



NET ZERO CITIES

Proceedings of Conference 2025

Deliverable D12.11

Summary of content of 2025 EU Cities Mission Conference
held in Vilnius, Lithuania

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
NZC	NetZeroCities
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
EIB	European Investment Bank
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MmC	Mission Minded Cities
NbS	Nature Based Solutions
JRC	Joint Research Centre

Summary of the deliverable

This deliverable (D 12.11) gives a summary of the programme and thematic content of the fourth EU Cities Mission Conference, held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 6-8 May 2025.

This deliverable is connected to NZC task 12.6 “Events”, which outlines the coordination and delivery of the two previous conference editions. The conferences targeted a wide range of stakeholder groups to ensure dissemination of the project findings, including local, regional and national public authorities; EU institutions; policy makers; research and academia; industry; civil society and finance.

D 12.11 focuses on the *content* of the conference and complements NZC-SGA2 Deliverable 3.5¹ (Proceedings of 2025 Conference - Overview of the 2025 EU Cities Mission conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania), which provided a general overview of the conference including operations, communications, participant management and feedback. D 12.11 includes a detailed overview of the plenaries and breakout session content summarised by 'track', an analysis of emerging themes, and a description of the role and contribution of the moderator and the graphic recorder to the conference experience and outcomes.

The conference, as outlined in the deliverable, was coordinated by ICLEI Europe with LGI and CKIC supporting its organisation and delivery, alongside the European Commission and the City of Vilnius. All work packages contributed to the content.

The proceedings of the Vilnius conference span two deliverables. This conference engaged a wider range of stakeholders than previous editions and welcomed the highest number of participants in a Cities Mission conference to date. The 2025 conference also required collaboration across multiple projects – NZC, SGA-NZC, and NZC-SGA2 – given its scale and breadth. This deliverable covers the programme components, including event facilitation, plenary sessions, and parallel breakout sessions. The operational elements of the event, encompassing venue arrangements, participant attendance, site visits, as well as partnerships and communications have been addressed in NZC-SGA2 D 3.5.

Keywords

Conference, Mission Cities, Mission-minded cities, Peer Learning, Experts, Changemakers.

¹ The proceedings of the Vilnius conference span two deliverables. It engaged a wider range of stakeholders than previous editions and welcomed the highest number of participants in a Cities Mission conference to date.

Conference summary

The EU Cities Mission Conference 2025, held from 6-8 May in the 2025 European Green Capital of Vilnius, Lithuania, welcomed over 825 participants from across Europe and beyond to accelerate progress toward the Mission's goal of 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030. Co-organised by NetZeroCities, the European Commission, and the City of Vilnius, the event showcased cities' climate successes and was an outstanding opportunity for them to share knowledge and collaborate to replicate those successes.

*The overall theme of the conference was "Harnessing City Successes: Advancing Climate Action for 2030", to spotlight the progress and ambition of Mission Cities and their partners as they strive to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. High-level speakers in person and via recorded messages underscored the important status of the event for cities and included: **Teresa Ribera**, European Commission Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition; **Patrick Child**, Manager for the Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, Acting Director-General, DG ENV, European Commission; **Marcos Ros Sempere** Member of the European Parliament, and former US Vice-President **Al Gore**, as well as many city mayors and deputies. The awarding of a Mission Label to 39 Mission Cities was also a programme highlight and further conveyed to cities the significance of their achievements to date and their crucial work ahead.*

Based around sessions distributed across various thematic tracks - including finance, peer learning and technology - the conference programme covered critical topics to Mission Cities including innovative finance and strategic enablers for the 2030 transition, as well as discussions on engaging Mission-minded cities, including in Ukraine.

In addition to the core itinerary, the event featured many opportunities for networking and interaction, creating space for dynamic exchanges across professional and geographical backgrounds. This included the exhibition area, which featured 21 stands showcasing innovation and activity across Europe in initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus and Smart Cities Marketplace and offered a lively arena for knowledge-sharing that was fully utilised by guests.

Attendees were able to keep track of the events of the conference, as well as connect with other guests and receive important updates, via a highly functional conference app. Twice-daily social media posts and live updates included professional photographs and eye-catching graphic recordings that visualised discussions and added interest both for participants and followers online. The use of a professional moderator helped sustain energy and deepen message retention.

Local site visits to end the conference offered insight into Vilnius's own sustainability efforts, including a tour of the Tech Zity Vilnius innovation campus and the Sand Offices Business Center, a sustainable and environmentally conscious workspace. A guided bicycle tour allowed participants to explore Vilnius's green mobility infrastructure.

1 Programme and messaging 'red thread'

The 2025 conference offered a balance of conference plenaries, breakout sessions, and site visits. In addition to this, a dedicated VIP programme was offered on days two and three, and several opportunities to network were offered across the three days, during coffee breaks and mealtimes.

Structured around eight plenaries filled with high-level speakers and more than 50 parallel sessions (over 80 hours of contact and content), the conference programme covered critical topics to Mission Cities, including innovative finance and strategic enablers for the 2030 transition, as well as discussions on engaging Mission-minded cities, including in Ukraine.

A theme of increasing "connection" ran through the days, and networking time was also prioritised, in addition to content sharing and exchanging, through regular coffee breaks, times to gather in the breakout spaces, a longer lunch break and other informal networking opportunities.

The themes and messaging across the three days were carefully crafted to be celebratory, empowering, uplifting and to create a sense of shared purpose and progress across the Mission.

An internal messaging “red thread” document was produced in advance of the conference, which guided the building of the structure and content of the plenary sessions and the moderator’s interventions. The EU Cities Mission Conference 2025 was structured around a powerful narrative of **progress fuelled by ambition and guided by collaboration**. This three-day journey was set to showcase how cities are transforming challenges into opportunities while maintaining an unwavering focus on the 2030 climate neutrality horizon. The aim was to ensure each day built strategically upon the previous one so that participants left inspired, informed, and emboldened to accelerate climate action in their own contexts.

Day 1 “Celebration” highlighted tangible achievements and milestones, aimed as an inspiring showcase of what Mission Cities and their partners have already accomplished. This reinforced the power of collaboration and innovation through the foundation of proven successes, demonstrating that ambitious climate goals are not just aspirational but achievable with dedicated effort and strategic partnerships.

Day 2 “Innovation” looked toward the future, with the aim of exploring cutting-edge approaches, smart technologies, and innovative governance models that enable cities to tackle climate challenges in diverse circumstances. The focus was set to examine successful funding mechanisms, private sector partnerships, and the transformative role of digitalisation in scaling impactful solutions across different urban contexts.

Day 3 “Action” was designed to culminate in high-level political dialogue, with the aim of bringing together mayors, ministers, and EU representatives to emphasise the urgency of visionary leadership and coordinated action. The focus was set on aligning efforts across all governance levels – from local to international – while defining actionable pathways for achieving collective 2030 goals through multi-level governance, cross-border collaboration, and sustained momentum despite global challenges.

EU MISSIONS CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITIES		PROGRAMME			
06.05.2025-Day 1		07.05.2025-Day 2		08.05.2025-Day 3	
08:00 - 09:00	Registration	08:00 - 09:00	Registration	08:00 - 09:00	Registration
09:00-10:30	Opening: Celebrating Mission Cities' Successes - Plenary Room	09:00-10:00	The Baltic View: A Regional Perspective on Energy Transition, Innovation, and Shared Governance - Plenary Room	09:00-10:00	What will it take? Strategic enablers for the 2030 transition - Plenary Room
10:30-11:00	Coffee Break	10:00-10:30	Mission Label Ceremony - Plenary Room	10:00-11:00	Building bridges across Europe - Plenary Room
11:00-12:30	Breakout Sessions	10:30-11:00	Coffee Break	11:00-11:30	Coffee Break
12:30-14:00	Lunch	11:00-12:30	Breakout Sessions	11:30-12:45	Breakout Sessions
14:00-15:30	Breakout Sessions	12:30-14:00	Lunch	12:45-14:15	Lunch
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break	14:00-15:30	Breakout Sessions	14:15-15:30	Closing: From Dialogue to Shared Action - Plenary Room
16:00-17:00	Advancing Climate Action Locally: Policy, Investment, and Partnership - Plenary Room	15:30-16:00	Coffee Break	15:30-17:30	Site Visits
17:00	Drinks - Onsite	16:00-17:00	Financing the Future - Plenary Room		
		19:00	Dinner - The Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania		

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*Programme subject to change.

Figure 1 – Final overview of the conference programme

2 Plenaries

The three-day conference featured seven plenary sessions that brought together all participants in the main conference hall.

The plenaries in this three-day conference were the foundations of the event and served several key purposes, including:

- **Bringing everyone together** – The plenaries gathered the entire conference in one room for shared experiences and chances to reflect on specific elements of the climate transition.
- **Featuring key speakers** – This included selected Mission City representatives, external keynote speakers and high-level political representatives.
- **Keeping energy and focus** - The plenaries, thanks to the professional facilitation, helped to maintain momentum across three days and provide high-energy moments.
- **Framing the event** – The opening plenary set the tone and expectations, while closing ones wrap up key themes and inspire action.
- **Creating networking opportunities** - When everyone gathered in the same space, this naturally led to conversations and connections before and after sessions.
- **Ensuring key messages reach everyone** - Important information for all attendees was delivered in plenaries, including key announcements and logistics information.

The plenaries functioned as the main gathering points that held this multi-day conference together, while the breakout sessions allowed for specialised learning and discussion. The plenaries developed from the overarching messaging, focussing on elements of “celebration” on day 1, “innovation” on day 2, and “shared action” on day 3.

2.1 Plenaries, day one: ‘Celebration’

2.1.1 Plenary 1: Celebrating Mission Cities’ Successes

The opening plenary kicked off with a heartfelt welcome from the Mayor of Vilnius, **Valdas Benkunskas**, who recognised the journey of all cities attending when he said his city’s slogan - *the greenest city in the making* – was “not just a promise, but an honest acknowledgement that the journey is ongoing. We are not perfect, but we are determined.” A short address by Mission Team Manager, **Philippe Froissard**, outlined the genesis of the EU Cities Mission and emphasised the impressive distance already travelled by Mission Cities to date. The Mayor of Leuven, **Mohamed Ridouani**, spoke in his role as Chair of the Mission Advisory Group and referenced the “elephant in the room” – namely, finance and how cities pay for the transition.

These introductory remarks were followed by a panel with high-level political representatives from Bristol, Bologna and Guimares, chaired by NetZeroCities Director **Thomas Osdoba**. The director of Viable Cities, **Olga Kordas**, presented the ‘Development Declaration’ with over 60 signatories, sending a powerful statement for the work that still needs to be done across all levels of governance.

The keynote of the opening session was delivered via a recorded message from former US Vice President **Al Gore** (introduced by **Wolfgang Teubner**, Director of ICLEI Europe), who congratulated Mission Cities for their leadership and commitment to climate action and encouraged them that “political will is itself a renewable resource.”

2.1.2 Plenary 2: Advancing Climate Action Locally: Policy, Investment, Partnerships

Plenary 2 of the Cities Mission Conference 2025, *Advancing Climate Action Locally: Policy, Investment, and Partnership*, was a dynamic and well-received session that brought to life the real-world implementation of Climate City Contracts (CCCs). The session highlighted how cities are translating ambition into delivery through strong local partnerships, smart financing strategies, and innovative procurement practices.

The session struck a careful balance between policy insight and practical storytelling. Three TED-style talks from Krakow, Espoo, and Kosice anchored the session, each one shining a spotlight on local successes and offering replicable lessons for other Mission Cities. Whether through cross-city cooperation, green finance attraction, or reimagining procurement, each speaker brought energy, clarity, and a clear call to action.

Audience feedback was positive, with many attendees remarking on the engaging format and practical focus. (An outline of participant feedback, gathered from a survey of attendees immediately after the conference, is addressed in the deliverable NZC-SGA2 D3.5.) The session’s structure enabled deep dives into key aspects of CCC delivery, while the closing Q&A offered space for meaningful exchange and peer learning.

Crucially, this plenary also served as a platform to celebrate and elevate the leadership of our partner cities – reminding the wider audience that real progress is already underway at the local level – and highlighted how policy frameworks, when matched with ambition and collaboration, can unlock scalable transformation.

2.2 Plenaries, day two: ‘Innovation’

2.2.1 Plenary 3: ‘The Baltic View’

The Baltic View: A Regional Perspective on Energy Transition, Innovation, and Shared Governance focused on the Baltic region's unique offer to Europe in driving the energy transition, emphasising strong local experiences, especially in cross-border collaboration.

