



Report of Mission City Support

Deliverable D2.3

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
NZC	NetZeroCities
CCC	Climate City Contract
CA(s)	City Advisor(s)
CSO(s)	City Support Officer(s)
PCP	Pilot City Programme
DWG(s)	Domain Working Group (s)
CESF	City Support Expert Facility
CMCH	Capital Matchmaking Hub
CFS	Climate Finance Support
CSG(s)	City Support Group(s)
SO	Support Office



Summary

NetZeroCities (NZC) is designed to support the Mission for Cities, by enabling European cities and citizens to show the way forward towards an inclusive, thriving, climate resilient and sustainable future. The platform works with and for cities to accelerate the necessary transformations to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. SGA-NZC represents an evolution of the City Support Model envisioned in NZC, adding specialised expertise to the core support that we provide to cities. SGA-NZC has organised support services into City Support Groups (CSG), that include City Advisors (CA), City Specialists and one City Support Officer (CSO) per Group, through which the platform has worked with cities to develop and implement Climate City Contracts (CCC), pilot city program actions, and twinning and learning programs.

This document provides a detailed and extensive overview of the evolution and consolidation of city support within NZC, covering the period from October 2024 to May 2025. As part of the wider Cities Mission, NZC aims to empower European cities to lead the transition toward climate neutrality, with the goal of achieving net-zero emissions in 100 cities by 2030 and inspiring all cities to reach this milestone by 2050. Over the past two years, a key component of this effort has been the support offered to Mission Cities in the preparation and finalization of their Climate City Contracts (CCCs), a process facilitated and structured by the City Support Groups (CSGs).

The first anniversary of the CSGs in October 2024 marked a strategic inflection point. As cities submitted their CCCs, the role of the CSGs expanded in scope and capacity. This period saw the integration of new tools and services such as the City Expert Support Facility (CESF), the Climate Finance Specialists (CFS), and the Capital Hub. These additions have enhanced the platform's ability to offer tailored, high-quality guidance to cities navigating the complexities of climate action.

In addition, this document builds on the foundations laid in **Deliverable 2.2 - Report of Mission City Support** and captures key developments, achievements, and challenges observed in the past eight months. It highlights the progressive consolidation of the CSG model and its role in shaping a coordinated and adaptable support system. Each CSG, composed of City Advisors, City Support Officers, and City Specialists, functions as a multidisciplinary team, ensuring that the support provided reflects the diverse needs and contexts of cities. CSG members are collectively accountable to their group, with all groups reporting to the Theme 2 Leadership Group, ensuring coherence and oversight across the consortium.

Across the reporting period, the CSGs have delivered four main types of support to cities: sustained communication, CCC guidance and review, tailored assistance for implementation, and core involvement in the Pilot City Programme. These efforts are complemented by engagement with external partners and participation in key urban climate events, contributing to broader knowledge exchange and alignment with emerging trends.

The evolution of the support model has also included the development of additional coordination structures. Domain Working Groups (DWGs) have strengthened thematic expertise across key areas, while the creation of National Support structures has enabled alignment with national policies and funding streams. Peer-to-peer support mechanisms are being scaled to facilitate learning and collaboration among cities.

The shift from design to implementation marks a critical phase in the mission. CSGs are now focused on enabling cities to operationalize their climate commitments. Direct engagement through site visits, portfolio design, and sustained dialogue are being prioritized. At the same time, training initiatives such as Seasonal Schools and Bootcamps have been introduced to enhance local capacities and maintain momentum.



To support these activities, an operational framework underpinned by clear workflows and collaborative tools has been established. Weekly CSG check-ins, bi-weekly cross-CSG meetings, and dedicated Notion workspaces ensure efficient coordination and knowledge sharing. These systems allow CSGs to remain flexible while maintaining strategic alignment and consistent delivery standards. Notion, Microsoft Teams, and Outlook serve as the backbone of day-to-day operations, enabling asynchronous collaboration and real-time communication.

As cities transition from planning to implementation, NZC remains focused on refining and adapting its support model. The lessons learned during this period will inform future strategies and reinforce the platform's mission to accelerate systemic transformation and turn climate ambition into measurable, long-term change.

Keywords

NetZeroCities; Cities Mission; Climate Neutrality; City Advisors; City Support Officers, City Specialists, City Support.



1 Introduction: Scaling support for mission cities

NetZeroCities (NZC) is designed to drive the Cities Mission forward, empowering European cities and citizens to lead the transition toward a thriving, inclusive, climate-resilient future. Working with and for cities, the platform accelerates the systemic transformations needed to achieve climate neutrality in 100 cities by 2030 and inspire all cities to be climate neutral by 2050 at the latest.

Over the past two years, a core pillar of NZC has been the guidance and support provided to 112 Mission Cities in the development and development of their Climate City Contracts (CCC). In this process, the consolidation of the City Support Groups (CSG) has played a crucial role—both in structuring the platform's engagement with cities and in ensuring a more coordinated and effective delivery of support.

October 2024 marked a significant milestone: the first anniversary of the CSGs. As the CCCs were submitted, the CSGs not only expanded their scope but also strengthened their capacity by integrating new assets within the platform, including the City Expert Support Facility (CESF), City Finance Specialists (CFS), and the Capital Hub.

This report, covering the period from **October 2024 to May 2025**, serves as a continuation of Deliverable 2.2 - Report of Mission City Support, building upon its foundations to provide a comprehensive analysis of the progress made during these months. It captures the lessons learned, the evolving landscape of city support, and the next steps ahead. Specifically, it explores:

- The **evolution of the CSGs** over the past year, tracing their development and impact.
- A detailed assessment of the **support delivered to cities** and pilot programs, showcasing key achievements and challenges.
- The **establishment of new coordination spaces** to enhance efficiency and coordination across all the partners of the consortium.
- The opportunities and complexities that have emerged as the platform expands its offerings, particularly in relation to the **CESF, CFS, and Capital Hub**.
- The **tools, workflows, and operational frameworks** that have been refined to optimize city support.
- The **strategic direction and next steps** that will shape the future of NetZeroCities.

As cities continue to navigate the path toward climate neutrality, NetZeroCities remains committed to evolving, adapting, and strengthening its support structures. By deepening its capabilities and fostering new synergies, the platform continues to bridge the gap between vision and reality—turning bold climate commitments into concrete, lasting change.



2 City Support Groups (CSG): Strengthening coordination and expanding impact

City Support Groups (CSGs) serve as the backbone of city support within NetZeroCities, coordinating assistance for both Mission and Pilot Cities. This model emerged from a co-design process in mid-2023, allowing teams to align on shared principles, approaches, and methodologies that shape their engagement with cities. The initial design phase fostered collaboration across teams, laying the foundation for a more structured and effective support mechanism, ultimately enabling the scaling and refinement of city support across the consortium.

