



D4.6 Proceedings and Lessons Learnt from Summer Schools 1 & 2

Deliverable D4.6

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
NZC	NetZeroCities
WP	Work Package
CCC	Climate City Contract
SGA	Specific Grant Agreement 1
CBP	Capability Building Programme
Demsoc	Democratic Society
VC	Viable Cities
GHG	GreenHouse Gases
BwB	Bankers without boundaries
UPM	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid

Executive summary

This document compiles the lessons learned and reflections from the first two Seasonal Schools delivered in the framework of NetZeroCities, held in Milano/Como and Santander during the summer of 2023. These Seasonal Schools are a key component of the learning offerings provided by NetZeroCities aimed at supporting cities in preparing their Climate City Contracts (CCC). For this purpose, tailor made sessions were offered during the two schools. Specifically, the cities participated in sessions related to the following topics related to the CCC: Transition and local governance team; Co-development of portfolios for climate action planning; Impact pathways, indicators for measurement, evaluation and learning; Economic modelling and investment planning; Stakeholder engagement, Social innovation. Cities also exchanged experiences of good practices in different areas of action. Given that these were the inaugural Seasonal Schools, it was crucial for us to assess their impact on participants to refine the quality of future sessions and content. This deliverable presents the results of that evaluation.

Keywords

Capacity Building, Seasonal Schools, learning offering

1. Seasonal Schools

○ 1.1 Context

This deliverable provides an overview of the **NetZeroCities Summer Schools held in June and July 2023**, which brought together approximately 60 representatives from Mission Cities for an intensive learning program aimed at accelerating their progress toward achieving climate neutrality by 2030. Conducted in Milan and Como, Italy, in early June, and in Santander, Spain, in mid-July, these Summer Schools offered cities an opportunity to engage in collaborative activities, fostering the advancement of their climate objectives.

The NZC Seasonal School is an **in-person learning experience** focused on preparatory processes and knowledge needed for Mission cities to co-create Climate City Contracts (CCC), as well as for the monitoring, implementation and iteration of the CCC. Seasonal Schools are one of several turning points in Mission Cities' journey towards climate-neutrality, as they make up the in-person **component of Capability building**. A component of the CBP directly enabled by NZC-SGA WP4. Summer schools are a key entry-point into learning for a Mission City.

These schools are mainly organised by Polimi and UPM, with the support of the other partners: Viable Cities, Climate-KIC, TNO, Dark Matter Labs, ICLEI, DemSoc, BwB and others on a more on-demand basis.

The cities that attended each school are detailed below:

Date	Place	Lead	Nº of cities participating
7-9 June 2023	Como/Milano, Italy	Polimi	16 cities: Aachen, Bergamo, Parma, Bologna, Roma, Eilat, Firenze, Kosice, Malmö, Milano, Turin, Guimarães, Gabrovo, Mannheim, Tartu and Valladolid.
19-21 July 2023	Santander, Spain	UPM	19 cities: Barcelona, Differdange, Guimarães, Istanbul, Klagenfurt, Kranj, Lisbon, Madrid, Miskolc, Münster, Porto, Sevilla, Tartu, Taurage, Thessaloniki, Vilnius, València, Valladolid and Vitoria-Gasteiz.

Table 1: Seasonal Schools attendance

In total, thirty-two cities attended these schools. The cities of Guimarães, Tartu and Valladolid attended both editions of the Summer Schools.

○ 1.2 Purpose

The aim of the Seasonal Schools is to kickstart and build sustainable relationships among Mission cities and with NZC learning facilitators, leveraging networking moments and spaces, facilitated and non-

facilitated, as well as interactive sessions and workshops. This enables long-term resonance learning, reflective learning and strengthens the community feeling necessary for the Cities Mission to carry momentum.

One of the main objectives of these schools is to create a space in which cities can connect with each other to establish synergies that allow them to share the knowledge they already have, and even to collaborate in achieving their particular and common objectives.

The NZC Seasonal Schools are a two and a half day intensive learning track that aims to help cities to accelerate the design of coherent portfolios of actions and sound funding strategies by introducing key tools and approaches in workshops and peer-to-peer spaces, in view of the CCC submission. This experience include:

- Working group sessions to frame the challenges of the CCC journey.
- Exchanging Peer-to-Peer sessions to share strategies, tools, methodology to overcome barriers to CCC.
- Multidisciplinary design sessions to accelerate the CCC preparation.
- Lectures and case studies to deepen knowledge on a range of topics including financing, social innovation and citizen engagement, etc.