Cities like Vilnius, Tallinn, Riga, and Liepaja – who were represented by high-level speakers, including two deputy mayors – shared how their geopolitical circumstances have catalysed rapid shifts toward energy independence and climate neutrality. From disconnecting from Russian gas to investment in renewables and heating system modernisation, the Baltic region showcased practical innovation under pressure. Notable efforts include Vilnius’s aim to phase out natural gas by 2030, Tallinn’s public-private investments in central heating and cooling, and Riga’s Climate Fund model that incentivises public sector energy savings.

Innovation and collaboration emerged as central themes. Cities are not only adapting but leading, with Tallinn testing green technologies through its Green Capital platform and Riga pioneering the “municipality as first customer” model for piloting clean technologies. A shared history and proximity foster regional solidarity, while platforms like “Testing in Tallin” and collaboration with international partners (e.g., Heidelberg, Valencia, Seoul) scale learning and impact. The session also highlighted the tension between political shifts and climate priorities, underlining the need for expert-driven, long-term strategies that remain resilient to change.

Overall, the Baltic region offers a compelling case study in how smaller states and cities, bound by both shared challenges and innovation cultures, can become laboratories for Europe’s green transformation. Their experiences underscore the importance of embedding climate action into governance, economic development, and public services - before crisis dictates the terms.

2.2.2 Plenary 4: Mission Label Ceremony

The EU Mission label was awarded to 39 additional Mission Cities during the Mission Label Ceremony hosted on the second day of the conference, focusing on “Advancing Innovation for 2030”. In total, 92 out of the 112 Mission Cities have now received the label. A press release was also issued by the European Commission to celebrate this milestone, [which was also shared on the NetZeroCities website](#).

Labelled Mission Cities demonstrate innovation through their ambitious climate objectives, which are supported by extensive and well-developed action plans, forward-thinking investment strategies, and novel collaborative governance frameworks.

2.2.3 Plenary 5: Financing the Future

The focus on innovative finance is one of the key elements of the Cities Mission. This plenary session was moderated by the City Climate Finance Capital Hub and addressed the critical challenge of financing urban climate transitions under the EU Cities Mission, bringing together city leaders, public financial institutions, private investors, and philanthropic organisations to explore pathways for converting ambitious climate plans into bankable projects.

Cities across Europe face significant barriers in this regard, including limited internal capacity for financial structuring, difficulties integrating technical and financial planning, and constraints in securing funding for operational costs and early-stage project preparation, as outlined by an EU Mission board member. National policy frameworks, including borrowing limits and restrictive legal structures, further complicate private capital mobilisation, noted the Program Director for NetZeroCities.

The Mayor of Limassol presented its €1.3 billion climate neutrality investment plan, focusing on green corridors, tram feasibility studies, and enhanced public mobility, while highlighting challenges with

limited pedestrian infrastructure and the need for feasibility funding support, highlighting the support received from the Climate City Capital Hub on the project preparation side. The city of Bristol demonstrated innovative approaches through multiple funding streams, including the European Investment Bank's ELENA program and public-private partnerships like City Leap, developing a regional impact fund for SMEs while maintaining public influence in blended finance arrangements. The Climate City Capital Hub is working with the City on various assignments and has recently conducted an impact investor mapping exercise to support the Fund's anchor investor fundraising approach. The **European Investment Bank** outlined its comprehensive support through both investment and framework loans, with advisory services playing a crucial role. One quarter of EIB's 2024 portfolio targeted municipalities, with key priorities including adaptation, housing, and energy efficiency projects. It also provides technical assistance funding and is a key partner to the Climate City Capital Hub.

The Climate City Capital Hub's City Finance Specialist covering French Cities shared insights from working with French cities, emphasising the need for enhanced financial modelling skills and translating environmental objectives into investor-friendly language.

Several replicable financial models emerged: **Bristol's Green Growth West Fund** for instance demonstrates how public anchor investment can attract private capital while preserving strategic public influence; **institutional philanthropy** represented by Philea acts as catalytic capital for early-stage investments, with 58 foundations currently working across 22 cities; French cities utilize **public-private SEMs** for co-financing feasibility studies; and green bonds supported by peer learning networks show promise for scaling.

Scaling and Key Recommendations

The session emphasised the importance of peer learning and the support of structured city networks, and that small upfront investments representing 2-5% of total capital expenditure can unlock significant project pipelines and enhance bankability.

Cities must rapidly transition from planning to concrete project development through building internal financial capacity. Citizen-level investments in areas such as energy efficiency and transport behaviour change also represent critical but under-supported opportunities. The session concluded that success requires organizing available capital for early-stage project development and setting up comprehensive support systems to help cities navigate the complex landscape of climate finance.

2.3 Plenaries, day three: 'Shared action'

The final day of the conference focussed on tackling strategic barriers, engaging the political level towards bold and ambitious climate action, and featured a wide range of high-level speakers.

2.3.1 Plenary 6: What will it take? Strategic enablers for the 2030 transition

This session focussed on the strategic levers necessary for a successful implementation of the Climate City Contracts and the acceleration to 2030 climate neutrality targets. It focused on financial instruments and multilevel governance.

The session opened with a recorded message by Teresa Ribera (Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition and Commissioner for Competitiveness), which highlighted the people-centred approach of the Cities Mission, stating: "This Mission is not just about policies and strategies, but it is about people, it is about citizens." She emphasised that while "change is never easy, it takes bold action," and Mission Cities are successfully "turning ambition into delivery."

Patrick Child (Manager for the Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, Acting Director-General, DG ENV, European Commission) presented findings from an aggregated analysis of Investment Plans,

highlighting that while cities need 300 billion euros of investment for climate transition, economic modelling shows strong returns with a 30% return on investment. He emphasised that climate action makes both environmental and economic sense, with significant private sector financing opportunities available.

Mohamed Ridouani (Mayor of Leuven) described how in his city, the Capital Hub helps structure projects through the Leuven 2030 platform, focusing on 86 breakthrough projects in circularity and retrofitting. The approach involves derisking capital and people, recognising that while climate policy shouldn't be risky business, successful implementation requires motivated talent.

Elise Grosse (Director of Sustainability, Real Estate & Development from Sweco) emphasised the importance of having a problem-solving mindset: "When we have a challenge, we have fun with it to solve it." She advocated establishing carbon as equivalent currency to monetary value, creating competitive advantages for decarbonisation. She cited Uppsala's pioneering climate targets in Sweden, which drove the development of tools for measuring emissions and savings. She also flagged that the goal is now evolving from carbon neutrality to making cities carbon sinks or "climate positive" through systemic action. She also described the potential of creating digital platforms and "playgrounds" with cities to visualise consequences of inaction, working with game developers to gamify the path to net zero.

Povilas Poderskis (Lithuanian Minister for the Environment) acknowledged that the current focus has shifted towards security, stability, and energy independence, while maintaining climate neutrality ambitions. He emphasised that cities must take leadership roles, particularly given their concentration of population and pollution, with national government doors remaining open for support and monitoring.

Donna Cooney (Deputy Lord Mayor of Dublin) stressed the importance of engaging stakeholders across municipal boundaries, including commuters who contribute to emissions from transport. She noted consistent public demand for climate action and emphasised the effectiveness of engaging children for their perspectives on creating better lives through climate initiatives. She shared examples of regulatory changes needed for solar installations and wind projects, emphasising the need to provide evidence, raising the profile of low-carbon technologies to sometimes slow-moving national governments.

Thomas Ostros (Vice-President, European Investment Bank) outlined EIB's commitment to climate financing, noting they no longer finance unabated fossil fuels and focus on renewable energy and efficiency. The EIB offers lending, blending, and advisory services with 200 million euros dedicated to supporting cities.

The session concluded with emphasis on enabling the cities' problem-solving capacity and ensuring projects work from multiple perspectives - environmental, economic, and social, while building viable business cases around climate solutions.

2.3.2 Plenary 7: Building Bridges across Europe

Plenary 6, *Building Bridges Across Europe*, explored how cross-border collaboration, solidarity, and city diplomacy can help accelerate the path to climate neutrality – particularly in the context of crisis, recovery, and transformation. The session brought together city leaders and institutional partners to share experiences and invite new partnerships, especially between EU Mission Cities and Ukrainian municipalities.

Moderated by Brooke Flanagan (Director for Climate and Environment, Eurocities), the session featured contributions from Hallstein Bjercke (Vice-Mayor for Finance, Oslo), Borys Karpus (Mayor of Novovolynsk, Ukraine), Iryna Hudz (Deputy Mayor of Zhytomyr, Ukraine), Olga Kordas (Viable Cities, Sweden), and James Falzon (Associate Director, EBRD).

Speakers shared examples of how cities are delivering climate action despite immense challenges – from war and infrastructure loss to economic uncertainty and migration. Ukrainian city leaders described how the imperative to rebuild is being matched with a vision for green, climate-resilient urban futures.

Oslo offered insights on managing urban transformation through financial discipline and public transparency, while Viable Cities highlighted the importance of structured collaboration and peer learning.

James Falzon from the EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) spoke about the Bank's ongoing support for urban resilience and its readiness to finance sustainable reconstruction, underscoring the critical role of cities in shaping a climate-smart and people-centred post-crisis recovery. James also discussed the Green Cities Programme and the various support provided for the implementation of CCC.

A highlight of the session was the Call for Mission Cities to partner with Ukrainian municipalities in follow-up to the SUN4Ukraine initiative. With 12 flagship Ukrainian municipalities selected, representing over 7.3 million residents, this call invites EU cities to forge long-term, mission-aligned partnerships that support joint climate goals and democratic resilience.

The session emphasised that while the road to 2030 is steep, shared learning and solidarity can help cities across Europe – whether in times of peace or conflict – drive forward a just and green transition.

2.3.3 Plenary 8: Closing: From dialogue to shared action

At the start of the session, the **City of Oslo** took the stage to share the 'Green Responsible Innovative Procurement' (GRIP) initiative aims to deepen political commitment across Mission Cities to use procurement to advance climate action.

The conference concluded with reflections on the progress made and future priorities for the EU Cities Mission and urban policy initiatives.

Matthew Baldwin, (Head of the European Commission's Housing Taskforce) highlighted the Cities Mission's success of achieving 92 Mission Cities receiving a Mission Label for their Climate City Contracts (CCCs), marking significant progress since he joined the first event back in 2022, where we were still collectively building the framework of what CCCs are. He emphasised that Mission Cities must now focus on delivery in coordination with the Capital Hub, the European Investment Bank, and other partners, while national governments need to endorse cities' work. Baldwin identified **housing** as a critical European issue, noting that the housing crisis is fundamentally an urban phenomenon affecting young people's ability to afford city living. He announced that the European Commission, working with the European Parliament, will publish its first affordable housing plan in Q1 2026. The connection between the Cities Mission and housing initiatives centres on energy poverty, linking climate action with affordability concerns.

Gunars Ansins (Mayor of Liepaja and vice-chair of the Environment, Climate Change and Energy Commission of the Committee of the Regions) emphasised the **Covenant of Mayors'** role in helping cities understand "how green is green". They highlighted the financial benefits his city has experienced through implementing green solutions. He encouraged non-participating cities to join the initiative.

Marcos Ros Sempere MEP addressed the lack of systematic city representation in the European Parliament, announcing the creation of the "Urban Forum", a multi-group platform with 90-100 stakeholders, including cities, networks, builders, and housing organisations. The forum aims to organise debates, connect stakeholders, and influence legislation.

Julia Kelsz (co-founder and Vice-President of the "Important Matters Foundation" and leading youth representative) shared insights from the European Youth Dialogue in Warsaw (March 2025), where 30 young people from Poland discussed urban development priorities, including better public transport, thermal modernisation, green spaces, renewable energy access, and disaster preparedness. However, she noted concerning drops in youth climate engagement for unknown reasons.

Patrick Child reflected on the three days of the conference and expressed satisfaction with its interactive nature, which he identified as central to the Mission's collaborative approach. He highlighted economic opportunities in cities, citing a report that indicates potential net benefits of € 87 billion from

urban investments that deliver both environmental and economic returns. Key next steps include deepening connections with national governments and maintaining people-centred approaches while exploring synergies with other Commission workstreams, including the urban agenda led by Commissioner Fitto.

2.4 Key Plenary Takeaways

The rich content of the 2025 conference plenaries programme highlighted how Mission Cities are transitioning from planning to implementation, with **financing** emerging as the critical bridge to cross between ambition and delivery - evidenced by the €300 billion investment need identified and innovative models like Bristol's blended finance approaches and Limassol's €1.3 billion climate plan. Regional collaboration and solidarity are proving essential on the sustained path towards a more climate-neutral and resilient future, from the Baltic states' energy independence strategies to the call for EU cities to partner with Ukrainian municipalities, demonstrating that climate action thrives through shared learning and cross-border cooperation.