A key strength of the CSGs lies in their interdisciplinary approach. By integrating expertise across multiple Work Packages (WPs), such as NZC WP13 – City Engagement and SGA1 WP2 - Agile City Support at Mission Scale, the CSGs have developed a framework that is both comprehensive and adaptable to the specific contexts of each city. This cross-collaboration ensures that support is informed by a diverse range of perspectives, allowing cities to navigate the complexities of climate action with tailored, high-quality guidance.

Additionally, engagement with external partners and participation in key events further extend the reach and impact of the CSGs, aligning city support with broader trends and innovations in urban climate policy.

Throughout 2024, the CSGs demonstrated their value in multiple ways. Over the past year, they have identified four primary categories of support provided to cities: sustained communication, Climate City Contract (CCC) guidance and review, tailored support in the implementation phase, and core support within the Pilot City Program.

As detailed in the table below, Each CSG is composed of City Advisors, City Support Officers, and City Specialists, each playing a distinct yet interdependent role in ensuring an effective support structure:

- **City Advisors** act as facilitators and holders of the NZC-city relationship, maintaining communication channels, documenting city insights, fostering connections between cities, and orchestrating tailored support. Their role carries (co)accountability for the impact of the work delivered in their assigned cities.
- **City Support Officers** ensure the smooth coordination of city support activities, facilitating knowledge exchange across CSGs, supporting project management and direct help to cities, and serving as primary points of contact for consortium members within their CSG.
- **City Specialists** provide expertise in three key areas of cross-cutting city support—finance, systemic innovation, and citizen and stakeholder engagement. Their role is to mobilize specialized knowledge; shape tailored support strategies and ensure alignment with broader NZC goals.

Each CSG is structured to foster dynamic collaboration, with a lead Specialist working alongside the City Support Officer to coordinate support effectively. Deliverable 2.6 - Handbook on city support groups, thematic working groups and sprint groups - provides an overview on the city interface's operating approach, and a more detailed explanation of CA, CSO and Specialists' roles.

Table 1 - City Support overview

	CSG A	CSG B	CSG C	CSG D
Total n° of cities	24	29	32	26



Labelled cities*	21	26	24	21
N° of pilots	18	26	22	23
Countries represented	Germany, Slovakia, Norway, Israel, Finland, Austria, Czech Republic and Poland (8)	Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, UK (12)	Denmark, Netherlands, France, Belgium, Hungary, Luxembourg, Albania, Malta, Turkey, Latvia, Cyprus, Sweden and Bosnia (13)	Greece, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Poland, Ukraine (non-Mission city), Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia (10)
Members of CSG (n°)	7	8	9	10

*Six cities were classified as Window 4+ Mission Cities and successfully submitted their Climate City Contracts (CCCs) in January 2025: Elbasan, Gozo, Podgorica, Sarajevo, Tartu, and Utrecht.

2.1 From design to implementation

As the CSG model continues to evolve, its role pivots toward the CCC implementation phase. The foundation has been laid, and the mechanisms for city support have been refined. The challenge ahead lies in translating strategic frameworks into action, ensuring that cities receive the hands-on guidance needed to accelerate the implementation of their climate commitments. How will CSGs adapt to this next phase? What new challenges and opportunities will emerge as implementation unfolds? As cities move from planning to implementation the work of the CSGs is entering a crucial new stage—one that will test the resilience, agility, and impact of this collaborative model.

To ensure that cities receive the necessary guidance and resources to find solutions to the main challenge they are facing, support has been organised into key areas of engagement. At the core of this structure are the City Support Groups (CSGs), which provide tailored assistance through **Climate City Contract (CCC) guidance, portfolio design, and sustained communication**—including direct engagement through site visits.

Beyond the CSGs, the consolidation of Domain Working Groups (DWGs) leverages the technical expertise of partners, ensuring that cities have access to specialized knowledge. At the same time, support for the coordination of national structures facilitates knowledge sharing on national policies and funding opportunities, strengthening national and regional alignment with the mission. Complementing these efforts, peer-to-peer support mechanisms are being expanded, drawing on city networks to promote collective learning and shared problem-solving.

Cities also benefit from structured NZC support initiatives, including Seasonal Schools and Bootcamps, which provide immersive training and capacity-building opportunities. These elements, combined, form a comprehensive framework that not only sustains momentum but also empowers cities with the knowledge, tools, and confidence needed to navigate the complexities of implementation. As this phase unfolds, the challenge lies in refining these mechanisms, ensuring they remain adaptive and responsive to the evolving needs of cities.

2.2 Tools and ways of working

To support this evolving framework, a clear set of ways of working and collaborative tools has been established to enable coordination, knowledge sharing, and accountability across the ecosystem. These



practices are designed to ensure coherence among support structures while allowing flexibility to respond to the diverse contexts of cities. At the operational level, tools such as Notion serve as central hubs for documentation, planning, and tracking engagement, while regular coordination meetings and shared protocols help align efforts across the CSGs, DWGs, and national structures.

- **Weekly check-ins within each CSG remain the most effective and consistent way of working.** These regular touchpoints allow for ongoing alignment, timely problem-solving, and shared accountability among team members.
- **Each CSG operates independently within its own dedicated Notion workspace.** This autonomy enables teams to adapt their workflows to specific city needs while maintaining a clear structure for documentation and tracking.
- **Shared cross-CSG spaces support collaboration and knowledge exchange.** These bi-weekly meetings facilitate the sharing of resources, good practices, and updates across different support groups, enhancing coherence and reducing duplication.
- The core tools supporting coordination and communication are **Microsoft Teams, Outlook, and Notion**. Together, they enable both asynchronous collaboration and real-time interaction, providing a flexible yet structured environment for daily operations.

Notion is a digital workspace that combines notetaking, databases, task management, and collaboration in a single tool. Within the NetZeroCities framework, **Notion is being used as the main platform to organise and manage the work of the City Support Groups (CSGs)**. It serves as both a dynamic database and a collaborative environment, allowing for structured data collection, tagging of cities, and coordination across multiple teams. This ensures consistency, visibility, and traceability of actions and support provided to cities.

The screenshot below offers a glimpse into the shared Notion workspace, where all collaborative spaces, databases, and project resources are centrally organised and easily accessible.



City Support homepage

Introduction and overview

Welcome to the City Support Home Page! Here, you'll find an overview of the various initiatives within the City Support framework of NetZeroCities. This includes access to databases containing information about the cities we collaborate with (Mission, Pilot, and Twin cities, among others), operational dashboards for tracking success stories for our communications team, dashboards for monitoring the progress of Domain Working Groups (DWGs), as well as other valuable documents and resources.