○ 1.3 Content

The sessions are focused on providing participants with essential knowledge on different topics related to the mission of achieving climate neutrality, all grounded in the framework of the NZC Transition Map. This was done through interactive sessions and workshops, where the following topics were addressed:

€ Transition and local governance team

This session focuses on the critical role of multidisciplinary Transition Teams in driving climate action within cities. It explores strategies for distributed leadership, stakeholder analysis, and alignment within these teams. The session provides practical tools and guidance for building and expanding effective Transition Teams, with an emphasis on communication, learning practices, and overcoming organisational silos.

Key Takeaways:

- Emphasises the importance of well-structured Transition Teams.
- Provides practical advice on how to develop and lead these teams effectively.

€ Co-development of portfolios for climate action planning

This session provides participants with strategies and techniques to co-design city-wide portfolios of coordinated actions for climate neutrality. The focus is on moving from fragmented sustainability projects to a more integrated portfolio approach, which is crucial for systemic climate action. Participants are guided on how to refine their existing plans and improve the coherence and impact of their portfolios.

Key Takeaways:

- € Facilitates the shift from isolated projects to a cohesive portfolio approach.
- € Enhances the potential and impact of a city's climate action plans.

€ Impact pathways, indicators for measurement, evaluation and learning

This session supports cities in co-creating their impact pathways using existing climate-neutrality scenarios and emission reduction trajectories. Through interactive exercises, the session clarifies key concepts such as direct versus indirect impacts, early versus later outcomes, and the selection of

appropriate indicators. The session also includes examples of how other cities are implementing these strategies.

Key Takeaways:

- € Supports the design of effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes.
- € Aligns these processes with long-term climate goals.

€ Economic modelling and investment planning

In this session, participants delve into the use of the NetZeroCities (NZC) economic model and how it supports cities in making investment decisions to achieve climate neutrality. The session covers how the model works, focusing on key investment types in sectors like mobility, energy, and efficiency, and their impact on reducing CO2 emissions. The discussion also includes the relationship with asset owners and the financial solutions that can be deployed.

Key Takeaways:

- Deepens understanding of the NZC economic model.
- Guides the application of the model in city contexts.

€ Stakeholder engagement

This session provides participants with strategies to enhance citizen and stakeholder engagement in their climate initiatives. Through a combination of presentations, interactive exercises, and group discussions, participants explore challenges, opportunities, and best practices for effective engagement.

Key Takeaways:

- Improves stakeholder engagement strategies.
- Fosters meaningful conversations that lead to actionable outcomes.

• Social innovation

In this session, participants explore the role of social innovation in achieving climate neutrality, focusing on the importance of fostering an enabling environment for bottom-up innovation. The session includes peer-to-peer learning, case studies, and practical exercises to help cities integrate social innovation into their climate action plans.

Key Takeaways:

- Provides a deeper understanding of social innovation.
- Guides the integration of social innovation into action plans to accelerate climate action.

€ Best Practices Exchange

The main objective of this session is to map and learn from the best practices of Mission Cities, including solutions, governance processes, strategies, and technologies, to build capacity for accelerating climate transition in cities. These sessions focus on sharing lessons learned from case studies and conducting reflection sessions with cities and experts to enable reflexive learning, analyse the effectiveness of best practices in the Climate City Contracts (CCC), and support the implementation and iteration of these contracts.

Key Takeaways:

- Offers insights into the best practices of other cities.
- Fosters an environment of mutual learning and reflection, supporting the ongoing development and iteration of Climate City Contracts.

In addition, the Schools offer several networking moments that allow participants to initiate conversations and relationships, encouraging a sense of empowerment and solidarity in their work.

All the content from the Seasonal Schools has been uploaded to the “[NetZeroCities Seasonal Schools](#)” group on the NZC website, where documents from each edition are shared with city representatives and consortium members.

2. Milano/Como Summer School

2.1 General information

The first NetZeroCities Summer School was held in Milan and in Como from June 7 to 9, 2023, and was attended by **49 representatives from 16 cities**: Aachen, Bergamo, Parma, Bologna, Rome, Eilat, Florence, Kosice, Malmö, Milan, Turin, Guimarães, Gabrovo, Mannheim, Tartu, and Valladolid. The organisation of this Summer School was led by Politecnico di Milano, with support from Universidad Politécnica de Madrid and partners Viable Cities, Climate-KIC, TNO, Dark Matter Labs, DemSoc, BwB, and ICLEI.