The integration of multiple policy areas also became increasingly apparent, with housing, procurement, and citizen engagement emerging as key enablers alongside traditional climate measures. Most significantly, the conference emphasised the role of cities taking leadership while calling for national governments to provide supportive frameworks, recognising climate action as fundamentally about improving citizens' lives in addition to meeting environmental targets.

3 Breakout sessions

A varied programme of breakout sessions was offered throughout the three days of the conference. These included:

- “City-led” sessions, where Mission cities took the lead
- Sessions organised by Cities Mission projects and other external initiatives with close links to the Mission
- Sessions organised by NetZeroCities consortium partners

3.1 Session selection process

The sessions went through a rigorous selection process between the end of January and March 2025. More than 120 session proposals were received and evaluated by a team of experts coordinated by ICLEI Europe, and just over 50 sessions were accepted, either as standalone sessions or merged with other relevant ones. To ensure a varied experience throughout the conference, sessions were selected based on their thematic relevance, innovative angles and interactive facilitation methods.



Figure 3 – Thematic session selection ICLEI Europe, Freiburg, March 2025

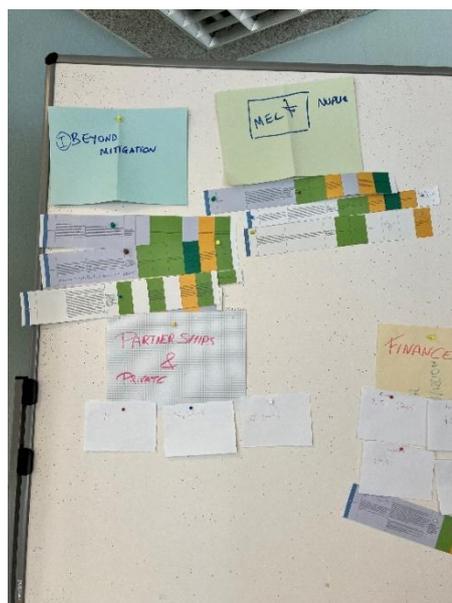


Figure 2 – Identification of themes by thematic tracks

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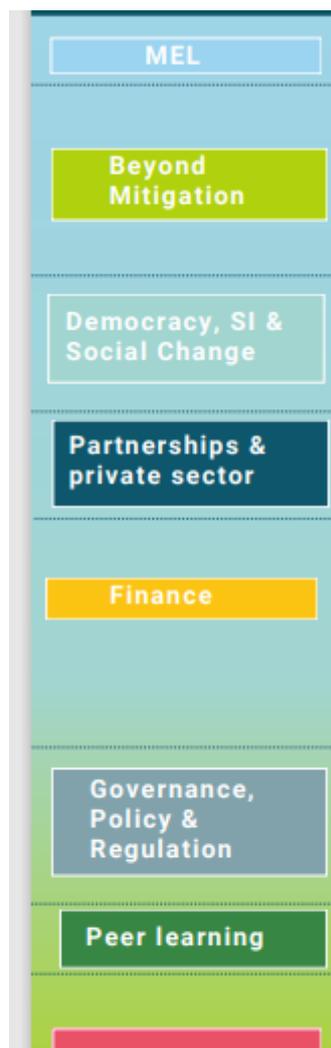


Figure 4 – Final thematic tracks

Based on the sessions submitted and after an intense process of grouping them thematically, several “tracks” were identified, which were adapted from the “Levers of Change” concept (CCC quick read 2025). This is a broad framework which identified a series of key areas of intervention, ranging from technology to democracy, social innovation and social change, and was widely used during the set-up phase of the Cities Mission programme.

Several of the proposed sessions spanned across several levers of change, given the systemic and transdisciplinary nature of the Mission work. In this case we allocated these sessions to the lever that was more closely related, or to the “Transversal / Peer” Learning track.

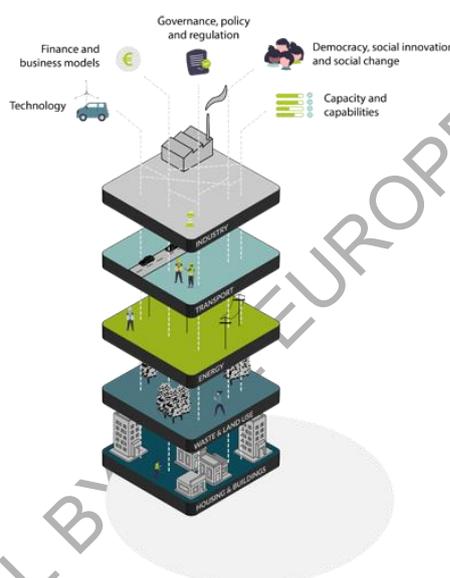


Figure 5 – Levers of change model (Dark Matter Labs)

Based on this process, eight core tracks were identified:

- Track 1 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
- Track 2 Beyond Mitigation
- Track 3 Democracy, Social Innovation and Social Change
- Track 4 Partnerships and Private Sector engagement
- Track 5 Finance
- Track 6 Governance, Policy and Regulation
- Track 7 Peer Learning /Transversal Track
- Track 8 Technology: Energy & Mobility

These translated into a rich programme of breakout sessions for participants, which was outlined in both the PDF programme online and through the conference app. For further details of the conference app, please refer to NZC SGA2 D 3.5.

EU MISSIONS CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITIES		BREAKOUT SESSIONS	
TRACKS		Day 1 - 11:00-12:30	Day 1 - 14:00-15:30
MEL	MEL-Driven Climate Action: Unlocking the Power of Co-Benefits for Cities - Breakout Room 8 (5.1)	Connecting the dots: data, reporting and policy - Breakout Room 3	
Beyond Mitigation		Strengthening Climate Resilience Through Citizen-Powered Data - Breakout Room 10 (5.6)	
Democracy, SI & Social Change	All Hands on Deck: Building the Participation Infrastructure Cities Need Now - Breakout Room 1	Reflecting on methods, indicators and tools for inclusive and climate neutral cities for Nature-Based Solutions - Plenary Room	
Partnerships & private sector	From Challenge to Change - The Outcomes of the ICC Project in Forging Successful City-Business Collaborations - Breakout Room 10 (5.6)	From Local Experimentation to Urban Transformation: R&I Projects for Net-Zero - Breakout Room 6 (5.3)	
Finance	National Dialogue on Better Funding Part 1 (Closed Door) - Breakout Room 7 (5.2)	The New European Bauhaus: Meaningful Community Engagement in Urban Transformation - Breakout Room 9 (5.5)	
	Overcoming Financing Challenges: Effective Approaches to Mobilise Resources for the Long-term Implementation of Climate Investment Plans - Breakout Room 4	National Dialogue on Better Funding Part 2 (Closed Door) - Breakout Room 7 (5.2)	
	Place based financing - overcoming value model gaps through multi-actor collaboration - Breakout Room 9 (5.5)		
Governance, Policy & Regulation	Scaling up the Mission: How Climate City Contracts Drive Learning and Replication in National Platforms - Breakout Room 2	Supporting All European Cities in Their Journey to Climate Neutrality: NetZeroCities Tools, Services, and Peer-learning Opportunities - Breakout Room 4	
Peer learning	Strategic Public Procurement for Sustainable Cities: Driving Environmental Action and Stimulating Innovation - Room 6 (5.3)	Piloting Systemic Approaches to Transformational Change: Learning from Implementation Part 1 - Breakout Room 5	
Technology: Energy, Mobility	Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) - Outcomes, Challenges & Future Prospects - Plenary Room	Ticket to Circularity: City Experiences Implementing Circular Economy in Public Transport - Breakout Room 1	
	Traffic and Transport Policies: Decarbonizing Urban Mobility - Breakout Room 3	City-Led Session: How to Reduce Emissions from Heavy Transport and the Logistics Sector? Case Studies from Cities - Breakout Room 2	
	City-Led Session: Good practices of Cities Aiming Towards Climate Neutral Heating and Cooling - Breakout Room 5		

Funded by the European Union

*Programme subject to change.

Figure 6 – Example of full conference programme, day one

This report will give a more detailed overview of the three of these tracks: “Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning”; “Beyond Mitigation” and “Finance”. Please see the Appendix for a full overview of all the 2025 Mission Cities conference sessions by each track.

3.1.1 Track 1 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

This track included five sessions:

- 1.1 MEL-Driven Climate Action: Unlocking the Power of co-benefits for Cities
- 1.2 What Can Cities Do About Scope 3 Emissions?
- 1.3 Powering City Action through Climate Neutrality Tools and the Community of Practice
- 1.4 Mission in Action: How Research Supports Cities in Achieving Climate-Neutral and Smart Futures
- 1.5 Connecting the Dots: Data, Reporting and Policy

The sessions were organised based on the needs and barriers expressed by cities in the various interactions as part of the Consortium work over the last year. The availability of data, streamlining choices of climate visualisation tools and aligning them with city needs of reporting and monitoring were some of the challenges addressed in the sessions. Further, the sessions on Scope 3 and co benefits were strategically aligned to an increasing need to address emissions beyond Scope 1 and 2 and map out next steps of how to encourage cities to discuss and report on co benefit indicators. Co-benefit

indicators also provided a link to the session on Adaptation finance thereby linking monitoring and finance sessions. The format of the MEL sessions focussed on inviting experts and practitioners from the cities to present their good practice, challenges or strategic planning to the audience with NetZeroCities experts as facilitators.

Session 1.1: MEL-Driven Climate Action: Unlocking the Power of co-benefits for Cities This session explored how Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning frameworks support cities in implementing Climate Action Plans. Key highlights included sharing experiences with co-benefits approaches, presenting analysis from 112 Climate City Contract MEL plans, and fostering city-to-city knowledge exchange on impact measurement, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven governance. The presentations by Mission cities on their work around co-benefit indicators provided an important basis for this session. Other presentations from experts collated the different approaches to understanding and mapping co-benefits for bridging work in cities around climate adaptation and mitigation. This session gave impetus to the strategic work around co-benefits being undertaken in the cities Mission platform, NetZeroCities.

Session 1.2: What Can Cities Do About Scope 3 Emissions?

This session featured a dialogue on tackling out-of-boundary emissions for Mission cities. The session focused on sharing actionable strategies for reducing Scope 3 and Consumption-Based Emissions (CBE), which are often the most challenging emissions for cities to address as they occur outside city boundaries but result from city activities. This session produced two clear and tangible conclusions: that cities want to learn more about how to measure their scope 3 emissions and that they want to contribute to discussing further on the acceptable methodology for the EU for measuring scope 3 emissions. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) was also invited to speak at this session as they are currently developing a guideline document for cities for measuring scope 3 emissions. A proposal was formulated to set up a formal consultation group of cities to interact with the JRC on this document. This is aimed at cities that are interested to share their experience or learn more from other cities on understanding the critical need for measuring scope 3 emissions and challenges involved. Another consultation group was set up an online for city-to-city exchange on this.

Session 1.3: Powering City Action through Climate Neutrality Tools and the Community of Practice

This session focused on climate monitoring tools with a focus on NetZero Planner. Cities shared experiences in measuring and strategising climate action, addressing challenges in skills development, cross-departmental collaboration, data accuracy, progress tracking, and translating monitoring data into policy decisions. This session invited cities to share their experience using the in-house tool, the NetZero Planner, as well as present other tools being used. The developers of the tools were joint the session as communities of practice to connect the city needs with the tool providers. The ambition was to make the workings of the climate tools more transparent, enabling cities to select from a suite of climate data visualisation tools available in the EU.

Session 1.4: Mission in Action: How Research Supports Cities in Achieving Climate-Neutral and Smart Futures

This session connected city leaders, researchers, and policymakers to shape the EU Mission research agenda. The session explored how research can drive real change, featuring European case studies and focusing on two-way dialogue where cities expressed research needs and researchers gained insights for more impactful work. This was one of the primary sessions at the conference, engaging the research community and linking the capacity sharing, learning from the monitoring work being undertaken by the Mission cities. The session also laid the foundation for the learning for the Mission Mindful Cities related to monitoring, data, municipal capacity and research-based action.

Session 1.5: Connecting the Dots: Data, Reporting and Policy

This participatory workshop examined how cities collect, manage, and use monitoring data for evidence-based policy-making. The session addressed reporting requirements, data collection challenges, and identified what's needed beyond quantitative metrics to drive transformative, sustainable change. The sessions focused on partnerships, collaborations between cities, with the private sector and communities of practice and other platforms to showcase the good practices of such endeavours at the conference. One example was this session co-created by both reporting platforms. My Covenant of

Mayors and CDP-ICLEI identified city needs with a focus on the future of data and reporting on climate mitigation.