Information on cities

- 📁 All Cities Database
- 📊 City Finance Assessments
- 🏆 Success stories
- 📅 Cities Event Calendar
- 📈 City Support Tracker (City updates)
- 🚧 Pilot Cities Programme

Cities Support working groups

- 🏠 CSG spaces
- 🔗 City Interface/Cross-CSG
- 🗨️ City Support meeting notes
- 👥 Domain Working Groups (DWG)
- 🔄 Peer-to-Peer city exchanges
- 📄 Support Model

NZC services and tools

- 🌐 CESF (public view)
- 📚 NZC Expertise Database
- 🔍 Support

Figure 1 City Support homepage overview



Each CSG has a dedicated area within Notion where activities, interactions, and timelines are tracked and regularly updated. This structure facilitates smooth internal coordination, enables knowledge sharing, and allows the central team to monitor progress and detect challenges early on. As the programme transitions into the implementation phase, Notion will continue to serve as a key operational tool, supporting both strategic planning and daily management.

2.2.1 CSG A

City Support Group A comprises four City Advisors from different organisations: Anna Huttunen (CKIC), Svea Heinemann (ICLEI), Anna Sokolowska (Eurocities) and Simon Warne (CKIC); who previously was a City Support Officer. The CSG also works along with three City Support Specialists: Alicia Puig (Demsoc), Simon Höher (DML), and Ryan McManus (BwB). This diverse team employs various methodologies and tools to identify and address the support needs of cities, ensuring a coordinated and tailored approach that aligns with the unique characteristics of each city.

CSG A works with a total of **24 Mission cities across 8 different countries**: Germany, Slovakia, Norway, Israel, Finland, Austria, Czech Republic and Poland. There are also 26 cities in CSG A in the Pilot City Programme, including one non-Mission city from Cohort 1, Drammen.

CSG A operates through regular meetings, including internal preparations and weekly check-ins, ensuring smooth communication and continuous alignment in decision-making. CSG A CAs meet with the CSO at the beginning of the week; to prioritise which issues will be most important for the whole group session on Thursdays. The tools used include digital platforms like Notion for internal organisation and tracking needs, along with more traditional communication channels such as Outlook and support request forms.

CSG A has established a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to supporting cities in their efforts to develop and implement the CCC. The identification of needs usually starts at the CSG level, and it is nourished by seasonal schools, bootcamps, Pilots sensemaking, the Twinning Learning Programme and other NZC activities.

2.2.2 CSG B

City Support Group B (CSG B) consists of four City Advisors: Keira Webster (Climate KIC), Gabriela Uchoa, Maria Giorda, and Sozvin Al Youssef (Eurocities), one City Support Officer: Elena Ricci (Climate KIC), and three specialists: David Brito (DML), Jonathan Reyes (DemSoc), and Tommaso Buso (BwB). **The group currently supports 29 Mission Cities across 12 European countries**: Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, UK. **CSG B also includes 26 cities participating in the Pilot City Programme - while also collaborating with Galway, a non-Mission Pilot City.**

To effectively assess and address the support needs of these cities, CSG B utilises various methodologies and tools (e.g., Outlook, Miro, Notion, Sharepoint, Word), ensuring a customised approach. The group's operations are structured around three interconnected levels:

- Weekly meetings on Thursdays to discuss support needs, challenges, and shared opportunities with the entire CSG B
- Weekly CSG B coordination meetings on Mondays between City Support Specialists, the City Support Officer and the lead CA to address urgent matters
- Monthly individual meetings (mainly when is needed) between each City Advisor and the City Support Officer to discuss detailed city-specific issues and task allocation.



Moreover, for each CAs working in CSG B we set up a communication channel on SharePoint with specialists involved in the CSG to give immediate support, having the possibility to talk directly if something is needed. The agenda for the weekly meeting is set up based on urgent needs and support necessities, according to the City Support tracker where CSG people highlight what they would like to discuss in the CSG meeting. Coordination efforts are further enhanced through communication platforms such as Notion, Outlook, and Teams, facilitating seamless information sharing and task management.

Support needs are typically identified within CSG B using various methodologies – mainly regular check-ins with cities and SNAP-Up processes -, and are informed by external initiatives like seasonal schools, bootcamps, and other collaborative activities. This comprehensive approach allows the group to remain responsive to the evolving needs of cities, thereby enhancing their implementation efforts and overall engagement in the Climate City Contract process.

2.2.3 CSG C

The CSG C team comprises five City Advisors: Deniz Celik and Jakob Stolt (Climate KIC), Bob D'haeseleer (ICLEI), and Joanna Kompedra (ERRIN), one City Support Officer: Paula Serra Bachs, (Eurocities), and three specialists: Marcial (DML), Carlotta Fontana Valenti (DemSoc), and Ede Boberly (BwB). **The group provides support to 32 cities across 13 countries:** Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Hungary, Luxembourg, Albania, Sweden, Malta, Turkey, Latvia, Cyprus, and Bosnia.

City Support Group C was established in September 2023 with the goal of providing comprehensive support to cities throughout the Climate City Contract submission process and into the implementation phase.

CSG C maintains an active pace, holding three weekly meetings, which amount to around 12 meetings per month. The team utilises digital platforms such as Notion for internal organisation and Excel for tracking city needs, along with traditional communication tools like Outlook and support request forms. The identification of city needs originates at the CSG level and is enriched through NZC activities such as seasonal schools, bootcamps, sensemaking workshops, and the Twinning Learning Program.

City needs are typically identified through direct conversations, SNAP-UP process or formal requests. The team is currently working on establishing a coordinated methodology across National Platforms, the City Expert Support Facility (CESF), Pilot Cities Program (PCP), Capital Matchmaking Hub (CMCH), Climate Finance Support (CFS), and Policy Labs.

2.2.4 CSG D

CSG D is one of the four City Support Groups of NetZeroCities. It supports 25 Mission cities from nine different European countries: Greece, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Poland, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Croatia. And one non-Mission city from Ukraine: Rivne. City Support Group D was established at the end of September 2023 and has been meeting weekly for the past year and a half.

The CSG D team comprises of 4 City Advisors: Justyna Wieczorkiewicz-Molendo (Climate KIC), Alvaro Soldevila (Resilient Cities Network), Vlatka Berlan Vlahek (Energy Cities) and Francisco Gonçalves (Energy Cities), one City Support Officer: Irene Vivas Lalinde (Eurocities) and three specialists in three strategic areas identified by the consortium (finance, engagement and systemic approach): Renata Haseh (Finance specialist, Bankers without Boundaries), Mike Duff (Systems innovation specialist, Dark Matter Laboratories) and Ignatius But (Citizen Engagement specialist, Democratic Society, previously Adriana O'Phelan)

The team above has changed through time, more specifically in the autumn of 2024, Mike Duff was substituted by Metadel Mengestu (City Specialist from DML) and Mari Hukkalainen (City Specialist from VTT). In addition, in January 2025, former City Advisor Nilofer Tajuddin (Resilient Cities Network)



stepped down from her role as City Advisor due to a change of role in RCN and City Advisor Alvaro Soldevila (Resilient Cities Network) became the City Advisor of the three Dutch cities in CSG D.

The ways of working in CSG D have evolved significantly. In the first year, an agenda was prepared ahead of the weekly meeting, which took place in Teams. The CSO then followed up via email with key action points, if any, and updated a slide deck with summary information about all ongoing activities. A folder in SharePoint and a Notion space were created to share materials and update information. In the second year, the team evaluated our ways of working through a Self-Reflection form and explored how to work more organically.