2.2 Agenda



Schedule	June 7 (Milano – Design campus via Durando 10)		Schedule	June 8 (Como – Politecnico residence, via Zezio 58)		Schedule	June 9 (Como – Politecnico residence, via Zezio 58)	
				Group 1	Group 2		Group 1	Group 2
			9.00-11.00	Portfolio Codesign	Transition Team	9.00-11.00	Pathways and Indicators	Social Innovation
			11.00-11.30	Break		11.00-11.30	Break	
			11.30-13.30	Investment Plan	Portfolio Codesign	11.30-13.30	Social Innovation	Pathways and Indicators
14.00-15.00	Welcome and Opening		13.30-14.45	Lunch and networking		13.30-15.00	Lunch and networking	
15.15-17.15	Group 1	Group 2	14.45-16.45	Group 1	Group 2	15.00-18.00	Learning session Individual coaching sessions with NZC expert group	
	Transition Team	Stakeholder Engagement		Stakeholder Engagement	Investment Plan			
17.15-17.30	Break		16.45-17.00	Break				
17.30-18.30	Learning session From submitted CCCs		17.00 -18.00	Learning session Kirsten Dunlop – TBC – EIT Climate KIC				
18.30-21.00	Aperitif in Milano Design Campus Bus transfer to Como		20.00 -22.00	Dinner in Como Circolo dei canottieri				

Figure 1: Agenda from the Milan/Como Summer School (June 7-9, 2023)

2.3 Evaluation from cities

At the end of the Summer School, a survey was completed by city representatives to evaluate the main learnings during the different sessions offered during the event. The main results are presented below:

Name of the session	Rating: 0 to 5 5 being excellent	Participants liked the most	Participants would have liked more
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Transition team	4.1	Participants particularly appreciated the interactive dynamics, clear and schematic explanations, and the opportunity to define team roles and relationships within the transition process.	Participants wished for more time, practical examples, and additional information on the initial presentations, particularly on defining and establishing transition teams.
Stakeholder engagement	3.5	Participants particularly appreciated the dynamics, clear explanations, and the valuable background information that helped them understand the ecosystem and identify key stakeholders. They also valued the examples provided and the overall presentation content.	Participants wished for more time to discuss, a clearer introduction before starting, and more clarity on stakeholder engagement, including mapping and roles. Some felt the exercise was confusing and would have liked additional guidance on how to apply the knowledge gained.
Portfolio co-design	4.3	Participants particularly enjoyed the opportunity to gain perspectives from other cities, the presented methodology, guiding templates, and the deep dive into real portfolios. They also appreciated the clear timelines, insightful discussions, and the high-quality content of the presentations.	Participants wished for more time to interact and co-design, and for materials that were more practical and less research-focused. Some found it challenging to grasp everything needed for the workshop, though they valued the group discussions.
Investment plan	4.00	Participants appreciated the practicality and usefulness of the tools and templates provided, the support from BwB, and the in-depth exploration of real investment plans. They also valued the economic model introduction, the motivation to continue their work, the comprehensive overview of possibilities, and the	Participants wished for more concrete exercises, additional insights into financial instruments, and more time. Some also desired more exchange on investment instruments and a clearer, simplified approach to understanding investment planning.

		openness of facilitators to address future questions.	
Pathways and indicators	4.3	Participants appreciated the hands-on work with canvases, the high-quality presentations and explanations, and the comprehensive supporting materials. They found the interactive parts informative, valued the introduction of connections in the process, and liked seeing GHG emissions considered alongside other indicators. The pathway mechanism and framework visualisations were well-received, along with the clear, engaging activities that helped identify key indicators and clarify questions.	Participants wished for more time, a less rushed pace, clearer guidance on choosing indicators, and a ready-to-use template. Some found the exercise stressful and challenging to understand, though they appreciated the discussions within their groups.
Social innovation	3.8	Participants particularly enjoyed sharing experiences and examples of social innovations, engaging in group discussions, and learning from best practices and examples from other cities. They appreciated the interesting content of the presentations and found it reassuring to see that other cities face similar challenges.	Participants wished for a more user-friendly template, better-looking and more motivating workshop materials, and clearer explanations of the map field. They also desired more examples, improved facilitation of group discussions to ensure equal participation, and more time to build and understand social innovation examples or actions. Some participants also felt that having someone more knowledgeable from their city would have been beneficial.
Best Practices	4.1	Participants particularly valued the practical examples shared during the sessions,	Participants expressed concerns about the timing of some sessions, feeling they were scheduled too