The discussions emphasised collaborative partnerships between municipalities, with private industry, and through professional networks and other platforms, to demonstrate best practices from these initiatives. A prime illustration of collaboration was that this session was jointly developed by two reporting platforms: My Covenant of Mayors and CDP-ICLEI, which jointly identified city needs and future directions for data management and climate mitigation reporting.

3.1.1.1 Key themes emerging

Several themes emerged from these sessions:

The Data Foundation: Sessions 1.3 and 1.5 established the technical infrastructure - the tools cities need to collect, monitor, and report climate data accurately and systematically.

The Analytical Framework: Session 1.1 provided the MEL methodology to make sense of this data, particularly through co-benefits analysis that helps cities understand the broader impacts of their climate actions beyond just emissions reduction.

The Scope Challenge: Session 1.2 addressed one of the most complex data and action challenges cities face - how to measure and influence emissions that occur outside their direct control but result from city activities.

The Translation to Impact: Session 1.4 closed the loop by ensuring that all this monitoring, evaluation, and learning translates into evidence-based research and policy that can be scaled and replicated across cities.

The underlying thread is **evidence-based climate governance** - moving cities from intuitive or politically driven climate action to systematic, measurable, and continuously improving approaches. Each session addressed a different piece of this puzzle: the tools, the methodology, the scope challenges, the policy translation, and the research foundation needed to create truly data-driven climate action that cities can learn from and improve upon over time, building cities' capacity to "learn by doing" in their climate transition.

3.1.2 Track 2 'Beyond Mitigation'

This track was created in response to the high number of session proposals that touched on areas that go beyond our core focus on mitigation, and which are of great interest and timely for all cities, highlighting the natural overlaps and links with the Adaptation Mission. This was a critical track to introduce at this conference post the announcement at Valencia for both the missions to collaborate closely in their ambitions for cities. Relevant topics centred around carbon removal, data and resilience-related work and investments for Nature-based Solutions (NbS) were showcased. These sessions have had an impact on bridging the work within cities on climate mitigation and adaptation making space of the dialogue and strengthening climate action.

This track included three sessions during the Cities Mission Conference (an additional fourth session on Disaster Preparedness had to be cancelled at the last minute by the session organisers).

- 2.1 Strengthening Climate Resilience Through Citizen-Powered Data
- Closing The Net-Zero Gap: Carbon Removal and BECCS in Cities
- Unlocking Investments for Nature-Based Climate Solutions: Bridging Finance, Policy and Governance for Scaled Impact

Strengthening climate resilience through citizen powered data

Effective collaboration between local communities and public authorities is essential for tackling climate risks, ensuring equitable transitions, and enhancing urban resilience. This session highlighted how cities are leveraging citizen-generated data and digital tools to drive sustainable urban development.

Featuring success stories from Mannheim, Riga, Utrecht, and Athens, the discussion showcased the role of Earth Observation, low-cost sensor networks, and mobile apps in advancing climate adaptation, green infrastructure, and community-led urban planning.

Representatives from Riga, Utrecht, and Athens, alongside leading researchers, explored how participatory data solutions are transforming decision-making and fostering inclusive environmental action.

Attendees engaged in an interactive roundtable discussion that showcased digital tools for monitoring heat stress, urban trees, and greenspace perceptions, which can be scaled to fit attendees' cities.

Using the Slido app, participants could pose questions and share insights, ensuring a dynamic exchange of knowledge and best practices. This session offered a unique opportunity to learn how citizen-powered observations are shaping urban sustainability across Europe, creating data ecosystems that empower communities and drive impactful policy decisions.

Closing the net-zero gap: Carbon removal and BECCs in cities

As cities work toward net-zero, Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) is emerging as essential to address residual emissions. However, cities are not just end-users of CDR; they are key drivers in shaping and scaling these solutions. From policy and funding to innovation and implementation, cities can play multiple roles in accelerating – and leveraging opportunities from – projects like Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS), one of the key CDR options in Europe today.

This interactive session explored how Mission cities can advance BECCS and other CDR solutions by taking on different roles – strategist, regulator, funder, innovator, service provider and convener. After a brief introduction and real-world case studies from cities and the City CDR Initiative, participants worked in groups to explore how cities can actively enable, and benefit from, CDR. Each group focused on a specific role, guided by city representatives and experts.

By the end of the session, city practitioners, policymakers and stakeholders gained practical insights and actionable ideas on how to integrate CDR into their climate strategies. This session ensured that discussions went beyond theory, equipping cities with tools to scale carbon removals and close the net-zero gap.

Unlocking investment for nature-based climate solutions: bridging finance, policy and governance for scaled impact

Cities are facing serious challenges, including climate change and biodiversity loss. Innovative financial mechanisms are required to achieve net-zero cities and implement nature-based solutions (NbS). This session, hosted by NetworkNature and NetZeroCities, brought together key policymakers, city representatives, and financial experts to explore strategies for mobilising investment in NbS, aligning climate and biodiversity objectives, and fostering cross-sector collaboration.

In an interactive, fishbowl discussion, participants gained and share insights into effective governance mechanisms, innovative financing approaches - including market-based instruments - and necessary safeguards that ensure NbS investments deliver long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits. The session also examined how NbS financing can be integrated into urban planning and climate strategies to remove sectoral silos and enhance resilience.

3.1.2.1 Key themes emerging

The three sessions from Track 2 "Beyond Mitigation" revealed several interconnected themes that emphasised collaborative and innovative approaches to urban climate action. Central to all sessions was the importance of collaborative governance, bringing together citizens, local authorities, policymakers, and private sector actors to create more effective and inclusive climate solutions. Each highlighted innovation in climate solutions, from citizen-generated data collection and digital monitoring tools to advanced carbon removal technologies and nature-based interventions that could be scaled across different urban contexts.

Financial mechanisms and investment strategies emerged as critical enablers, with discussions focusing on how cities could mobilise resources through innovative funding approaches and market-based instruments. Equity and inclusion ran throughout, ensuring that climate solutions would benefit all communities while preventing negative impacts, like greenwashing. The emphasis on practical implementation distinguished these sessions, as they moved beyond theoretical discussions to provide actionable tools and strategies that cities could immediately apply.

Finally, the sessions promoted multi-functional approaches that integrated climate mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity goals within comprehensive urban planning and policy frameworks, recognising that effective climate action required breaking down sectoral silos and addressing multiple challenges simultaneously.

3.1.3 Track 5 Finance

The sessions in the finance track included:

- 5.1 Funding Transition Pathways: Leveraging Policy & Regulation to Unlock Alternative Finance
- 5.2 "Multi-level Governance" in Practice: Aligning Public funding at all levels
- 5.3 Overcoming Financial Challenges: Effective Approaches to Mobilise Resources for the Long-term Implementation of Climate Investment Plans
- 5.4 Innovative finance for Adaptation and Climate Resilience
- 5.5 Place-Based Financing – Overcoming Value Model Gaps
- 5.7a National Dialogue on Better Funding (part 1) – Closed Door
- 5.7b National Dialogue on Better Funding (part 2)- Closed Door
- Scaling Up Climate Innovations in cities: Lessons learned from 10 years of Smart cities and Communities projects

5.1 Funding Transition Pathways: Leveraging Policy & Regulation to Unlock Alternative Finance

This interactive workshop focused on empowering cities to strategically leverage policy and regulation to unlock innovative climate financing. The session covered two critical areas: funding opportunity mapping and sustainable repayment mechanisms. Key discussions centred on creating "green building" designations with expedited permitting, establishing revolving funds for energy efficiency, and implementing revenue-generating low-emission zones like those in Stockholm and London. The workshop demonstrated how performance-based financing for energy renovations and strategic reinvestment of LEZ revenues can create sustainable investment cycles.

5.2 "Multi-level Governance" in Practice: Aligning Public funding at all levels

Participants explored the practical implementation of multi-level governance from EU to local levels. The session examined how co-defining legislation and aligning targets across governance tiers can enhance policy effectiveness and funding program outcomes. With the EU preparing its new multi-annual financial framework, discussions emphasised embedding strong multi-level governance principles to create a future-proof investment and implementation tool, drawing lessons from Cohesion Policy implementation.

5.3 Overcoming Financial Challenges: Effective Approaches to Mobilise Resources for the Long-term Implementation of Climate Investment Plans

To kick off the session, a current analysis of the cumulative investment gap across Mission cities, broken down by sector and highlighting the co-benefits expected from bridging this gap was presented. This set the stage for concrete discussions on the challenges involved in closing the gap.

The peer-driven workshop focused on the transition from climate planning to implementation, with particular attention to long-term financing and private sector engagement. Through interactive subgroup sessions facilitated by city advisors and finance experts, participants learned from successful examples in from several Mission Cities. The session provided actionable strategies for turning climate plans into investable project pipelines and for mobilising both public and private capital.

5.4 Innovative finance for Adaptation and Climate Resilience

The Capital Hub, ICLEI and other core partners explored innovative financial mechanisms for municipal climate adaptation projects. A key focus was measuring co-benefits – social, economic, and environmental gains – to enhance project value propositions. The session covered various financial instruments, including blended finance models, green bonds, and nature-based solutions funding, while presenting real-world case studies of cities that successfully mobilised private or blended financing for climate resilience.

5.5 Place-Based Financing – Overcoming Value Model Gaps

This session addressed the challenge of creating viable business cases for integrated climate transition projects. Rather than traditional project-based approaches, discussions focused on holistic, place-based strategies combining multiple interventions across heating, mobility, and adaptation sectors. Successful multi-actor coordination examples from Finland and the Netherlands demonstrated how integrated approaches can unlock long-term investment from diverse city stakeholders while managing complexity and transaction costs.

5.7a & 5.7b National Dialogue on Better Funding (Baltic Region)

These closed-door workshops specifically addressed enhancing national funding for cities in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania within the SGA2 framework, providing a focused national conversation on improving funding mechanisms in the Baltic region.

These sessions collectively addressed the critical intersection of policy, finance, and implementation in urban climate action, providing cities with practical tools and strategies for mobilising resources and scaling climate solutions.

Additional session: Scaling Up Climate Innovations: Smart Cities Lessons

Building on 10 years of smart cities and communities projects, this session reflected on lessons learned and their transfer to the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities. Participants reviewed replication assessment methodology and findings from lighthouse city projects, while exploring future funding mechanisms and investment structures that could enable scaling of city-level climate innovations through systemic finance solutions and capacity building.

3.1.3.1 Key themes emerging

Policy-Finance Integration

The conference sessions on finance demonstrated that successful climate finance requires strategic alignment between policy tools and financial mechanisms. Cities learned that regulatory frameworks—such as green building designations, expedited permitting, and mandatory energy audits—can

significantly unlock private investment when designed thoughtfully. The integration of policy levers with innovative financing emerged as a fundamental requirement for scaling climate action.

Multi-Level Governance as a Critical Success Factor

A clear consensus emerged that effective climate finance requires coordinated action across EU, national, regional, and local levels. The conference highlighted how fragmented approaches limit impact and that co-defining legislation and aligning targets across governance tiers dramatically improve policy effectiveness and funding program outcomes. This principle was identified as essential for the EU's new multi-annual financial framework.

Transition from Planning to Implementation

Multiple sessions addressed the critical gap between climate planning and actual implementation. Cities gained practical strategies for transforming investment plans into bankable project pipelines, with successful examples from Gävle, Parma, Florence, and Marseille providing concrete models. The conference emphasised that moving beyond planning requires dedicated focus on private sector engagement and long-term financing structures.

Measuring Co-Benefits Enhances Investment Cases

The conference established that quantifying co-benefits – including improved public health, reduced energy costs, increased biodiversity, and social gains – significantly strengthens adaptation and mitigation project value propositions. Cities learned which co-benefits investors prioritise and how to align projects with investor reporting requirements, making projects more attractive to private and blended finance. Co-benefits have assumed importance to offer KPIs for climate investments to identify clear, tangible outcomes that, alongside reducing GHG emissions, have a direct impact on urban liveability, socio-cultural impacts and economic and other benefits. Working around urban landscapes, mobility, water and air pollution and conserving the historic built environment demonstrates benefits that are critical to political messaging as well as impacting and engaging citizens.

Place-Based Approaches Overcome Traditional Limitations

A major insight was that integrated, place-based financing approaches can overcome the commercial viability challenges that plague individual climate projects. Examples from Finland and the Netherlands demonstrated that coordinating multiple interventions across heat, mobility, and adaptation sectors can unlock long-term investment from diverse stakeholders while managing complexity and transaction costs effectively.

Revenue-Generating Climate Policies Create Sustainable Cycles

The conference showcased how well-designed climate policies can generate revenue streams that fund further climate action. Low-emission zones in Stockholm and London exemplified how charging schemes can generate substantial revenue for reinvestment in sustainable transport infrastructure, creating self-reinforcing improvement cycles.