The implementation of these new practices has included less-structured meetings, the increasing use of Notion, better coordination of City Specialists, as well as increased collaboration with City Finance Specialists and other City Support Groups. For that, the team has organised workshops at national level or bilateral calls to identify emerging patterns for support across all CSG D cities. City Specialists have continued to help scoping cities' needs either to provide support directly, via the City Expert Support Facility or via the Domain Working Groups.

2.3 Processes and responsibilities of the CSGs

Effective city support requires both **a deep understanding of each city's evolving needs** and **a structured approach to delivering tailored assistance**. The City Support Groups (CSGs) play a central role in ensuring that Mission Cities receive the guidance and resources necessary to implement their climate strategies.

The structured support provided by the CSGs is deeply rooted in the principles outlined in **Deliverable 2.2**, which established the foundational approach for city engagement under NZC. These principles - **co-design and collaboration, agility and responsiveness, multidisciplinary engagement, and holistic support** - continue to shape the evolving role of CSGs as cities transition from Climate City Contract (CCC) development to implementation.

Currently, the responsibilities and role of CSGs focus on ensuring that cities receive the necessary support to accelerate climate action. These key functions help coordinate, optimize knowledge, and maximize the impact of initiatives.

1. **Maintaining a comprehensive knowledge base:** CSGs work collaboratively to continuously map the needs, challenges, and priorities of each city, using the SNAP-UP process and Notion to gather and track data on each city's evolving status.
2. **Delivering first-line support:** As the first point of contact, CSGs provide direct assistance whenever their expertise and capacity allow, offering tailored guidance and technical advice. All actions are documented in Notion to ensure transparency and coordination.
3. **Facilitating second-line support and CESF Funding:** When additional expertise or resources are needed, CSGs coordinate the development of well-defined support requests that align with the city's priorities, which are then submitted to the Support Office for assessment and allocation to the appropriate consortium partners.
4. **Ensuring cohesion across support initiatives:** CSGs accompany and oversee support delivered by other actors, such as second-line expertise, financial support, or pilot projects, ensuring alignment and capturing insights to feed back into the broader consortium.
5. **Identifying strategic opportunities for cities:** CSGs proactively identify and connect cities to relevant opportunities, such as peer-learning initiatives, policy discussions, and thematic clusters, ensuring cities can benefit from the full spectrum of resources within NZC.

3. Coordination, strengthen and shared spaces

In the mission to accelerate urban climate neutrality, cities are the core agents of transformation. Recognising their diversity, complexity, and evolving needs, a city-centric framework has been developed to ensure that support mechanisms are coordinated, strengthened, and delivered through shared spaces of collaboration.

Over time, it has become evident that structured coordination and collective learning are critical to empowering cities. Through shared mechanisms, cities are able to access tailored expertise, exchange insights, and co-develop solutions to common challenges. This framework is built on three pillars:

- Coordination between actors to streamline engagement and reduce fragmentation.
- Strengthening support structures to ensure that interventions are responsive, timely, and city led.
- Shared spaces to foster dialogue, enable peer exchange, and integrate thematic expertise.

3.1 Coordinated engagement with cities

A central coordination mechanism has been established to act as the main interface between cities and the wider programme. Through a structured rhythm of interaction, this mechanism connects cities with relevant work streams, ensuring alignment across priorities and a continuous feedback loop.

This city-facing space acts as the operational core of engagement: it enables city teams to voice needs, share progress, and access tailored guidance. It also ensures that city advisors, technical experts, and programme leaders are aligned in real time, reinforcing the city-centric nature of the mission. The inputs gathered through this channel are instrumental in informing support design, identifying cross-cutting needs, and adapting programme activities accordingly.

3.2 Strengthening strategic alignment across the programme

To ensure coherence and synergy across all actors involved in city support, a second space facilitates the alignment of strategies, themes, and methodologies. This internal coordination mechanism brings together city advisors, technical leaders, and support officers to maintain a unified direction and avoid duplication.

It serves as a platform to sense-check progress, share learnings across cities, and update the support pipeline. By anchoring discussions in the lived experiences and emerging needs of cities, this space helps translate strategy into practical, implementable actions.

3.3 The Support Office: A hub for City Support

At the heart of the city-centric model is the Support Office—a dedicated structure that acts as a matchmaking and coordination hub between cities' support requests and the expertise available within the consortium. It ensures that no city is left behind and that resources are deployed where they are most needed.

The Support Office is responsible for:



Validating requests from city teams to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the mission's goals.

- Clustering similar needs to maximise efficiency and foster collective support.
- Shaping programme activities by identifying trends and informing relevant teams (e.g., training, peer learning).
- Matching expertise to requests by allocating them to the appropriate technical or thematic groups.
- Mobilising resources so that expert teams are equipped to deliver high-quality, city-relevant support.
- Managing delivery, ensuring collaboration across teams and timely outcomes.
- Monitoring quality, providing insights that feed into continuous improvement of city services.

By acting as a bridge between different programme actors and the evolving needs of cities, the Support Office ensures that support is both strategic and actionable.

3.4 Integrating thematic expertise for cities

To ensure that cities benefit from cutting-edge knowledge, thematic expert groups have been consolidated across core areas of urban transformation, such as the built environment, energy, citizen engagement, and just transition. These expert groups play a pivotal role in translating complex knowledge into accessible, actionable support for cities.

A regular coordination space allows group leaders, support officers, and the Support Office to align priorities, surface knowledge gaps, and co-design responses to emerging urban challenges. This structure ensures that cities receive integrated guidance that reflects the multidimensional nature of climate neutrality.



4. Opportunities & areas of improvement

Several strategic areas have been identified for improvement and further development in the support provided to cities under the NetZeroCities framework:

- **Enhanced coordination of the Cities' Finance Specialist (CFS):** Strengthening alignment between city needs and financial mechanisms, while improving the flow of information across stakeholders involved in funding and financing.
- **Capital Hub coordination:** Increasing the strategic integration of the Capital Hub with other city support functions to ensure coherent and streamlined access to expertise, funding instruments, and investment readiness tools.
- **Agile ways of working:** Continuing to evolve internal processes towards more agile and responsive methodologies that allow the programme to adapt to city feedback, emerging needs, and contextual shifts in real time.
- **Consolidation of Peer-to-Peer (P2P) sessions:** Structuring and integrating P2P sessions more systematically to ensure continuity, capture of learnings, and effective cross-city knowledge transfer.
- **Integration with the Portal:** Strengthening the use of the NetZeroCities portal as a central interface for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and access to resources, while aligning it more closely with cities' day-to-day engagement with the programme.



