Updated Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (3)

Deliverable D12.4

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
NZC	NetZeroCities

Summary

This updated version of the Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan reviews the actions carried out throughout the project based on the monitoring of results collected. It outlines the strategy and actions that were implemented to promote NetZeroCities and Mission Cities progress on the journey to climate neutrality during the 48 months of the project. Updates have been incorporated into communication objectives, target audiences, and key messages to reflect the advancements achieved by Mission Cities, Pilot and Twin Cities, encompassing the introduction of novel concepts necessitating clarification for the audience.

The report conducts an in-depth analysis of diverse communication tools employed for the promotion and awareness-building of NetZeroCities. These tools include the website, social media accounts, newsletters, videos, press releases, website articles, emails to cities, events, and communication campaigns. For each tool, the report provides a detailed account of activities and presents statistical insights into the results obtained.

This updated version of the Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan also includes figures on the project's key performance indicators, acknowledging the attainment or near-attainment of those set in D12.2 and D12.3.

This plan concludes with recommendations to improve future communication, dissemination, and exploitation activities in related projects NZC-SGA, NZC-SGA2 and the upcoming NZC-SGA3.

Keywords

NetZeroCities, communication, dissemination, awareness raising, exploitation.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

Communication, dissemination and exploitation activities are a top priority in European collaborative research projects funded under the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme.

The purpose of this deliverable is to describe the updated communication, dissemination and exploitation strategy implemented by NetZeroCities throughout the project and the results obtained. This document reviews and updates, when necessary, the communication objectives, target groups and key messages, gives an overview of the tools and channels that have been used to communicate with the audience and to disseminate project outcomes, and the results obtained. It also includes a list of results based on key performance indicators (KPIs).

The scope includes all project actions taken internally and externally in terms of knowledge dissemination and public communication regarding NetZeroCities and its results.

This plan is also intended as a guidance document for future communication, dissemination and exploitation activities to be undertaken in related projects such as SGA-NZC, SGA2-NZC and the upcoming SGA3-NZC. This is to ensure learnings are drawn from the NetZeroCities projects and outcomes are maximised even after the project duration.

1.2 Partner contributions

LGI has been leading on communication and dissemination activities for NetZeroCities. More specifically, LGI focused on the global communication of the project and its results, as well as the dissemination of results and progress to key stakeholders (cities' elected officials and cities' staff, regional authorities and national governments, researchers, urban stakeholders, etc.).

LGI organised regular WP12 meetings to involve all contributing partners in the communication, dissemination and exploitation activities and agree on the strategy and actions to be implemented.

A summary of partner contributions, based on the grant agreement can be found in the table below.

Partner	Contribution
LGI	**Task 12.1 – Project Communication** • Set up of the Communication and Dissemination Plan, regular updates of the plan • Communication toolkit including project branding • Setup of NZC website, regular updates and monitoring • Setup and animation of social media accounts (Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube) • Quarterly electronic newsletters • Monitoring of communication KPIs • Regular communication coordination meetings with the EU Cities Mission **Task 12.2 – Content production and media relations** • Oversight and participation to editorial process • Curation of an editorial calendar to effectively plan and coordinate communication activities across the consortium **Task 12.3 – City communication support** • Contribution to the design of a visual kit that cities can use in their local communication actions • Coordinate the creation of a Communication Playbook for cities **Task 12.4 – Building and engaging a broad Community of Practice (CoP)** • Define the scope, ambition, functioning and tools of the CoP • Animation of the CoP • Organise practitioners' participation in feedback sessions for platform services