Multi-Actor Coordination Models

The conference provided concrete frameworks for managing complex multi-stakeholder climate investments. Cities learned about governance structures, process management approaches, and investment sequencing strategies that enable successful coordination between public authorities, private investors, utilities, and community organisations. Cities that took part in the sessions also gained comprehensive understanding of diverse financial tools including:

- Revolving funds for energy efficiency upgrades.
- Performance-based financing tied to actual energy savings.
- Blended finance models combining public and private capital.

- Green bonds for large infrastructure projects.
- Nature-based solutions funding.
- Bank partnerships for specialised loan products.

4 Facilitation and documentation

To ensure a cohesive and engaging experience throughout the three-day event, the conference enlisted the support of a professional moderator, Katharina Moser, and a live graphic recorder, Carlotta Cataldi. Their contributions greatly enhanced the structure, energy, and clarity of the programme.

Professional facilitator **Katharina Moser** served as the Master of Ceremonies for the whole event, hosting the plenary sessions and moderating several of them. Her presence added consistency and professionalism, guiding participants through the agenda while creating a dynamic and inclusive atmosphere. The decision to work with a professional moderator was made to ensure smooth transitions between sessions, foster audience engagement, and respond flexibly to the needs of the programme. Katharina is well known as a facilitator who can bring topics to life and ensure the audience connects with them on both an emotional and intellectual level. She is familiar with the content of the work of the Mission, having already facilitated the first as well as the second editions of the EU Cities Mission conference, and she was thoroughly briefed in advance as well as throughout the event to ensure her interventions and introductions captured the essence of the current evolution of the Mission's work.

Carlotta Cataldi ([CarlottaCat](#)) provided live graphic recordings that visually captured key messages and discussions in real time. Working throughout the sessions, Carlotta produces **beautiful visual summaries**, harvesting only the key messages and creating a **memorable** and **meaningful experience** for participants. These illustrations were displayed in the background during all plenary sessions as they were being created, enhancing audience engagement and supporting information retention. During each slot for parallel sessions, one session was selected by the organising team to represent a range of thematic tracks to be recorded in this way. The graphic recordings offered a creative and accessible way to summarise complex content, helping to make the discussions more memorable and impactful. These visuals also serve as an effective recap of the conference and an impactful resource for communication activities.

On the final day, Carlotta created a final visual synthesis that captured the overarching themes and highlights of the entire programme.



Figure 7 – Visual summary by graphic recorder

Please refer to the Annex to view a further selection of the graphic recordings from the plenary sessions, the selected parallel session.

5 Conclusion and next steps

One of the conference's greatest achievements was to showcase how Mission Cities are bridging the gap between ambition and implementation. Through eight plenary sessions, over 50 parallel workshops, strategic networking opportunities, and social events, participants witnessed firsthand how Mission Cities are translating their bold ambitions and their Climate City Contracts into tangible, scalable solutions. The award of the EU Mission Label to 39 additional cities, bringing the total to 92 out of 112 Mission Cities, marked a significant milestone in the Mission's evolution from planning to delivery.

Perhaps most significantly, the conference addressed the critical question of **financing** urban climate transitions. With cities requiring an estimated €300 billion in climate investments, the discussions revealed not just the scale of the challenge, but the remarkable opportunity it represents. The economic modelling presented showed high potential return on investments, reinforcing that climate action is not just an environmental imperative, but a sound economic strategy. The involvement of the European Investment Bank, innovative financing models from cities like Bristol and Limassol, and the emergence of blended finance solutions provided practical pathways for other cities to follow.

The conference's structure itself embodied **innovation**. The integration of professional moderation, live graphic recording, and digital platforms created an engaging experience that kept energy high across three intensive days. The thematic framework built around "levers of change" provided coherence while allowing for specialised learning. Site visits to Vilnius's sustainability initiatives, ranging from Tech Zity to cycling infrastructure, provided participants with tangible examples of climate action in practice.

By bringing together political representatives, researchers and practitioners, private sector stakeholders and many others from dozens of cities, the event multiplied and strengthened the web of relationships that will drive climate action forward and further supported the second aim of the Mission to enable all

cities to reach climate neutrality. The cities themselves also enhanced this joint effort through the initiatives they presented at the conference.

The 2025 conference's focus on the power of relationships and collaboration, as well as addressing financing challenges, provides crucial insights for next year's gathering, which will focus specifically on finance and private sector engagement. Several key lessons emerged that should shape the 2026 agenda:

Deepening Financial Literacy: While Mission Cities demonstrated strong climate ambitions, the conference revealed varying levels of financial structuring capacity. Future programming should include dedicated workshops on project bankability, risk assessment, and investor communication – skills that cities consistently identified as critical gaps.

Expanding Private Sector Participation: The finance-focused sessions drew significant interest but highlighted the need for more systematic private sector engagement. Future conferences could feature dedicated investor forums and structured matchmaking between cities and private capital providers.

Scaling Successful Models: Bristol's Green Growth West Fund, the Climate City Capital Hub's work with French cities, and philanthropic catalytic capital models demonstrated replicable approaches. The 2026 conference should create further dedicated spaces for peer-to-peer learning on these proven financing mechanisms.

Early-Stage Project Development: The consistent theme that small upfront investments (2-5% of total capital expenditure) can unlock significant project pipelines suggests next year's agenda should emphasise project preparation facilities and feasibility study financing, with a particular focus on mobility, affordable and energy efficient housing and energy generation.

National Government Integration: The financing discussions revealed the critical role of national policy frameworks in enabling or constraining private capital mobilisation. Future conferences should strengthen multi-level governance dialogues, particularly in areas such as regulatory barriers and enabling legislation.

Citizen-Level Investment: The under-explored opportunity for citizen financing in energy efficiency and transport behaviour change, for instance via crowdfunding, represents a significant area for development, requiring specialised programming that bridges technical solutions with community engagement.

Youth Leadership Integration: The insights shared from the European Youth Dialogue underscored that young people bring essential perspectives on urban priorities and climate solutions, yet concerning drops in youth climate engagement signal the need for more systematic youth leadership development and decision-making roles within future conference programming.

The Cities Mission Conference 2025 proved that Europe's cities are not just participants in the climate transition – they are its leaders, innovators, and accelerators. As former US vice president Al Gore eloquently reminded the audience via his recorded message on day one, "Political will is itself a renewable resource." The three days in Vilnius set the tone to renew that resource abundantly, ensuring that the journey to climate neutrality remains not just an aspiration, but an achievable reality for Europe's urban future and beyond.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Extract of Spreadsheet used for tracking session content

#	Track	Name track	New ID	Room Type	Session Contact	Final Confirmed Title	Final Confirmed Description
2	1	MEL	1.1	T	Mira Conci	MEL Driven Climate Action: Unlocking the Power of co benefits for Cities	This session brings together city representatives to explore how MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) and in particular the use of co benefits supports the implementation of Climate Action Plans. Cities will have the opportunity to share their experiences, best practices, and lessons learned—both successes and challenges—in developing and utilizing MEL for their just transitions. NZE will present insights from an analysis of 112 Climate City Contract MEL plans. The session aims to foster connections between cities to promote learning and knowledge sharing around impact with a focus on co benefit indicators, their relevance in tracking progress, engaging community and political stakeholders, and enhancing data driven city governance.
3	1	MEL	1.2	W	Apurva Singh	What can cities do about Scope 3 emissions?	This session aims at enhancing dialogue towards understanding and addressing out of boundary emissions amongst Mission cities. The session will facilitate knowledge and insights sharing particularly in the context of actionable strategies within the Mission for reducing Scope 3 and Consumption Based Emissions (CBE).
4	1	MEL	1.3	W	Julio Lumbereras & Silvia Gagu	Powering City Action through Climate Neutrality Tools and the Community of Practice	Climate monitoring and the key tools available to cities are being used to measure, visualize, monitor the journey towards climate neutrality. They serve as a prime example of how cross sectoral collaboration across Communities of Practice (CoP) drives progress toward achieving climate goals. In this engaging session, city representatives will share their experiences using tools like NetZero Planner (and others) to measure, monitor and strategise climate action. You are invited to learn from and share opportunities and challenges faced in key areas such as:
5	1	MEL			Helena Suarez Grodz		Skills & Training: Building capacity to effectively use climate tools Collaboration & Governance: Coordinating efforts across departments and ensuring data accuracy Management & Communication: Tracking progress, adjusting plans, and sharing results Policy & Decision Making: Influencing policy, investments, and strategic direction
6	1	MEL			Nupur Prothi		Valuable resources for peer to peer learning, training, and ongoing support will be shared to encourage the cities' climate actions. Participate to hear and share with your peers on experiences around the power of data.
7	1	MEL	1.4	W	Emma Puerari	Mission in Action: How Research Supports Cities in Achieving Climate Neutral and Smart Futures	This session is all about turning knowledge into action to help shape the Research Agenda for the "EU Mission: Climate Neutral and Smart Cities". It's a unique chance to connect, learn, and collaborate across sectors — bringing together city leaders, researchers, universities, policymakers, and practitioners who are all working toward the same goal: making Europe's cities climate neutral and smarter. We'll explore how research can become a real driver of change on the ground. What can researchers learn from cities' experiences? How can cities better benefit from cutting edge research? By sharing lessons from real European case studies, this session will spotlight practical ways to overcome challenges, scale up solutions, and adapt best practices to different local contexts. Most importantly, this event is about dialogue. City officials will have the chance to voice what they need from research to move faster and further. Researchers will get fresh insights to make their work more relevant and impactful. By bridging these worlds, we aim to unlock new ideas, strengthen collaboration, and accelerate the journey toward climate neutral cities — together. Format: The session will have two parts. First, selected city representatives will share their experiences on how research has supported their climate neutrality pathways. The second part of this session focuses on strengthening the action research processes and collaboration between the researchers (and their research organisations) and Mission/Pilot Cities — to advance collective and systemic impact.
8	1	MEL	1.5	W	Ana Rita Neves	Connecting the dots: data, reporting and policy	In this participatory workshop, we engage city practitioners in a reflection about data collection and management, monitoring and reporting and its use for evidence-based policy-making. We explore the real impact of reporting from a city perspective and discuss cities' reporting requirements along with current challenges of collecting data at city level. We identify where limitations lie, emerging trends, and what is needed beyond the numbers to drive transformative change for a sustainable future. Participants will be divided into discussion groups.

AWAITING APPROVAL B...

9	2	BMit	2.1	T	Marcelo Lampkowski, ICLEI Europe	Strengthening climate resilience through citizen-powered data	Effective collaboration between local communities and public authorities is essential for tackling climate risks, ensuring equitable transitions, and enhancing urban resilience. This session highlights how cities are leveraging citizen-generated data and digital tools to drive sustainable urban development. Featuring success stories from Mannheim, Riga, Utrecht, and Athens, the discussion will showcase the role of Earth Observation, low-cost sensor networks, and mobile apps in advancing climate adaptation, green infrastructure, and community-led urban planning. Representatives from Riga, Utrecht, and Athens, alongside leading researchers, will explore how participatory data solutions are transforming decision-making and fostering inclusive environmental action. Attendees will engage in an interactive roundtable discussion, and the session will also showcase digital tools for monitoring heat stress, urban trees, and greenspace perceptions, which can be scaled to fit your city. Using the Slido app, participants can pose questions and share insights, ensuring a dynamic exchange of knowledge and best practices. This session offers a unique opportunity to learn how citizen-powered observations are shaping urban sustainability across Europe, creating data ecosystems that empower communities and drive impactful policy decisions.
10	2	BMit	2.2	W	Matteo Barberi, South Pole	Closing the net-zero gap: Carbon removal and BECCS in cities	This interactive session will explore how Mission cities can advance BECCS and other CDR solutions by taking on different roles – strategist, regulator, funder, innovator, service provider and convener. After a brief introduction and real-world case studies from cities and the City CDR Initiative, participants will work in groups to explore how cities can actively enable, and benefit from, CDR. Each group will focus on a specific role, with guidance from city representatives and experts.
14	3	Finance	2.4	W	Katie Dawkins, UNEP-WCMC	Unlocking Investment for Nature-Based Climate Solutions: Bridging Finance, Policy and Governance for Scaled Impact	<p>Cities are facing serious challenges, including climate change and biodiversity loss. Innovative financial mechanisms are required to achieve net-zero cities and implement Nature-based solutions (NbS).</p> <p>This session, hosted by NetworkNature and NetZeroCities, will bring together key policymakers, city representatives, and financial experts to explore strategies for mobilizing investment in NbS, aligning climate and biodiversity objectives, and fostering cross-sector collaboration.</p> <p>In an interactive, fishbowl discussion, participants will gain and share insights into effective governance mechanisms, innovative financing approaches—including market-based instruments—and necessary safeguards that ensure NbS investments deliver long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits. The session will also examine how NbS financing can be integrated into urban planning and climate strategies to remove sectoral silos and enhance resilience.</p> <p>Key topics include:</p> <p>Innovative Financing Mechanisms: Exploring financial tools to mobilize resources that integrate climate and biodiversity goals, including market-driven approaches.</p> <p>Policy Integration & Governance: Strengthening collaboration between European and local policymakers, investors, and the private sector to ensure governance frameworks align with financing strategies.</p>