5. Conclusions

All four City Support Groups (CSGs) — A, B, C, and D — share a common objective: to provide tailored, coordinated support to Mission Cities throughout the Climate City Contract (CCC) process. Each group brings together City Advisors, City Support Specialists, and a City Support Officer, applying structured collaboration and adapted methodologies to address city-specific needs. This work is underpinned by shared tools and practices—such as Notion, Outlook, SharePoint, regular check-ins, and joint planning sessions—that ensure coherence and alignment across teams.

Key collaborative spaces, including the City Interface, WP13 meetings, and the newly established Support Office, have played a vital role in strengthening coordination and enabling more effective engagement. These platforms not only foster knowledge exchange but also connect the work of the CSGs with thematic expertise through the Domain Working Groups and cross-consortium alignment. As the programme advances, opportunities for improvement have been identified: better coordination of financial advisory services through the Cities' Finance Specialist (CFS), closer integration of the Capital Hub with other support functions, and enhanced use of the NetZeroCities Portal as a shared resource and communication space. Increasingly agile and peer-informed ways of working are also seen as essential to meet emerging demands and maintain momentum.

As NetZeroCities moves further into the CCC implementation phase, the CSG model stands as a cornerstone of the Mission's delivery framework—combining agility, expertise, and proximity to cities. Continued refinement and integration will be crucial to ensure that support remains fit-for-purpose and responsive. Ultimately, the CSGs not only serve the operational needs of cities—they contribute directly to advancing the European Green Deal and the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, demonstrating how multi-level collaboration can translate ambition into action.



3 Annex I

This annex compiles the key highlights and milestones achieved across the City Support Groups (CSGs) during the period covered by this deliverable. It provides a concise overview of significant progress, major activities, and collaborative efforts that have driven the advancement of the pilot projects within the NZC framework. By summarizing cross-CSG achievements, this section offers a comprehensive snapshot of how various cities have contributed to and benefited from shared knowledge, innovative practices, and coordinated actions in the journey toward climate neutrality and sustainable energy transitions.

Workshop with Hungarian Cities (Budapest, Pécs, Miskolc)

The site visit to Hungary involved meetings in Miskolc, Pécs, and Budapest, primarily aimed at understanding the current status of the cities and identifying areas where targeted support can be offered going forward.

- In **Miskolc**, the meeting was largely ceremonial, due to ongoing transitions in local leadership and the absence of newly appointed staff. The agenda focused on protocol and site visits to relevant locations in the city.
- A similar approach was taken in **Pécs**, where local representatives provided updates on recent developments and shared presentations outlining their progress and immediate priorities.
- In **Budapest**, a joint session was held with all participating cities. The NZC team presented on development pathways and opportunities within the Mission. As part of the session, cities were invited to share short reflections on their progress. This was followed by presentations from DML specialists on policy and governance, and citizen engagement respectively.

The sessions were primarily presentation-based, serving as a first step to assess local contexts and gather input for future engagement. The focus now is on analysing the insights gathered to define tailored support strategies for each city, either through joint initiatives or individual follow-ups.



Figure 2 Mission visit to Hungary

Izmir & Istanbul – Targeted Support Overview

In line with the evolving needs of Mission Cities, tailored support was provided to Izmir and Istanbul across several strategic and technical areas. This included guidance on digital innovation, stakeholder engagement, national-level alignment, and financial preparation for the Climate City Contract (CCC). The following highlights summarize the key areas of support delivered:

Izmir

- **CESF Scoping & Technical Support:** Support was provided to the pilot project team—together with their university partner and municipal IT department—to scope a CESF application for their digital energy platform. Expert input will be offered on platform design, digital twin architecture, sensor integration, data security, and monitoring strategies. Additionally, guidance was provided to match the team with Fraunhofer for further technical expertise.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** Assistance was given to strengthen Izmir's Global Climate Committee and its approach to multi-stakeholder engagement. This included forming working groups, identifying key sectors, and developing an active collaboration platform. Two focused sessions were organised: one on creating inclusive spaces for encounters, and another on best practices in citizen and stakeholder engagement. A continuous feedback mechanism has been established to support collaboration across the CCC process, pilot project, and climate governance.
- **Energy Communities:** The pilot team sought insights from other Mission Cities on the development of energy communities. Topics included legal and technical frameworks for energy sharing, energy exchange models, and alternatives such as digital vouchers. The Energy Domain Working Group has contributed examples and will continue sharing best practices to support local implementation.
- **National-Level Engagement and Visibility:** Regular coordination with TÜBİTAK, Türkiye's national research organisation and CapaCITIES partner, has helped raise the visibility of Izmir's climate efforts at the national level. Despite political challenges, these efforts aim to strengthen institutional links and align local initiatives with national priorities.

Istanbul

National-Level Engagement and Strategic Positioning: The City Advisor has maintained close collaboration with TÜBİTAK and other key stakeholders to reinforce national-level engagement for Istanbul. These efforts have increased recognition of the city's climate initiatives and strengthened its position within national discussions—particularly important given the complex political landscape.

CCC Preparation and Financial Coaching: Ahead of the CCC submission, continuous review and strategic evaluation were led to ensure alignment and robustness. In parallel, targeted financial coaching sessions were delivered to enhance the city's capacity in articulating funding needs and opportunities within the CCC framework.

Advancing Sarajevo's Climate City Contract through on-the-ground support

As Sarajevo moves toward its Climate City Contract (CCC) submission, targeted in-person support has been crucial in aligning local efforts with Mission goals. During the city's work week titled "Technical Assistance to the Net Zero Mission – Sarajevo Functional Urban Area," the City Advisor, City Finance Specialist, and Rupprecht Consult representatives engaged directly with local stakeholders.



Classified as a W4+ city—meaning it has not yet submitted its CCC—Sarajevo is working closely with the EU Delegation and external consultants on its Climate Neutrality Action Plan, Investment Plan, and Citizen Assembly processes, aiming for CCC submission by June 2025.

The visit provided strategic guidance on citizen engagement, supported by sectoral Citizen Assemblies and advice from a DemSoc specialist, as well as expert input on sustainable mobility planning through SUMP best practices. It concluded with a comprehensive review of the draft CCC, including sector-specific feedback from the City Advisor, DML specialist, and City Finance Specialist to strengthen the city's climate strategy and ensure alignment with Mission objectives.

Differdange: Advancing towards a Sustainable Industry

Differdange continues to progress its Climate City Contract (CCC) through ongoing reviews and targeted finance coaching sessions to support its preparation and submission. Communication support is also ongoing to ensure alignment with Mission branding and enhance public engagement. Reflecting its industrial heritage, the city actively participates in industry dialogues and policy workshops, demonstrating its commitment to advancing sustainable steel manufacturing in collaboration with private sector stakeholders.

French Cities' progress and support on CCCS and EU Policy Alignment

NetZeroCities has been actively supporting several French cities in advancing their Climate City Contracts (CCC) and climate initiatives through tailored advice, project identification, funding guidance, and peer learning. While engagement levels vary, targeted assistance focuses on aligning local efforts with upcoming EU policies and improving implementation capacity.