	Task 12.5 – Awareness campaigns • Overall monitoring • Contribution to campaign promoting 'urban climate champions', using an Instagram wall **Task 12.6 – Events** • Coordination of the participation at relevant events and liaison with the EU Cities Mission **Communication to Cities – in addition to tasks** • Plan communications to cities together with the coordination team and partners • Regular emails to Mission Cities on the resources, events and activities provided by NetZeroCities to support them on the journey towards climate-neutrality.
ICLEI	**Task 12.1 – Project Communication** • Contribute to communication and dissemination plan (initial and updated versions) • Create an event and publication plan • Monitoring and update of KPIs related to publications **Task 12.2 – Content production and media relations** • Oversight and contribution to the editorial process • Lead content production • Coordinate the production of a spotlight series to valorise the project outcomes and coordinate the translation of key project materials into all EU languages • Collect and moderate 10+ stories and interviews from pilots and twins • Coordinate and monitor scientific publications and non-scientific publications in specialised media **Task 12.3 – City communication support** • Relay communications to cities in its network **Task 12.5 – Awareness campaigns** • Contribute to an awareness campaign highlighting the calls for cities and selected pilots with three 2-3 minutes videos presenting the overall project (ICLEI) **Task 12.6 – Events** • Organisation of the final conference: project conclusions & future vision + 1-day workshop (M48) • Promote the participation of NetZeroCities sessions in its own annual events and communications to its network
Climate-KIC	**Task 12.1 – Project Communication** • Contribute to communication and dissemination plan (initial and updated versions) • Monitoring and update of KPIs related to interactions with related projects and networks, as coordinator • Dissemination of communication materials and messages **Task 12.2 – Content production and media relations** • Participation in the editorial process **Task 12.3 – City communication support** • Contribution to strategy and monitoring • Coordination with the EU Cities Mission **Task 12.4 – Building and engaging a broad Community of Practice (CoP)** • Contribution to CoP strategy and monitoring, outreach to practitioners **Task 12.5 – Awareness campaigns** • Contribution to awareness campaigns strategies and monitoring **Task 12.6 – Events** • Coordinate the organisation of three open conferences possibly connected to existing events. • Organisation of the first open conference in M8: 0.5-day conference + 1.5-day workshops including feedback sessions **Communication to Cities**

	• Contribution to regular emails to Mission Cities on the resources, events and activities provided NetZeroCities to support them on the journey towards climate-neutrality.
Climate Alliance	**Task 12.4 – Building and engaging a broad Community of Practice** • Contribution to the CoP strategy • Contribution to the animation of a community of interested practitioners **Task 12.5 – Awareness campaigns** • Contribute to the awareness campaign on platform go-live and call announcement
DML	**Task 12.2 – Content production and media relations** • Contribution to the editorial process • Support content production by designing infographics and visualization of concepts of the consortium's approach, ambition level and flow of the programme **Task 12.3 – City communication support** • Leading the design of a visual kit that cities can use in their local communication actions • Contribution to the Communication Playbook
Eurocities	**Task 12.3 – City communication support** • Support cities in their local campaigns about NetZeroCities and their local actions (CCC, pilots, etc.) by coordinating with communication/PR offices and providing brand material. • Coordinate interactions with communication offices in cities **Task 12.5 – Awareness campaigns** • Contribute to an awareness campaign on the platform go-live and call announcement **Task 12.6 – Events** • Organisation of 1-day mid-term conference, to present the platform and pilots + celebration ceremony for CCC signatories+ 1-day networking between pilots and twin cities (M24) • Promote the participation of NetZeroCities sessions in its own annual events and communications to its network
Energy Cities	**Task 12.3 – City communication support** • Relay communications to cities in its networks **Task 12.5 – Awareness campaigns** • Coordination of awareness campaigns • Contribute to the awareness campaign on platform go-live and call announcement • Contribute to the awareness campaign highlighting the calls for cities and selected pilots **Task 12.6 – Events** • Promote the participation of NetZeroCities sessions in its own annual events and communications to its network
UITP	**Task 12.4 – City communication support** • Contribution to the CoP strategy • Contribution to the animation of a community of interested practitioners **Task 12.6 – Events** • Promote the participation of NetZeroCities sessions in its own annual events and communications to its network
Demos	**Task 12.2 – Content production and media relations** • Contribution to the editorial process • Contribution to the production of spotlight series to valorise the project outcomes
OASC	**Task 12.3 – City communication support** • Relay communications to cities in its networks **Task 12.6 – Events** • Promote the participation of NetZeroCities sessions in its own annual events and communications to its network