Appendix 2 – Example of PowerPoint overview of the tracks

Sessions by track: 1. MEL (5 sessions)

New ID	Title of the session	Sessions Assigned	Room Assigned	Session Contact
1.1	MEL-Driven Climate Action: Unlocking the Power of co-benefits for Cities	Day 1 Morning	Room 8	Mira Conci
1.2	What can cities do about Scope 3 emissions?	Day 3	Room 2	Apurva Singh
1.3	Powering City Action through Climate Neutrality Tools and the Community of Practice	Day 2 Afternoon	Room 8	Julio Lumbreras & Silvia Gugu Helena Suarez Groen (LGI Sustainable Innovation) Nupur Prothi
1.4	Mission in Action: How Research Supports Cities in Achieving Climate-Neutral and Smart Futures	Day 2 Morning	Room 3	Emma Puerari
1.5	Connecting the dots: data, reporting and policy	Day 1 Afternoon	Room 3	Ana Rita Neves

2. Beyond Mitigation (5 sessions)

New ID	Title of the session	Sessions Assigned	Room Assigned	Session Contact
2.1	Strengthening climate resilience through citizen-powered data	Day 1 Afternoon	Room 10	Marcelo Lampkowski
2.2	Closing the net-zero gap: Carbon removal and BECCS in cities	Day 2 Morning	Room 9	Matteo Barberi
2.3	Cities, Climate Societal Resilience in a Security-driven era	Day 3	Room 6	Joost Reundersman
	Preparing and protecting critical infrastructure to external pressures: how climate actions contribute to security			Bob D'Haeseleer
	When disaster strikes			Keira Webster
2,4	Unlocking Investment for Nature-Based Climate Solutions: Bridging Finance, Policy and Governance for Scaled Impact	Day 2 Afternoon	Room 3	Katie Dawkins, UNEP-WCMC Philipp Lahaela Walter, Head of Biodiversity and NbS
11.2	R&I session: Urban Greening	Day 1 Afternoon	Room 11	Elvira INES (Urbano&Tarek)

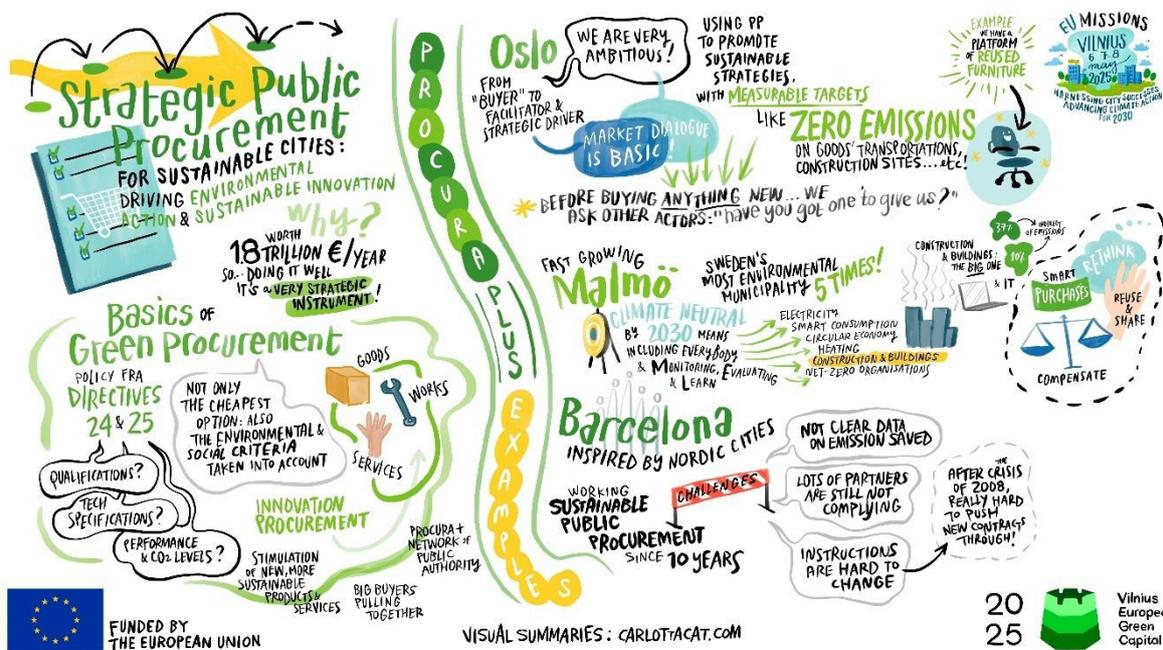
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AWAITING APPROVAL BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Appendix 3 – Graphic recorder images

Day 1

MISSION



AWAITING AT

CELEBRATING MISSION CITIES' SUCCESSES

IT'S 2025 AND HERE WE ARE IN VILNIUS. WE ARE MANY, NOW!

WE ARE ENTERING IMPLEMENTATION PHASE USING REAL HUMAN CONNECTION INVOLVED

TOWARDS THE MORE BEAUTIFUL WORLD OUR HEARTS BELIEVE IS POSSIBLE

ALREADY MORE THAN 90 CITIES WITH THE MISSION LABEL

AND CITIES WILL LEAD THE WAY TOWARDS CLIMATE NEUTRAL EUROPE BY 2030

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

NET ZERO CITIES

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON? SOME EXAMPLES:

IT'S PARTY TIME! BUT THE JOURNEY IS ONGOING

WE WILL GET IT DONE, BUT IT'S NO WALK IN THE PARK

NOT ALL PROJECTS ARE BANKABLE, BUT PLEASE HELP US ANYWAY!

EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK

EXTREME EVENTS

CITIES ARE ALWAYS THE FIRST RESPONDERS

YOUR VOICES ARE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT

CLIMATE TRACE.ORG

20 25

Vilnius European Green Capital

BRISTOL ACTION & INVESTMENT PLAN: 20 ACTORS COLLABORATING BRISTOL CITY LEAP & COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

GREEN ENERGY EFFICIENCY

EU MISSIONS VILNIUS 6-7-8 2025 HARNESSING CITY SUCCESSES ADVANCING CLIMATE ACTION FOR 2030

BOLOGNA OUR CLIMATE CITY? 1 CONTRACT 24 PARTNERS 80 SUPPORTERS MANY PROPOSALS FROM THE COMMUNITY

WE HAVE A PAID CITIZEN ASSEMBLY!

BIGGEST CHALLENGE WORKING IN A DIFFERENT WAY, HOUSTICALLY CHANGING THINGS IN THE ADMINISTRATION

REAL PEOPLE GOVERNANCE WITH ONE COMMON VISION

DEVELOPMENT DECLARATION

ALREADY SIGNED BY 60+ CITIES!

EUROPE WARMING UP TWICE AS FAST IN CREATING EVEN MORE EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

BUT WE HAVE GOT THE SOLUTIONS TODAY TO START THE HEALING PROCESS

DISTRICT C TRANSFORMING FACTORIES INTO VILLES, MARKETS, ART VENS, COMMUNITY PLACES

PILOTS ARE STARTING POINTS, NOT END GOALS

REAL CHANGE: SMALL ACTIONS + STRONG COMMUNITIES + COLLAB WITH PRIVATE SECTOR

VISUAL SUMMARIES: CARLOTIACAT.COM

How to reduce EMISSIONS FROM HEAVY TRANSPORT & LOGISTIC SECTOR

cities' CASE STUDIES

PARIS PARIS IS HUGE AND MOST GOODS ARE MOVED BY ROAD

WATERWAYS & RAIL ARE IN THE FUTURE

CO2 IS FROM GOODS TRANSPORTATION

25% ZERO DIESEL COMMITMENT

GREEN SPACE EXPANSION & BALANCE

PROMOTING LOCAL SUPPLY

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT WAS AND IS KEY TO THESE SUCCESSES

HELSINKI & LAHTI IT'S THE TURN FOR TRANSPORTATION

WE ALREADY CUT HEATING BY 15% IN 2023

ITS HARD TO INFLUENCE!

ROAD TRANSPORT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

BIGGEST SOURCE OF CO2

CHEAPER TO BUY AND CHEAPER TO USE

LANE PRIORITY FREE PARKING P

LOTS OF CHARGING STATIONS

OSLO ELECTRIC TRANSPORT

89% OF CARS ALREADY ELECTRIC IN 2025

AND PRACTICAL

70% EMISSIONS COME FROM TRANSPORTATION

GÄVLE IS IN A TRAFFICATED AREA OF SWEDEN

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IS TOO SLOW!

WHAT BUSINESS MODELS?

TRANSPORT BUYERS HAULIERS

CAN WE COLLABORATE?

AMSTERDAM Did you know that... LIVING IN CITIES? 4.5 CIGARETTES & DAY EQUIVALENT?

let's take care of the street!

CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE EDUCATION + PROMOTION + INCENTIVES + NEW REGULATION SYSTEM + HEAVY TRAFFIC-FREE CENTERS

EMISSION FREE ZONES EXPANDING (INFORMING CITIZENS NEEDS IN ADVANCE)

MADNESS INITIATIVE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT TO CREATE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE SECTOR & FIND SOLUTIONS TOGETHER!

SUSTAINABLE URBAN LOGISTICS

BUSINESS MODELS CHANGING INFRASTRUCTURE

REGULATIVE & SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

HARD ≠ IMPOSSIBLE WE WANT TO SHOW WHAT'S POSSIBLE

COLLABORATION PLATFORM

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

VISUAL SUMMARIES: CARLOTIACAT.COM

20 25

Vilnius European Green Capital

AWAITING

Advancing climate action Locally
POLICY, INVESTMENT, & PARTNERSHIP

KRAKOV
NEST OUR COLLECTIVE PROJECT
FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN CITIES, STRONGER THAN COMPETITION
DREAM TEAM
Cooperation CCGs & engaging crucial actors

ESPOO
520 BILLION € MORE NEEDED!
INVESTMENT-FRIENDLY ECOSYSTEMS
CLIMATE INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK
1. HAVING A STRATEGIC VISION IS IMPORTANT
2. TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION TO INCREASE TRUST
3. IDEAS:
4. SHOW HOW FUNDERS PURSUE IN THE MUNICIPALITY'S PLAN
5. MOTIVATION ISN'T ENOUGH... YOU NEED THE MONEY, BUT HOW?
6. LOTS OF COMPETITION FOR FUNDING!
7. THANK YOU TO ALL THE CITIES THAT SHARED THEIR TIPS & STRATEGIES WITH US
8. OUR SUPERPOWERS: BRUTAL CURIOSITY & HONESTY

KOSICE
a STORY of TRANSFORMATION OF INFRASTRUCTURES & MINDS
BUT ALL ALONG, IT WAS PROCUREMENT THAT MADE US HEROES

How cities can attract green finance

Procurement Power: from ZERO to HERO

EU MISSIONS VILNIUS 6 7-8 2025
HARNESSING CITY SUCCESS FOR ADVANCING CLIMATE ACTION FOR 2030

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER & ALIGNING CONTINUOUSLY

VISUAL SUMMARIES: CARLOTACAT.COM

20
25

Vilnius European Green Capital

AWAITING APPROVAL BY THE EUR...