Lyon: Support has centred on identifying projects from Agora 2030 and the City of Lyon that may qualify for Capital Hub funding, alongside collaboration with the City Finance Specialist. Tools for benchmarking carbon impact and co-benefits of climate actions have been shared. Participation in the Agora 2030 event in December 2022 enhanced knowledge exchange. Strategic advice and briefing notes on the Clean Industrial Deal and Affordable Housing have helped position Lyon in relation to these EU priorities. Continuous monitoring of Horizon Europe and LIFE programme funding opportunities ensures the city stays informed.





Figure 3 Agora Lyon 2030

Nantes: A support initiative launched the prefiguration phase of a carbon cooperative involving consortium partners and CESF experts. Assistance has been provided in preparing their youth engagement ECT project, including benchmarking best practices and designing questionnaires to foster a peer network among Mission Cities. Efforts continue to adapt their behaviour change app for broader European use and multilingual accessibility. Nantes is also connected with Brussels on multi-level governance issues. Like Lyon, strategic advice on EU policies and funding updates are ongoing.

Dijon: Support has focused on a low-carbon heating network project aimed at local industries, including business model reviews, innovative governance proposals, and risk analysis—collaboratively delivered by the Capital Hub and CESF. Assistance has also been provided in establishing a public-private company to finance renewable energy projects, and in developing a “Transition Management” model. Strategic positioning advice related to EU policies and funding monitoring are maintained.

Marseille: Since April 2025, support has involved promoting a multi-stakeholder event linked to their PCP and re-scoping CESF assistance for a solar energy project on school rooftops. The city also benefits from strategic advice on EU policies and ongoing funding opportunity updates.

Collaboration continues identifying common challenges across French cities to inform the National Platform’s agenda. Regular coordination with ministries, agencies, and networks supports the sharing of NetZeroCities progress, especially regarding CCCs. Participation in the April National Platform gathering in Marseille and joint efforts seek stronger political commitment from the French government and the identification of new financial partners for city projects.

Workshops with Greek cities

CSGs have met together to share information, sense-make and coordinate support across Greek cities. Monthly meetings during Q4 of 2024 have resulted in identifying common challenges and potential areas of support and advocacy at the national-level. An example of this includes the challenges faced by all



Greek cities related to national legislation governing energy communities.

Changes in legal definitions have resulted in many existing energy communities unable to continue or expand their operations.

There has been other work to address unique challenges specific to individual cities, such as:

- Financial, legal and citizen/stakeholder participation support for Kozani's district heating transition
- Transportation strategy and planning support for Ioannina's efforts to develop a demand-responsive transit network to its peri-urban areas
- Capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and convening Thessaloniki's Pilot partners to develop a vision and action plan on just transitions

With CLIMANET, the Greek National Platform for Mission cities, recently established, there is great opportunity to address systemic policy and financial barriers that block city's efforts to decarbonization. As individual cities continue to break down barriers to implementation, such a platform further enables sharing of solutions between cities.

Financial Support and Initiatives in The Hague, Porto, Suceava, and Valladolid

Over the past year, the Capital Hub and City Finance Specialists have focused on helping cities implement projects from their Investment Plans, aligning financial strategies with long-term sustainability goals. Examples include The Hague, where a revolving fund for SMEs investing in energy efficiency is being explored; Porto, developing a zero-interest loan fund for citizens' home improvements; Suceava, identifying funding for a green corridor nature-based solution; and Valladolid, supporting Energy Communities and river restoration projects. In-person meetings in Valladolid, Valencia, Porto, and Lisbon have strengthened collaboration and financial alignment. The ongoing aim is to enhance financial capacity and expand innovative financing to help cities achieve their climate objectives.



Figure 4 Meeting with the financial department of the city of Valladolid

Barcelona's science-driven climate strategy and legal innovation

Barcelona is working to create a comprehensive map of local research on climate change, decarbonisation, adaptation, climate justice, and citizen action to ensure public policies are informed by solid scientific evidence. To achieve this, the city is building a structured governance model to foster effective collaboration between researchers and policymakers, with support from Democratic Society.

In parallel, Barcelona is exploring how its existing municipal legal and regulatory frameworks can be better leveraged—through tools like taxation and public finance—to accelerate climate action. To address this, there are plans to establish a dedicated policy lab that will conduct a thorough review of current studies and engage experts from legal, tax, and policy fields. This lab will develop innovative, practical strategies tailored to Barcelona's needs while generating insights applicable to other Spanish cities with similar frameworks.

València's Climate Mission: Demonstration Spaces and Community Empowerment

València is creating a network of demonstration sites for its 2030 Climate Mission by rehabilitating public buildings and open spaces—such as schools and the Energy Office—into climate shelters that showcase integrated mitigation and adaptation measures. Building on the long-running 50/50 educational program, where students and staff collaborate on energy diagnostics, València is deepening community engagement through the Green Schools Plan, which focuses on refurbishing and re-naturalizing schoolyards with energy communities and nature-based solutions to empower neighborhoods.

In summer 2024, the city launched a network of climate shelters aimed at protecting citizens from extreme heat, set to be fully operational by summer 2025. This initiative is supported within NetZeroCities by participatory co-creation processes, technical feasibility studies via CESFs, and financial planning through the Capital Hub. The program, starting with three schools and one energy office, is designed for replication across the city's 165 public schools, maximizing its impact and community reach.

Citizen Engagement in Pilot Cities: Porto, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Thessaloniki

Cities in the Pilot City Programme under City Support Group D are advancing decarbonization by involving citizens in innovative ways.

- **Porto** is driving behavior change through its WAKE-UP pilot, which uses a digital platform to incentivize sustainable daily habits. The city benefits from ongoing coaching and research support from Democratic Society (DemSoc) and Digital Methods Lab (DML) experts to sustain these efforts beyond initial phases.
- **Lisbon** is rolling out one-stop shops to improve access to public funds for sustainable practices, focusing on inclusivity for low-income and marginalized groups, with DemSoc specialists guiding implementation.





Figure 5 Lisbon OSS (LxClimateLab PCP project)

- **Ljubljana**, part of Slovenia's UPSCALE pilot, centers on its Innovation Hub—one-stop shops designed as physical spaces for dialogue and participation around climate issues. DemSoc supports programming and funding strategies to maintain this hub.
- **Thessaloniki** is tackling neighborhood development challenges linked to a new Metro station, with a focus on sustainable mobility and nature-based solutions. Addressing gentrification risks from property speculation is a core just transition goal. DemSoc and DML have provided in-person and online workshops to help define actions in this area.

Together, these pilots illustrate diverse, citizen-centered approaches to climate action across European cities.

Innovating Mobility in Ioannina: From Demand-Responsive Transport to Urban Cable Cars

Ioannina is focused on improving its public transport by closing mobility gaps in peri-urban areas and strengthening connections to the city center. To do this, the city plans to introduce innovative solutions such as a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) system and an urban cable car. With support from the City Support Group (CSG), Ioannina requested assistance in November 2024, which is now being coordinated by the Mobility Domain Working Group alongside City Specialists.

