemic-innovation/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://youtu.be/OAT5OS41vQo>

<sup>8</sup> <https://netzerocities.eu/2023/08/17/spotlight-series-climate-neutrality-and-the-future-of-citizen-and-stakeholder-engagement/>





Figure 2 : NetZeroCities animated videos on YouTube

### 3 Campaign related to the NetZeroCities Platform go-live and call announcement

This campaign started at the very beginning of the project (M1) to promote the EU Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission Platform, managed by NetZeroCities and the Call for Expressions of Interest for Mission Cities issued by the European Commission. It consisted of a series of web articles and a press release (listed in Table 1) and was followed by an intense campaign on social media to promote the 112 Mission Cities after they were selected.

Title / Content	Date of Publication	Content Type
<a href="#">City networks and research organisations team up to accelerate the transition to net zero emissions by 2030</a>	September 28, 2021	NetZeroCities press release
<a href="#">The Call for Expression of Interest of #MissionCities is out! Apply before 31 January 2022</a>	November 25, 2021	NetZeroCities web article
<a href="#">377 cities from all 27 EU countries applied to the Cities Mission call</a>	February 10, 2022	NetZeroCities web article





<a href="#">The European Commission announces the 100 selected cities to join the Cities Mission</a>	April 28, 2022	NetZeroCities press release
<a href="#">Meet the 112 cities selected to join the EU Mission for 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities</a>	July, 2022	News item in NetZeroCities public newsletter #1

**Table 1 : Articles and press release on the platform go-live and call announcement**

**Social media campaign on the 112 Mission Cities**

Once the 112 selected Mission Cities were selected by the European Commission, a campaign to promote them was launched on NetZeroCities social media.

Target audiences included cities around the world interested in climate action, elected officials and staff working on implementing the Mission in cities, public & private stakeholders working on climate neutrality, practitioners and the civil society, among others.

WP12 created different types of social media publications to keep the audience engaged throughout the campaign. A combination of posts focused on providing facts about the cities (population, greenhouse gas emissions statistics, renewables energies used, etc.), and posts sharing media mentions of the Cities Mission in different countries was developed and shared across NetZeroCities social media accounts.

The main hashtag used for this campaign was #MissionCities, an official hashtag used by the European Commission when referring to the EU Cities Mission on social media, ensuring alignment, recognition and a broad outreach.



**Figure 3 : Example of an EU Cities Mission campaign post**





For example, during this campaign, the post that announced the selected 112 Mission Cities produced 164 'Likes' and 66 'Retweets' on Twitter, 385 'Reactions' and 50 'Shares' on LinkedIn, and 46 'Likes' on Instagram.

## 4 Campaign related to the first call for Pilot Cities and selected Pilot Cities

### 4.1 Promotion of the first call for Pilot Cities

This campaign targeted all cities, including Mission Cities. Other target audiences that were identified were City Panel members, members of networks involved in NetZeroCities among others.

The awareness campaign for the first call for Pilot Cities started in June 2022 at the occasion of the first Cities Mission conference in Brussels. Throughout the summer, the campaign continued with pre-announcements to ensure broad dissemination towards potential applicants among Mission and Non-Mission Cities. It was then intensified during the application window, which ran from September 5<sup>th</sup> to November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

Title	Date of Publication	Content Type
<a href="#">Call for Pilot Cities – Prepare for the opening of the call in September</a>	June 22, 2022	NetZeroCities article, Call to Action
<a href="#">The EU Cities Mission Journey Newsletter #1</a>	June 2022	NetZeroCities newsletter article
<a href="#">Cities as a Test Bed for Climate Neutrality: €32 million in Support for EU Cities Mission Pilot Cities</a>	September 5, 2022	Press Release
<a href="#">Call for Pilot Cities: NetZeroCities is looking for external experts to review applications</a>	September 16, 2022	NetZeroCities article, Call to Action
<a href="#">Call for Pilot Cities – Deadline Extended until 17 November</a>	October 31, 2022	NetZeroCities article, Call to Action
<a href="#">The EU Cities Mission Journey Newsletter #2</a>	December 22, 2022	NetZeroCities newsletter article

**Table 2 : Web articles and press release on the first call for Pilot Cities**

Once the Press Release was published, NetZeroCities had more than 20 media mentions.

#### **Social media campaign on the Call for Pilot Cities**

A series of social media publications were drafted to cover different aspects of the Call for Pilot Cities, such as:

- Objectives of the Call for Pilot Cities
- Advantages of becoming a Pilot City
- Registration call to action for the information sessions organised by NZC
- Useful documents to prepare the call: Guidebook, Guidelines, etc.
- Information on how to apply
- Press release on the Call for Pilot Cities
- Deadline reminder

The hashtags used for this campaign were #PilotCities #MissionCities and #EUMissions.