		finding them motivating and insightful. They appreciated the good mixture of content and examples, which provided a comprehensive understanding of different approaches. Hearing what other cities are doing was especially beneficial, as it offered both inspiration and reassurance that similar efforts are being undertaken elsewhere.	late in the day, which made it difficult to concentrate. They suggested allowing more time for presentations, setting stricter time limits, and ensuring that every participating city has the opportunity to introduce themselves at the start of the Summer School.
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Table 2: Feedback from cities (Milan/Como Summer School)

After evaluating the sessions, participants shared that they were very satisfied with the overall organisation of the Summer School. They particularly highlighted the excellent networking opportunities, practical guidance, and positive atmosphere, which helped them connect with NZC representatives and peers. They considered the event to be highly beneficial for advancing their climate neutrality goals.

However, participants suggested several areas for improvement. They recommended a less intensive schedule, particularly on the first day, along with better travel information, more frequent breaks, and enhanced food options. The desire for additional networking time, an extended event duration, and clearer directions to the location was also noted. Some participants felt the event was too structured and would have preferred a more informal atmosphere.

Looking forward, some participants proposed focusing future summer schools on a single topic for deeper exploration, extending the duration to four days with a more relaxed agenda, and providing a travel manual with detailed transport and accommodation guidance. They also suggested sending study materials in advance, refining time management, and sharing participant contact details for ongoing networking. Overall, participants emphasised the need for more discussion time and a more relaxed event schedule.

2.4 Updates from participating cities after the School

At the date of this report, **6 of the 16 cities** that attended the Milan/Como Summer School already have the mission label, having had their CCC validated in windows 1 and 2. In other words, **38%** of the cities that attended the school have already achieved the objective of developing their CCC and are currently in the implementation phase. Of the remaining cities, five have already submitted their CCC, which are currently under evaluation. Finally, the five cities that have not yet submitted their CCC will do so in window 4, which has a deadline of September 15, 2024.

2.5 Pictures



Part of the group that attended the summer school in Como, Italy (June 2024).



Participants during Transition team session



Opening session in Como

3. Santander Summer School

○ 3.1 General information

The second NetZeroCities Summer School, held in Santander, took place between July 19 and 21, 2023, and was attended **31 representatives from 19 cities**: Barcelona, Differdange, Guimarães, Istanbul, Klagenfurt, Kranj, Lisbon, Madrid, Miskolc, Münster, Porto, Sevilla, Tartu, Taurage, Thessaloniki, Vilnius, València, Valladolid and Vitoria-Gasteiz. The organisation of this seasonal school was led by Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, with the support of Polimi, and task's partners Viable Cities, Climate-KIC, TNO, Dark Matter Labs, DemSoc, BwB and ICLEI.

3.2 Agenda

	Wednesday 19 July 2023			Thursday 20 July 2023			Friday 21 July 2023	
	Free for travel		9:00-11:00	Session 2A (2 h) Portfolio co-design	Session 2B (2 h) Transition team	9:00-11:00	Session 5A (2 h) Social innovation	Session 5B (2 h) Stakeholder engagement
12:30-13:30	Welcome reception		11:00-11:30	Break & snacks (30min)		11:00-11:30	Break & snacks (30min)	
13:30-14:30	Lunch (1 h)		11:30-13:30	Session 3A (2 h) Pathways and indicators	Session 3B (2 h) Investment planning	11:30-13:30	Session 6A (2 h) Stakeholder engagement	Session 6B (2 h) Social innovation
14:30-15:15	Inspirational speech: Kirsten Dunlop		13:30-14:30	Lunch (1 hour)		13:30-14:30	Lunch (1 h)	
15:15-16:00	Inauguration speeches of Summer School		14:30-16:30	Session 4A (2 h) Investment planning	Session 4B (2 h) Pathways and indicators	14:30-15:30	Transport to residence (30 min)	
16:00-18:00	Session 1A (2 h) Transition team	Session 1B (2 h) Portfolio co-design	16:30-17:00	Break (20 min)		15:30-17:30	Individual coaching sessions (2 h)	
18:00-19:00	Collective learning session 1 (1 h) Learnings from the CCC - walkshop		17:30-18:30	Collective learning session 2 (1 h) Good examples from cities				
19:00-21:00	Free for personal time (2 h)		18:30-20:30	Free for personal time (2h)			Free for travel	
21:00-22:30	Dinner at Gran Casino Sardinero Plaza de Italia, s/n, 39005 Santander		20:30-22:30	Dinner at Restaurante La Luz c/ Ramón y Cajal, 18, Santander				