The project is structured into four work packages (WPs). WP1 starts by building a shared vision, developing concepts and scenarios, analyzing current public transport status, and reviewing urban planning strategies, while mapping and interviewing stakeholders. WP2 will focus on identifying transport gaps and prioritizing on-demand services, especially those linking industrial zones, alongside mobility demand analysis, spatial mapping, and planning for EV chargers integrated with renewable energy and smart grids. WP3 will develop operational models and tailored recommendations, including feasibility studies for DRT, electrification and cost assessments, business models—especially for multi-purpose or corporate vehicles—and potential financing options. WP4 will handle communication and reporting throughout the process.

This comprehensive, step-by-step approach aims to transform Ioannina's mobility system into a more flexible, sustainable, and connected network.

Cities in Action: Kraków's push for climate mission success

Kraków received strong support from NZC in preparing its Climate City Contract (CCC). After contract submission, key teams met in November to discuss challenges and financial readiness for mission projects. Post local elections, organizational changes have impacted the team managing the mission. Now, with support from CAs and CFS, focus is on strengthening the core team and involving key internal stakeholders, including the city's vice president. Upcoming highlights include the Vilnius conference and the awarding of the Mission Label.

As leader of the NEEST project, Kraków is actively finalizing activities by May, organizing events with ministries and institutions. The city also requested expert advice on bioclimatology and green infrastructure, currently under early review.

Regular meetings and monthly check-ins with other Polish mission cities, led by CAs, promote knowledge sharing and collaboration. Additionally, Kraków is involved in building a national platform to connect Polish cities working on climate missions.

Rzeszów: Building strong governance for climate action implementation

Rzeszów has done great work preparing its Climate City Contract (CCC) with strong support from the NZC consortium. After an in-person visit in November, key challenges were identified around governance and establishing an effective cooperation model for implementing CCC actions. Workshops have been held to set team priorities and design the transition team's structure—this process is ongoing, with the city preparing proposals to present in upcoming sessions. High-level decision-maker involvement remains essential, and the Vilnius conference, along with the Mission Label award, is expected to boost the city's commitment. Rzeszów continues to receive financial support and participates in monthly check-ins with other Polish cities to share best practices and overcome challenges.

Sofia: Enhancing citizen engagement and internal collaboration for energy transition

Sofia successfully submitted its Climate City Contract in September and quickly launched key activities with the support of specialists. The city faces challenges in effective citizen engagement and cross-departmental collaboration. Through coaching sessions and peer learning with cities like Kraków and Wrocław, Sofia is improving governance and internal cooperation practices. In April 2025, a specialist visited Sofia to better understand barriers within city departments and helped develop a tailored support plan focusing on internal collaboration, stakeholder participation, and energy transition. The city's political commitment was strengthened through events such as the B40 Summit, and regular check-ins continue to monitor progress on mission goals.

Kozani: Driving a just energy transition and social innovation in a city in transition

Kozani has historically supplied Greece with 70% of its power generation through coal-fired plants. As the city moves toward decarbonization, its coal-powered district heating system requires a transition to renewable energy sources. Kozani seeks targeted support to develop an effective stakeholder engagement strategy that ensures meaningful participation of key actors in accelerating this transition, known as the NEUTRON project. The goal is to foster a just transition by promoting social innovation



and behavioral change while addressing energy poverty. This includes creating and supporting energy communities and community-based projects with collective ownership—an area that has proven challenging. The city needs assistance to improve stakeholder collaboration and implement efficient engagement pathways.

NZC experts have supported Kozani by identifying funding opportunities for testing innovative energy storage technologies, facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges with other cities, reviewing engagement materials, and organizing workshops focused on combining agriculture with solar energy. Additionally, through the CESF tool, Kozani's pilot project is seeking external expertise on Greek energy law to support legal and market analyses needed for implementing innovative energy systems.

All these efforts strengthen Kozani's commitment to speeding up the energy transition with innovative approaches. Addressing a key challenge in its Climate City Contract—the heat supply following the planned 2025 closure of its coal plant—the NEUTRON project aims to replace fossil fuel heat sources with renewable energy and energy storage solutions that could serve as a model for future initiatives.

Rivne: Building capacity for climate finance and carbon trading to advance energy neutrality

Within the CESF tool, Rivne received support from South Pole on carbon trading and climate finance. Regular check-ins were organized between city officials and experts to build capacity in two key areas: carbon crediting and financing mechanisms, and accessing climate finance for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

Through multiple direct engagements, South Pole aligned expectations, presented key findings, addressed questions, and provided valuable materials including case studies, investor guides, and forward-looking recommendations. A final workshop enhanced the city officials' understanding of project finance and began applying lessons to local projects. Experts also led a case study exercise focused on preparing a funding proposal for Rivne's "energy island" project—a key part of the city's emission reduction strategy. This exercise emphasized the steps needed to advance the project and the cross-departmental collaboration required.

The work was done in close cooperation with City Advisors, ensuring alignment with local needs. By participating in NZC and CKIC activities, Rivne has opened up to sharing its good practices and climate neutrality plans with other Ukrainian cities and the international community. Earlier this year, Rivne took part in the "Energy for Peace: Accelerating Clean Transition in Ukraine" seminar in Berlin, showcasing the activities of its NZC pilot project.

Cluj Napoca: Workshop on youth engagement

Cluj Napoca is taking bold steps toward climate neutrality by putting young people at the heart of the transition. In a participatory workshop supported by CSG, the city brought together youth, local actors, and strategic partners to co-create a roadmap for youth engagement in climate action. The goal was clear: empower young citizens not just as participants, but as co-creators and leaders in shaping a sustainable future.

To support this ambition, we provided a blend of strategic insights and hands-on facilitation. We shared global best practices and case studies, offering inspiration from other cities that have successfully mobilized youth in meaningful ways. Together with local stakeholders, we mapped the city's youth ecosystem—schools, NGOs, cultural spaces, and grassroots groups—outlining how they can collaborate in a coordinated strategy. We also helped shape compelling, youth-driven narratives that connect climate action to values like purpose, creativity, and justice.



The workshop itself was a space for real co-creation, where participants aligned on objectives, identified next steps, and proposed concrete pilot actions—small but powerful “micromissions” to build early momentum. The result: a set of tailored recommendations, a mapped ecosystem of partners, draft narratives ready for use, and a co-developed action plan to turn engagement into impact.



Figure 6 Youth Engagement workshop in Cluj Napoca

Glasgow: Technical assistance matching building energy demand with renewable energy potential

Glasgow is advancing its **Community Renewable Energy Framework**, an ambitious project aiming to repurpose vacant and derelict Council-owned land by leasing it to community energy organisations for the development of solar PV schemes. To ensure these community-led projects are financially viable, the city is also exploring the potential for nearby Council-owned buildings—mainly schools—to purchase the electricity through Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), securing an initial revenue stream for the generating sites.