Between June and November 2022, a total of 17 posts were published on LinkedIn, X and Instagram to promote this first call for Pilot Cities.

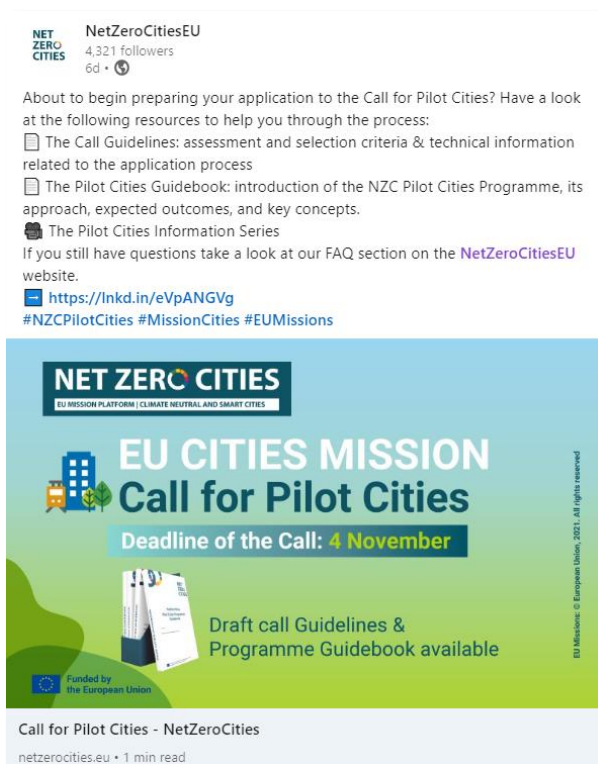


Figure 4 : Example of a Call for Pilot Cities campaign post

NetZeroCities social media channels gained 6,000+ followers across LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram between the inception of the project and October 2022. More specifically, across the two campaigns (promoting the 112 Mission Cities and the Call for Pilot Cities), Twitter gained 1,500+ followers, LinkedIn 4322 followers, and Instagram 318 followers by October 2022.

## 4.2 Promotion of selected Pilot Cities Cohort #1

Among 103 applications received, the list of the 53 selected Pilot Cities Cohort #1 was publicly announced in March 2023 with a dedicated press release and a news article on the project website. This came along with the creation of dedicated webpages on the NetZeroCities website for each individual and multi-city pilot activity (figure 5). These contents were then actively disseminated on the NetZeroCities social media accounts and in the project's public newsletter.

Title	Date of Publication	Content Type
<a href="#">Getting to Climate Neutrality: 53 Pilot Cities Offer a Path Toward Transformation</a>	March 1, 2023	Press Release



<a href="#">53 to Zero: How NetZeroCities Pilot Cities Are Scaling Up the Climate Transition</a>	March 6, 2023	NetZeroCities article
<a href="#">53 Pilot Cities Will Test Pathways to Accelerate the Climate Transition</a>	March 31, 2023	NetZeroCities public newsletter article

**Table 3 : Press release and web articles on the selected Pilot Cities**



**Figure 5 : Presentation of Pilot Cities, Cohort 1 on the NetZeroCities website**

A targeted communication regarding the selected Pilot Cities was also sent to 30 other EU initiatives and projects (see Table 4). This outreach included direct emails that provided links to the relevant press release, the Pilot Cities webpages, and useful resources to support dissemination (e.g. a communication toolkit and social media posts to share).

List of identified multipliers
Covenant of Mayors Europe
Global Covenant of mayors
100 Intelligent Cities Challenge
JPI Urban Europe
Clean Energy for EU Islands
CDP-ICLEI
C40 Cities
CIVITAS
ELTIS
Enoll (European Network of Living Labs)
Horizon 2020 Lighthouse Projects / SCALABLE Cities Secretariat
Living in the EU