Figure 2: Agenda from the Santander Summer School (July 19-21, 2023)

3.3 Feedback from cities

At the end of the Summer School, a survey was completed by city representatives to evaluate the main learnings during the different sessions offered during the event. The main results are presented below:

Name of the session	Rating: 0 to 5 5 being excellent	Participants liked the most	Participants would have liked more
Transition team	4.5	The approach methodology. "I liked to see how some ideas like 'the cube': this improve the way to explain the transition team concept.	More dialogues between the cities.
Stakeholder engagement	4.0	Very interactive session. "It was great to be on my feet for much of the session".	More time for the session.
Portfolio co-design	4.1	Very well structured and useful info with references. The effort put by the facilitator.	A more interactive session. To see more specific portfolios from other cities. More time to share conclusions with the other groups.
Investment plan	4.3	Very well planned and interesting conversation among all participants. Good overview of the economic model. The interactiveness.	Some more specific cases. More time for an open conversation.

Pathways and indicators	4.0	Great lectures and exercises, they were really useful. "Good storytelling to understand the process to select indicators".	More examples and exercises needed. Some exchange of information between groups at the end of the exercise.
Social innovation	4.0	Really great discussions around the topic.	More specific examples from the cities participating in the School.
Learnings from the CCC	4.3	Very dynamic and original. Great to move after sitting.	It could take place after lunch. The written part wasn't that relevant. It could be given at any other occasion.
Overall rating for the event	4.7		

Table 3: Feedback from cities (Santander Summer School)

In general, the School's participants were satisfied with the organisation of the sessions and the School in general, which received a rating of 4.7 out of 5.

The representatives of the cities positively valued the particular approach of each session and the variety of the dynamics, as well as their good planning. The possibility of having outdoor activities was also very much appreciated. In this regard, the location of this second Summer School, at the Palacio de la Magdalena in Santander, was considered ideal. It was demonstrated that cities highly value face-to-face meetings to connect with colleagues from other cities and their experiences.

On the other hand, participants commented that for some sessions they would have liked more time, as well as more concrete examples linking the participating cities to the sessions.

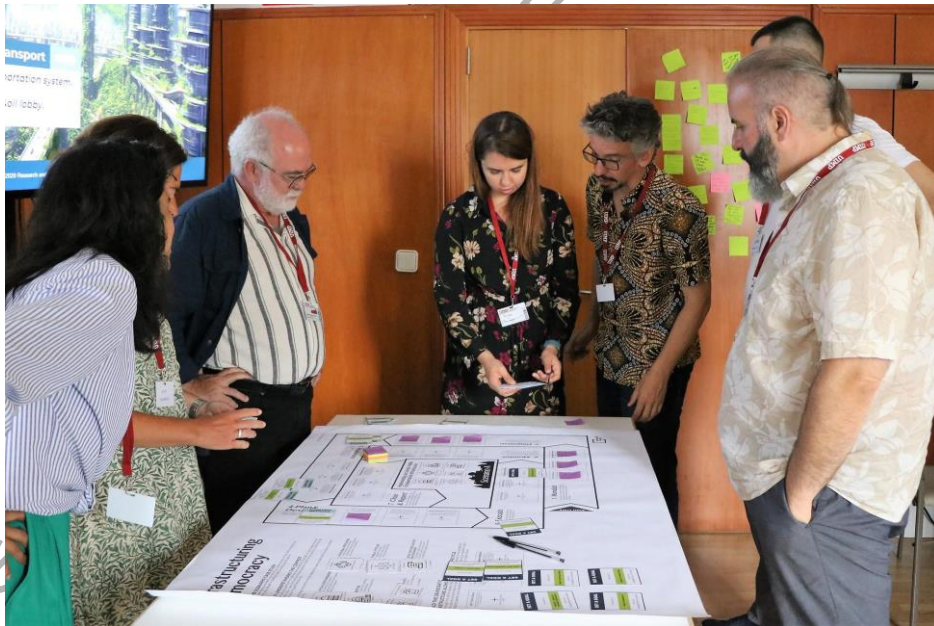
○ 3.4 Updates from participating cities after the school