Day 2

SION

CELEBRATING THE CITIES' LEARNING JOURNEYS

TWINNING LEARNING PROGRAMME

PEER LEARNING

- today featuring:
- FUNDAO
 - WURZBURG
 - ISSY-LES-MOLINEAUX
 - REYKJAVIK
 - JYVASKYLA

FIRST COHORT

HIGHLIGHTS

- 53 PILOT CITIES FROM 21 COUNTRIES
- 33 TWIN CITIES
- 40 SITE VISITS
- 5/37 REPLICATION PLANS

WURZBURG

TWINNING WITH UMEA
PARTICIPATION TO NETWORKS (GREEN NETWORK)
CO-CREATION WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS
STILL MISSING BUSINESSES



FUNDAO

LOCAL PORTUGAL
TWINNING WITH TURKU, FINLAND
SMART TERRITORIAL STRATEGIES
EASIER: DIGITAL PLATFORM
EXPERIMENTING DIVERSITY IN CROPS
INVOLVING MUNICIPALITIES FARMERS YOUTH ASSEMBLIES, RESEARCH INSTITUTES, UNIS...
UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CONTEXT: WHAT WE WANT AND NOT WANT TO REPLICATE
WE WANT MORE PEER-TO-PEER GROUPS AND LOCAL GREEN SPACES

ISSY-LES-MOLINEAUX

TWINNING WITH BOLOGNA WITH GENOVA, ITALY
CHALLENGE: DOUBLING POPULATION EACH WEEK!
FROM 70.000 TO 140.000
DECISIONS FOR TWINNING
COMMON DATA MANAGEMENT PLATFORM
ENERGY
USE OF HYDROGEN!
FACTORS IN THE CITY

OUR FOCUS IS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

VISUAL SUMMARIES: CARLOTTACAT.COM

REYKJAVIK

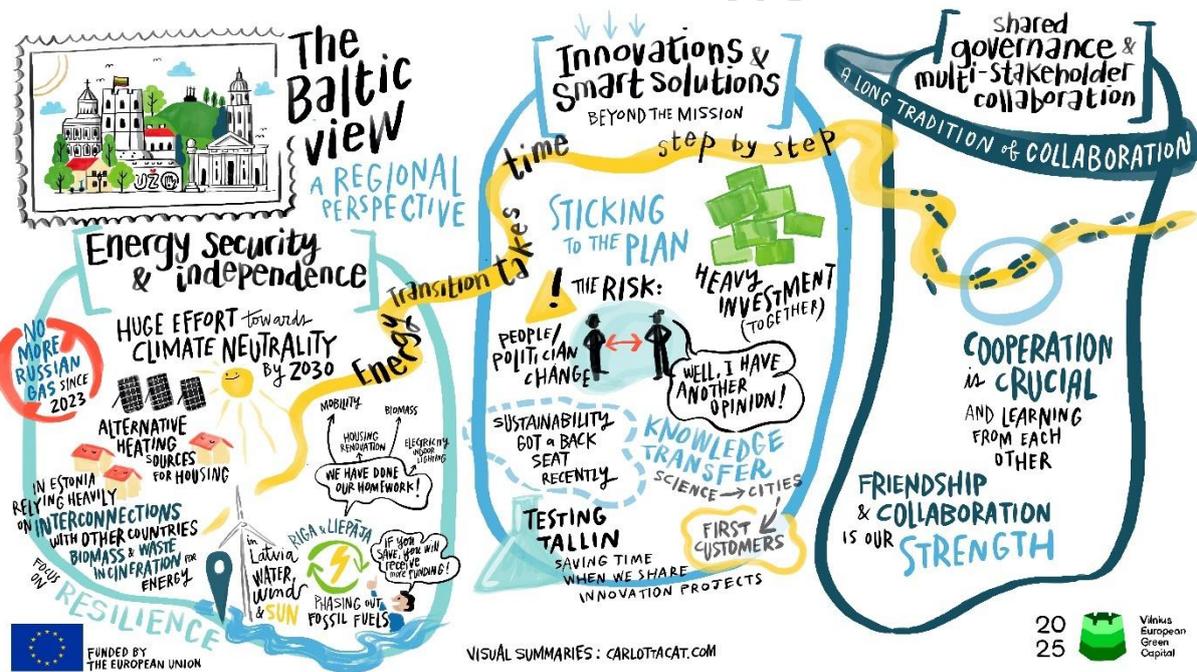
TWINNING WITH JERUSALEM ISRAELI
GOAL: DONE COMPANIES TO COMMUTE SUSTAINABILITY TO WORK
CHALLENGE: NUDGING EMPLOYEES
HEARING AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE FROM OUR TWIN CITY WAS SO USEFUL!
THE WORKS DON'T LIKE AN AIRPORT LIKE THIS FREE PARKING
COMBINING PROJECTS: MOST VALUABLE

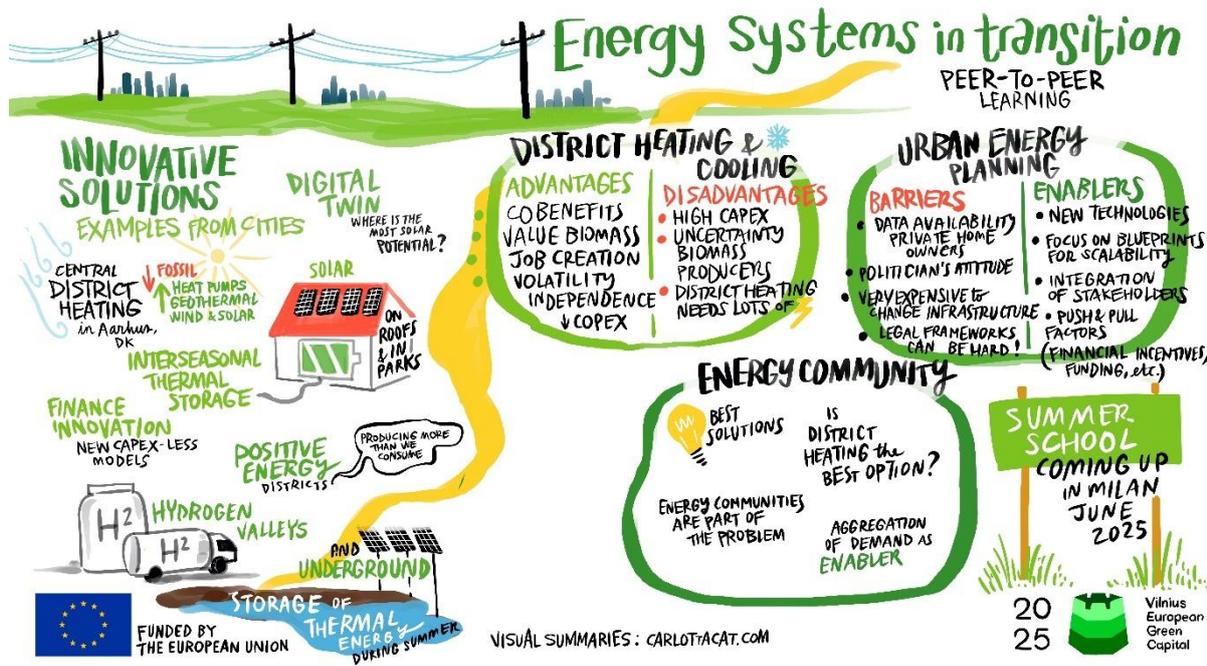
LEARNINGS:

- REPLICATE → ADAPT
- TAP IN EXISTING NETWORKS
- ENGAGE WITH COMPANIES STARTING SMALL
- FEELING SIMILARITIES DESPITE LOCATION
- STEADY MAYOR GUARANTEED PROGRESS & DIRECTION (ISSY-LES-MOLINEAUX)

20
25 Vilnius European Green Capital

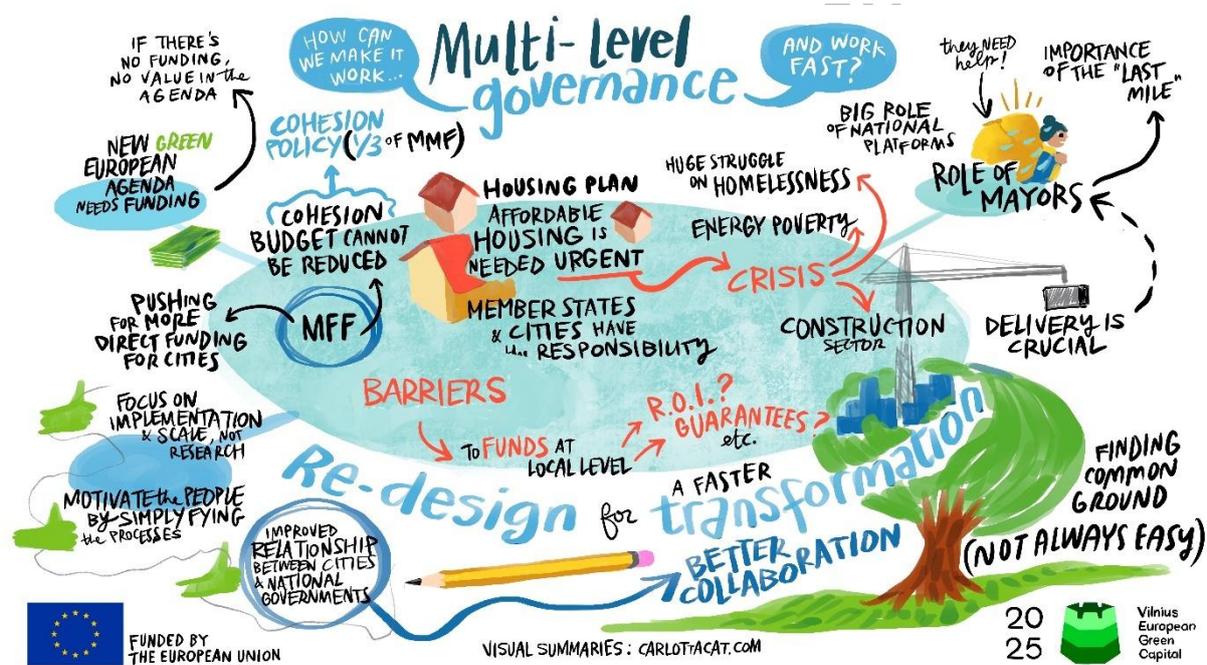
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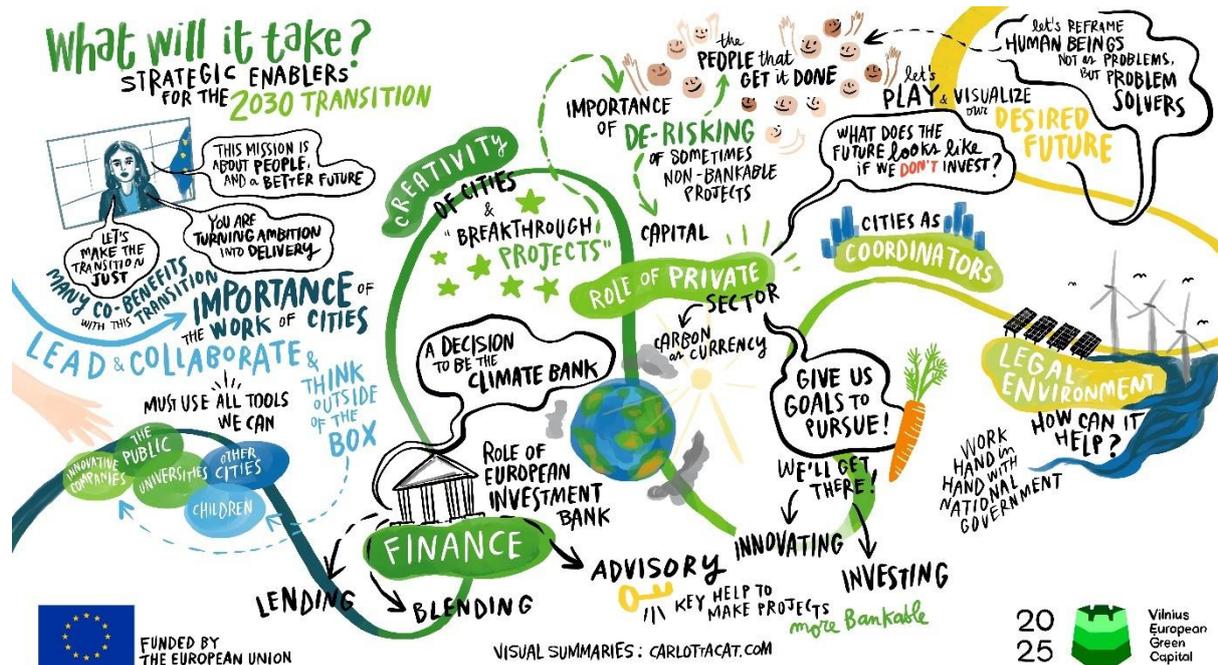