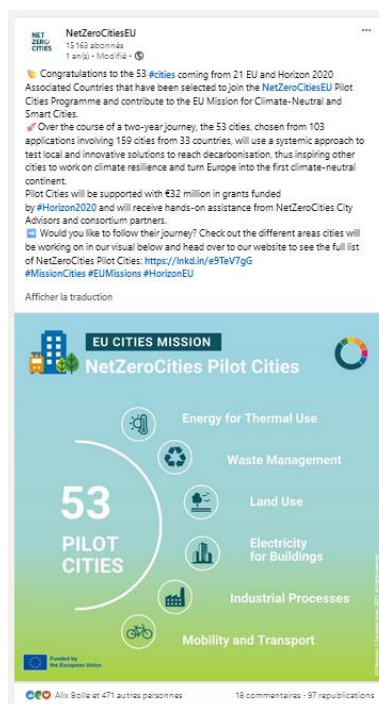


Smart Cities Marketplace
EU Climate Pact
URBACT
Civil Society Europe (CSE) thematic cluster climate change and environmental challenges
Managenery
CiviTechGuide
Oppla (EU Repository of Nature-Based Solutions)
Placemaking Europe
European City Facility (EUCF)
Green City Accord
The Climate group
Energy Poverty Advisory Hub
Carbon neutral cities alliance
Stockholm Environment Institute
UITP
Carbon neutral Finland
Carbon Gap
Net Zero (UK)

**Table 4 : Targeted initiatives for the promotion of Pilot Cities**

**Social media campaign on the announcement of selected Pilot Cities**

On social media, the selection of Pilot Cities was announced with a carousel showcasing the selected cities and the areas they would work on.



**Figure 6 : Announcement of the first 53 Pilot cities on LinkedIn**





Figure 7 : LinkedIn carousel

The hashtags used for this campaign were #PilotCities #MissionCities and #EUMissions.

**Social media impact**

On LinkedIn this announcement post gained 473 ‘Likes’ and 97 ‘Reposts’, Twitter had 69 ‘Retweets’, and 141 ‘Likes’, and Instagram received 82 ‘Likes’, 15 profile visits, and 3 followers.

**Media coverage**

In the sole months of March and April 2023, we recorded almost 80 media coverages instances for the selected Pilot Cities.10 were from European/Brussels-based media or organisations, while the remaining 70 came from local, regional, and national media across 18 different EU countries and languages.







Figure 8 : Examples of media coverage in Spain, Austria, and the United Kingdom

## 5 Instagram campaign on urban climate champions

The NetZeroCities Instagram account<sup>9</sup> is used to actively promote NetZeroCities campaigns, calls to action, and news items. As of September 2024, the account has over 160 published posts, focusing particularly on campaigns promoting selected Mission Cities, as well as Pilot and Twin Cities. The posts feature a mix of photos from NetZeroCities events, branded graphics, and infographics, and the account has gathered more than 1000 followers.

Starting in the summer 2024, the task partners launched the hashtag #URBANCLIMATECHAMPIONS to showcase concrete and innovative climate actions implemented by the Mission Cities in their local ecosystems, while engaging local communities and stakeholders. This relates to the third campaign mentioned in T12.5 in the grant agreement.

The primary objective of this campaign is to showcase innovative climate actions undertaken by cities, inspiring other municipalities to adopt similar initiatives. By highlighting successful stories from cities, the campaign aims to demonstrate that collective efforts can lead to significant progress in tackling climate change. These stories were sourced by NetZeroCities partners, including in collaboration with city advisors and other work packages. They were also shared with the European Commission, which showcased them in a digital exhibition<sup>10</sup>.

Instagram 'Stories' featuring the #UrbanClimateChampions campaign have reached more than 5,000 accounts in 'Impressions' when sharing the post to the 'Story' feature, the most engaged 'Story' of this campaign was the Valladolid post. The campaign also gained 10+ profile visits and a total of 100 'Likes' over the campaign.

In order to increase visibility, featured cities' official accounts were systematically tagged, enabling them to share the posts with their audience in a seamless manner and act as multipliers. The posts were also shared on additional social media platforms (X, LinkedIn), for broader outreach.

Over the last year of the project, it is intended that more stories will be shared under the #UrbanClimateChampions hashtag, with NetZeroCities continuously identifying interesting stories of achievements in cities.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/netzerocitieseu/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/en/projects/exhibition/exhibition2022#4Cities>







Figure 9 : Promoting Urban Climate Champions on the NetZeroCities Instagram account

## Conclusion

Since the early days of the project, sound communication campaigns were built and carried out to raise cities awareness on the EU Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, and on NetZeroCities as the Mission Platform. The benefits cities could find in engaging with the opportunities offered by the platform in support of their local actions for tackling climate change were constantly highlighted. In complement of the whole NetZeroCities consortium's work for the platform development, these awareness campaigns proved to be efficient, considering the 377 expressions of interest received from cities wishing to be part of the Mission and the 103 first Mission and non-Mission cities who applied for joining to Pilot City Programme. This was made possible by the effective integration of these campaigns into the project's overall editorial production, as well as by the right choices in terms of key messages and the different communication channels and formats used.

As they can now build upon ever growing examples of Mission cities' and Pilot and Twin Cities' stories and testimonies, these awareness-raising activities will be able to expand to a wider audience of cities and their local stakeholders and citizens.