At the date of this report, **10 of the 19 cities** that attended the Santander school already have the mission label, having had their CCC validated in windows 1 and 2. In other words, **more than 50%** of the cities that attended the school have already achieved the objective of developing their CCC and are currently in the implementation phase. Regarding the remaining cities, four have already submitted their CCC, which are currently under evaluation. Finally, the five cities that have not yet submitted their CCC will do so in window 4, which has a deadline of September 15, 2024.

○ 3.5 Pictures from the Santander Summer School



Part of the group that attended the summer school in Santander, Spain (July 2024).



Participants of the Santander School, during the Stakeholder Engagement session.

4. Lessons learnt

Many lessons have been learned during these first two Seasonal Schools. Here are some of them, thinking that they can help us to improve the experience of future schools and learning events that will be carried out in the framework of NZC.

In-person events are really important for the cities:

- Deeper engagement encourages active participation without the distractions of virtual meetings.

- Improved understanding and communication as non-verbal cues
- Enhanced motivation and morale boost energy and enthusiasm among participants.
- Building relationships as personal interactions build trust and long-term partnerships.
- It is recommended to have two participants per city.

Session formats still need to be improved:

- Increase interactive workshops, plenary discussions, and world café dialogues.
- Allow more time for Q&A and peer-to-peer exchanges.
- Include detailed, real examples and case studies.

To tailor the content to city needs:

- Customise content to address specific needs, with thorough explanations of CCC sections and practical tips.
- Collect input from cities during registration and preparatory sessions to tailor the agenda.
- Coordinate with City Advisors and City Support Groups to better understand city needs.

Foster a collaborative learning environment:

- Encourage a collaborative atmosphere with NZC staff available during breaks and sessions.
- Design sessions for active participation, avoiding static presentations and allowing deeper exploration of topics.

Optimise event logistics and communication:

- Announce event dates at least two months in advance and keep registration open for 2-3 weeks.
- Ensure registration includes a separate confirmation email and provide comprehensive pre-event information.
- Enhance the portal to be more intuitive and easier to navigate as a useful repository post-Seasonal Schools.

Suggested Learning Topics from Cities During the Seasonal Schools

During the learning schools, the following topics were identified. However, the idea of the thematic workshops is that they can work on demand. This demand can come directly from the cities, from the City Advisors (CAs) or City Support Groups (CSGs), or from a consortium partner.

- A Systemic Approach:
- Data Governance
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Building a Better Understanding of the Available Tools
- Investment Planning
- Political and High-Level Support (and Buy-In)
- Climate City Contract Support
- Upskilling on Co-Creation Facilitation
- From Theory to Practice
- Peer-to-Peer Learning
- Tailored Support

5. Conclusions

These in-person events provide an opportunity for cities to work directly with professionals and peers from other cities, fostering a hands-on, collaborative environment. This direct engagement allows

participants to not only receive tailored guidance and feedback on their Climate City Contracts but also to exchange best practices and innovative ideas with cities facing similar challenges. The combination of expert-led sessions and peer-to-peer interactions ensures that cities leave the schools with practical strategies, enhanced skills, and a clearer path forward in their climate action plans.

Out of a total of **32 cities that attended the first two NetZeroCities Seasonal Schools, as of the date of this report 14 of them have successfully earned the mission city label, representing 44%** of the cities that attended the schools. At the same time, 9 of the participating cities have already submitted their CCC, and are awaiting the results of the evaluation. The remaining 9 cities have yet to submit their CCC to the European Commission, for which they have Window 4, which ends on September 15, 2024.

Looking ahead, the feedback and lessons learned from these initial schools will help refine future sessions to better meet the needs of the cities. Continued focus on interactive formats, customised content, and enhanced networking opportunities will be key to further supporting cities in their climate action journeys. As of the date of this report, two additional Seasonal Schools have been conducted, one in Budapest in November 2023 and another in Stockholm in April 2024. The outcomes of these sessions will be detailed in Deliverable D4.7 Proceedings and Lessons Learnt from Summer Schools 3 & 4, providing further insights into the ongoing capacity-building efforts within the NetZeroCities framework.

References

D4.3 Capacity and capability building programme