Day 3

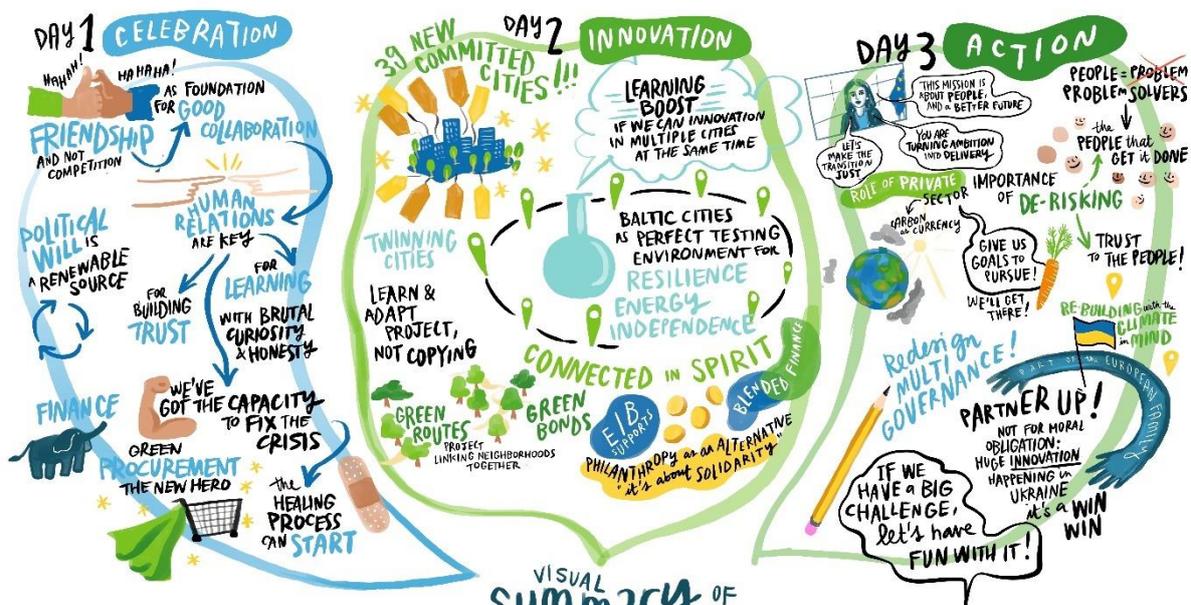
SION



AWAITING



AWAITING



VISUAL SUMMARY OF EU MISSION CITIES 2025 in Vilnius

By CARLOTTACAT.COM 20 25 Vilnius European Green Capital

AWAITING APPROVAL BY THE EU

Appendix 4 – Full conference programme

EU MISSIONS
CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITIES

6-8 May 2025
VILNIUS

**Harnessing City Successes:
Advancing Climate Action for 2030**

Funded by the European Union

CITY OF VILNIUS 2025

Vilnius European Green Capital

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EU MISSIONS CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITIES		PROGRAMME	
06.05.2025-Day 1	07.05.2025-Day 2	08.05.2025-Day 3	
<p>08:00 - 09:00 Registration</p> <p>09:00-10:30 Opening: Celebrating Mission Cities' Successes - <i>Plenary Room</i></p> <p>10:30-11:00 Coffee Break</p> <p>11:00-12:30 Breakout Sessions</p> <p>12:30-14:00 Lunch</p> <p>14:00-15:30 Breakout Sessions</p> <p>15:30-16:00 Coffee Break</p> <p>16:00-17:00 Advancing Climate Action Locally: Policy, Investment, and Partnership - <i>Plenary Room</i></p> <p>17:00 Drinks - <i>Onsite</i></p>	<p>08:00 - 09:00 Registration</p> <p>09:00-10:00 The Baltic View: A Regional Perspective on Energy Transition, Innovation, and Shared Governance - <i>Plenary Room</i></p> <p>10:00-10:30 Mission Label Ceremony - <i>Plenary Room</i></p> <p>10:30-11:00 Coffee Break</p> <p>11:00-12:30 Breakout Sessions</p> <p>12:30-14:00 Lunch</p> <p>14:00-15:30 Breakout Sessions</p> <p>15:30-16:00 Coffee Break</p> <p>16:00-17:00 Financing the Future - <i>Plenary Room</i></p> <p>19:00 Dinner - <i>The Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania</i></p>	<p>08:00 - 09:00 Registration</p> <p>09:00-10:00 What will it take? Strategic enablers for the 2030 transition - <i>Plenary Room</i></p> <p>10:00-11:00 Building bridges across Europe - <i>Plenary Room</i></p> <p>11:00-11:30 Coffee Break</p> <p>11:30-12:45 Breakout Sessions</p> <p>12:45-14:15 Lunch</p> <p>14:15-15:30 Closing: From Dialogue to Shared Action - <i>Plenary Room</i></p> <p>15:30-17:30 Site Visits</p>	<p>Funded by the European Union</p> <p>*Programme subject to change.</p>

EU MISSIONS CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITIES		BREAKOUT SESSIONS	
TRACKS		Day 1 - 11:00-12:30	Day 1 - 14:00-15:30
MEL	MEL-Driven Climate Action: Unlocking the Power of Co-Benefits for Cities - <i>Breakout Room 8 (5.1)</i>	Connecting the dots: data, reporting and policy - <i>Breakout Room 3</i>	Strengthening Climate Resilience Through Citizen-Powered Data - <i>Breakout Room 10 (5.6)</i>
Beyond Mitigation			Reflecting on methods, indicators and tools for inclusive and climate neutral cities for Nature-Based Solutions - <i>Plenary Room</i>
Democracy, SI & Social Change	All Hands on Deck: Building the Participation Infrastructure Cities Need Now - <i>Breakout Room 1</i>	From Local Experimentation to Urban Transformation: R&I Projects for Net-Zero - <i>Breakout Room 6 (5.3)</i>	The New European Bauhaus: Meaningful Community Engagement in Urban Transformation - <i>Breakout Room 9 (5.5)</i>
Partnerships & private sector	From Challenge to Change – The Outcomes of the ICC Project in Forging Successful City-Business Collaborations - <i>Breakout Room 10 (5.6)</i>		
Finance	National Dialogue on Better Funding Part 1 (Closed Door) - <i>Breakout Room 7 (5.2)</i>		National Dialogue on Better Funding Part 2 (Closed Door) - <i>Breakout Room 7 (5.2)</i>
	Overcoming Financing Challenges: Effective Approaches to Mobilise Resources for the Long-term Implementation of Climate Investment Plans - <i>Breakout Room 4</i>		
	Place based financing - overcoming value model gaps through multi-actor collaboration - <i>Breakout Room 9 (5.5)</i>		
Governance, Policy & Regulation	Scaling up the Mission: How Climate City Contracts Drive Learning and Replication in National Platforms - <i>Breakout Room 2</i>	Supporting All European Cities in Their Journey to Climate Neutrality: NetZeroCities Tools, Services, and Peer-learning Opportunities - <i>Breakout Room 4</i>	
Peer learning	Strategic Public Procurement for Sustainable Cities: Driving Environmental Action and Stimulating Innovation - <i>Room 6 (5.3)</i>	Piloting Systemic Approaches to Transformational Change: Learning from Implementation Part 1 - <i>Breakout Room 5</i>	
Technology: Energy, Mobility	Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) – Outcomes, Challenges & Future Prospects - <i>Plenary Room</i>	Ticket to Circularity: City Experiences Implementing Circular Economy in Public Transport - <i>Breakout Room 1</i>	City-Led Session: How to Reduce Emissions from Heavy Transport and the Logistics Sector? Case Studies from Cities - <i>Breakout Room 2</i>
	Traffic and Transport Policies: Decarbonizing Urban Mobility - <i>Breakout Room 3</i>		
	City-Led Session: Good practices of Cities Aiming Towards Climate Neutral Heating and Cooling - <i>Breakout Room 5</i>		

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EU MISSIONS CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITIES		PARALLEL SESSIONS	
TRACKS		Day 2 - 11:00-12:30	Day 2 - 14:00-15:30
MEL	Mission in Action: How Research Supports Cities in Achieving Climate-Neutral and Smart Futures - <i>Breakout Room 3</i>	Powering City Action through Climate Neutrality Tools and the Community of Practice - <i>Breakout Room 8 (5.1)</i>	Unlocking Investment for Nature-Based Climate Solutions: Bridging Finance, Policy and Governance for Scaled Impact - <i>Breakout Room 3</i>
Beyond Mitigation	Closing the Net-Zero Gap: Carbon Removal and BECCS in Cities - <i>Breakout Room 9 (5.5)</i>		
Democracy, SI & Social Change	Be a Superhero for a Day: Building Stakeholder Trust for Regenerative Urban Transformations - <i>Breakout Room 6 (5.3)</i>	Energy Democracy Levering Climate Neutrality in Mission Cities - <i>Breakout Room 2</i>	
Partnerships & private sector	City-Industry Dialogue - Part 1 (Closed door) - <i>Breakout Room 4</i>	City-Industry Dialogue - Part 2 (Closed Door) - <i>Breakout Room 4</i>	Mutual Learning Event on Engaging the SMEs in the Decarbonisation of Mission Cities - <i>Breakout Room 9 (5.5)</i>
Finance	Innovative Finance for Adaptation and Climate Resilience - <i>Plenary Room</i>		Funding Transition Pathways: Leveraging Policy & Regulation to Unlock Alternative Finance - <i>Breakout Room 1</i>
Governance, Policy & Regulation	National support for climate neutral and resilient cities: strengthening multilevel governance across European countries - <i>Breakout Room 2</i>		
	City-Led Session: Governance Innovation: Internal Transformation, Ecosystem Thinking & Regional Alignment - <i>Breakout Room 7 (5.2)</i>		
Peer learning	Celebrating the Cities' Learning Journeys from the Twinning Learning Programme! - <i>Breakout Room 5</i>	Piloting Systemic Approaches to Transformational Change: Learning from Implementation Part 2 - <i>Breakout Room 5</i>	Open Space - <i>Breakout Room 6 (5.3)</i>
	Urban Planning and Design for Climate Impact - <i>Breakout Room 8 (5.1)</i>		
Technology: Energy, Mobility	Stakeholder's Dialogue: How Data-driven, AI and Smart City Solutions Can Support Climate-Neutral Cities - <i>Breakout Room 1</i>	Getting Things Done! Successful measures ready for replication in Mobility and Transport - <i>Plenary Room</i>	Energy Systems in Transition: Peer-to-Peer Cities Exchange - <i>Breakout Room 7 (5.2)</i>

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PARALLEL SESSIONS



TRACKS
Day 3 - 11:30- 12:45

MEL	What Can Cities Do About Scope 3 Emissions? - <i>Breakout Room 2</i>
Beyond Mitigation	
Democracy, SI & Social Change	Bridging Divides in Everyday Politics – Building the Relational Capacity and Collective Intelligence of Governance - <i>Breakout Room 7 (5.2)</i>
Partnerships & private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A League of Climate Champions - <i>Breakout Room 8 (5.1)</i> ● City-Led Session: Governance of Climate Transition Collaboration with Private Sector - <i>Breakout Room 10 (5.6)</i>
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Multi-level Governance” in Practice: Aligning Public Funding at All Levels - <i>Plenary Room</i> ● Scaling Up Climate Innovations in cities: Lessons learned from 10 years of Smart cities and Communities projects - <i>Breakout Room 9 (5.5)</i>
Governance, Policy & Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strategic Settings for City Transitions: Using Regulatory Sandboxes, Policy Labs & Studios to Achieve Mission Success - <i>Breakout Room 3</i> ● Governance Innovation and Implementation: Building on Key Insights, Learnings and Good Practices in Four Critical Areas - <i>Breakout Room 1</i>
Peer learning	● Bridging Borders for Climate Neutrality: Partnering Ukrainian Cities with EU Mission Cities - <i>Breakout Room 5</i>
Technology: Energy, Mobility	● Building Resilient Public Transport Systems: Preparing for Future Shocks - <i>Breakout Room 4</i>



*Programme subject to change.



NetZeroCities’ Stand



SLOTS
Day 1 - 6 May
Day 2 - 7 May
Day 3 - 8 May

REGISTRATION	8:30 - 9:00	Portal Orientation Session & Learning opportunities for all cities EUROCITIES	Portal Orientation Session & Learning opportunities for all cities EUROCITIES	Portal Orientation Session & Learning opportunities for all cities EUROCITIES
MORNING BREAK	10:30-11:00	Green Bonds to Finance Investment Plans Climate City Capital Hub	NetZeroPlanner Demo: Climate action planning in practice EUROCITIES	
	11:00-11:30			Showcase of case studies on social innovation UPM
LUNCH	12:30-13:00	Introduction to the role of standards in the EU Cities Mission ICLEI	Leveraging External Capital with City Funds Climate City Capital Hub	
	12:45-13:15			Seat at the Table - Climate Transition through PPPs Climate City Capital Hub
	13:30-14:00	Community of Practice Meet and Greet: Connecting Cities, the Private Sector, and Beyond ? EUROCITIES	Peer-learning opportunities at National and EU-level EUROCITIES	
	13:45-14:15			Discussion on MEL, reporting and co-benefits ICLEI
AFTERNOON BREAK	15:30-16:00	Walk-through of the Social Innovation Resources on the NZC Portal UPM	Opportunities for Cities beyond the Mission, featuring the Online Planning Lab! EUROCITIES & POLIMI	Circular economy and positive energy districts ICLEI & VTT



*Programme subject to change.