Through NetZeroCities support – via the Support Office system -, Glasgow was able to take a critical next step: evaluating how well the energy demand of these adjacent buildings aligns with the generation potential of each proposed site. NZC provided targeted technical assistance to help the city assess energy demand profiles, map optimal building-to-site connections, and explore the feasibility of demand-generation matching. This work has been key in enabling the city to move from concept to implementation planning, giving them a clearer picture of how to structure PPAs and maximize the local impact of the project.

With four candidate sites for PV deployment and a network of nearby Council buildings, NetZeroCities' support helped Glasgow unlock the technical insights needed to design a solution that works—supporting both climate goals and community ownership.

Roma rallies stakeholders for climate transformation with support from NetZeroCities

Rome is accelerating its path toward climate neutrality with the completion of its Climate City Contract (CCC) and a clear aim to secure the Mission Label in 2025. Since establishing its internal Climate Office in 2021, Roma Capitale has been building a robust, multi-level engagement process, uniting public bodies, the private sector, academia, and citizens in a shared climate transition journey. What began with internal coordination has since evolved into a city-wide movement - and NetZeroCities has played a critical role in helping Rome turn this ambition into action.

With NZC's support, the City is now reinforcing and expanding the multi-actor ecosystem established during the CCC drafting phase. This collaboration focuses on deepening stakeholder engagement, aligning ambitions, and anchoring the CCC's 490+ proposed actions - largely focused on energy and the built environment—within a dynamic and inclusive governance structure. NZC is helping Rome navigate the complexity of multi-level collaboration, break silos between departments and sectors, and foster distributed leadership that empowers a diverse array of actors to co-own the climate transition.

Through a mix of strategic guidance, tailored facilitation, and hands-on workshops, NZC is helping Rome move from commitment to implementation. Stakeholder workshops—designed in partnership with the City—will support the identification of needs, clarify the impact and co-benefits of planned actions, and strengthen connections between actors. Additional roundtables with municipally owned utilities are also being set up to align operations across energy, water, and waste services. NZC is also helping to deliver technical sessions focused on energy efficiency, renewables, and financing solutions, ensuring that all stakeholders, from local businesses to research institutions, have the tools and knowledge needed to take meaningful climate action.

At the heart of this collaboration is a shared belief: real climate transformation in cities can only happen when public institutions, private entities, and citizens move forward together. With NetZeroCities' ongoing support, Rome is building a climate transition model rooted in partnership, inclusivity, and long-term impact—one that can inspire other mission cities across Europe.

Aachen and Mannheim: Shaping Climate Narratives to better engage citizens

Our current socio-political landscape adds significant complexity to the discussion around climate policy. With the rise of far-right movements, the narratives surrounding climate change have become more critical than ever. In an era marked by polarization and extreme rhetoric, it is essential to craft messages that emphasize the urgency of climate action while also promoting inclusivity and equity.

That's why NZC has supported Aachen and Mannheim in better communicating their climate policies and understanding how to engage diverse audiences. We recognize that communication and participation are most effective when climate policies deliver tangible benefits to people—beyond simply cutting emissions or conserving resources.

Our approach moves away from narratives focused solely on restrictions and sacrifices—especially for the most vulnerable—and instead embraces messaging that envisions a transformative, inclusive, and hopeful future.



Turning ambition into action: workshop drives collective climate action in Bristol

As part of Bristol's climate transition efforts, a dynamic, full-day workshop brought together stakeholders from across the city to transform big-picture climate ambitions into grounded, actionable initiatives. With support from NetZeroCities and Capital Hub, the session was designed to foster collaboration, ignite creativity, and build a strong sense of shared ownership over Bristol's climate goals.

The workshop opened with an energising icebreaker - *People Bingo* - designed to get participants talking and uncover unexpected connections. Following that, representatives from Bristol City Council, NetZeroCities, the Capital Hub, and CESF delivered short presentations setting the stage, outlining the context of the city's climate ambitions, and explaining how participants would contribute to shaping the next phase of the journey. With the groundwork laid, facilitators introduced the main objective: to translate Bristol's macro-level climate actions into measurable, locally grounded initiatives. Participants were grouped according to emission sectors, ensuring a focused approach aligned with Bristol's emissions profile and climate strategy.

Through a series of three structured brainstorming blocks, participants moved from high-level thinking to concrete planning. In **Block 1: From Macro to Micro**, groups broke down broad climate goals into specific, actionable opportunities. In **Block 2: Connect, Cluster, Collaborate**, they explored synergies, overlaps, and potential partnerships. Finally, **Block 3: Take ownership** focused on accountability—identifying who could lead or support the implementation of different ideas.

Later, the session shifted to prioritisation, where participants helped identify initiatives and ideas best suited for advancement through the Capital Hub. The day closed with a wrap-up session outlining next steps and reinforcing the collective commitment to Bristol's climate mission.

The workshop didn't just generate ideas - it built momentum, strengthened networks, and created a shared sense of purpose among diverse stakeholders. By combining structured facilitation with open collaboration, the session marked an important step in Bristol's journey from climate strategy to climate action.

Finnish Cities Policy innovation in Transportation and Mobility

The six Finnish mission cities face challenges tackling the transport and mobility sector emissions. NZC has been supporting the cities by designing a policy innovation workstream to bring together the cities and several stakeholders.

NetZeroCities has worked with Finnish cities' Mission Coordinators and their mobility & transport colleagues to identify three key problem spaces they share-in-common and concluded that each felt could benefit from a focus on policy & regulatory innovation. Through both online and asynchronous working, as well as an in-person workshop on the 10th of January in Espoo that [broadened the stakeholders involved](#), we built a deeper understanding of how an explicit effort around Mission-Driven Policy Innovation could serve these cities. The strategic framing and Policy Innovation Briefs generated inform the 'why', 'what', 'how', 'when' and 'who' of a Mission-Driven Policy Innovation (MDPI) Policy Lab in Finland.

The in-person workshop focused on three key challenges:

- Shifting citizen mobility behaviors and tackling car dependency
- Addressing urban logistics and heavy traffic flows
- Balancing competing priorities for urban space use



An actor mapping exercise helped frame stakeholder dynamics and power relationships effectively. Participants connected their technical expertise with systems thinking approaches, exploring frameworks for mission-oriented innovation while drawing on their practical city experience. The discussions highlighted opportunities for Finnish cities to work collectively - both in advocating for policy changes beyond city control and in strengthening their use of existing policy tools.

A dedicated Mission-Driven Policy Innovation Lab can support these efforts by working collaboratively across Finnish cities to ask “what shifts in policies & regulation, and the governance arrangements that operationalize them, can help unlock ‘hard-to-reach’ mobility & transport emission reductions tied up in complex problem spaces?” NetZeroCities is currently in the process a structured plan for a support stream to research and simulate possible policy mixes together with a variety of stakeholders.



Figure 7 Finnish Cities Policy innovation in Transportation and Mobility