ERRIN	**Task 12.3 – City communication support**
	• Relay communications to cities in its networks
	Task 12.6 – Events
	• Promote the participation of NetZeroCities sessions in its own annual events and communications to its network
RCN	**Task 12.3 – City communication support**
	• Relay communications to cities in its networks
	Task 12.6 – Events
	• Promote the participation of NetZeroCities sessions in its own annual events and communications to its network
All partners	**All tasks**
	• All partners will contribute to WP12, by relaying communication and announcements from other tasks (including on open calls), authoring publications, contributing to translations and press coverage
	• Dissemination of communication materials and messages
	• Reporting on their participation to events, publications, and communication activities

Table 1: Partner contributions

1.3 Relation to other activities

The success of the overall communication and dissemination strategy depends on, and is linked to, the work undertaken in other WPs. Communication and dissemination activities have relied on the work of all partners and their collaboration in providing WP12 with information on their activities and achievements and in sharing relevant information about the project to their own contacts and networks.

The work of WP12 is particularly interrelated with the work of the following WPs:

- [WP1] WP12 to provide visual identity support for CCC resources package, WP1 to provide information on city contract advancement, signatory process. WP1 to provide WP12 with the inputs to be shared with Mission Cities for distribution.

- [WP2] Liaison to define communication & outreach indicators, and to communicate on figures originating from monitoring KPIs in the project communication.

- [WP3] WP12 to provide visual identity support for the online portal and to provide inputs on portal development, in particular with regards to Task 12.4 Building the Community of Practice. WP3 to provide WP12 with the inputs to be shared with Mission Cities (and beyond) for distribution. WP12 to use the Portal to disseminate relevant resources and materials to cities.

- [WP4] WP12 and WP4 to work together for the development of a specific communication campaign to ensure that the call for Pilots reaches an extensive and diverse audience and to publish the call results. Development of several cross- fertilization activities with the city pilots, such as, mini-reports of cities' testimonies. WP4 to provide the inputs to be shared with cities to WP12 for distribution to Mission Cities and non-Mission Cities. WP12 to develop a specific webpage on Pilot Cities to present the programme, the selected Pilots and upcoming calls.

- [WP5] WP12 to provide communication support for the call for Twins (Task 5.2) – visual identity, development of a communication campaign. WP5 to provide WP12 with the inputs to be shared with a wide audience of cities in Europe for distribution. WP12 to develop a specific webpage on the Twinning Programme with information on the learning modules, the activities foreseen and the open calls. Collaboration on multi-media case studies promotion.

- [WP6-10] WPs 6 to 10 to provide WP12 with the inputs to be shared with Mission Cities (and beyond when relevant) for distribution.

- [WP8 and WP10] may be consulted for inputs during the building of the project community of practice (stakeholders mapping and identification). WP12 will present some of the results of these WPs in an attractive and public way.

- [WP11] General coordination on operations. Coordination between Task 11.3 on the annual satisfaction surveys towards cities and Task 12.3 "City communication support".

- [WP13] Coordination between WP12 and WP13 on the publication and communication around the calls for City Panels and Focus Groups, coordination on visual elements (infographic on city interaction). City Panel meeting on communication.

- [WP14] WP12 to contribute to D14.6 policy framework media package

Regular liaison took place with all WPs to collect information and inputs to fuel content into the communication channels of the project. This liaison is also the way for WP12 to be aware of key achievements and milestones in other WPs to be able to communicate efficiently about them.

2 Objectives

Based on the needs of the project, NetZeroCities main communication and dissemination objectives have been including the following:

- **To ensure Mission Cities are fully informed on NetZeroCities and the services, tools and resources it provides and are engaged with in an efficient way:**
  - Contributing to embarking Mission Cities in the climate-neutrality journey and CCC process
  - Contributing to making sure Mission Cities have a clear picture of the key concepts in NZC, of the work ahead of them and of the ways of working with NZC
  - Communicating information in a way that provides clarity and creates buy-in from Mission Cities contact points as well as all municipality stakeholders
  - Ensuring Mission Cities are aware of the tools and resources produced by consortium members to support their journey towards climate-neutrality by 2030
  - Ensuring Mission Cities are aware of how to access the services and resources at their disposal, in particular the NetZeroCities Portal
  - Ensuring Mission Cities are aware of the initiatives taking place in other Mission Cities by showcasing best practices
  - Ensuring Mission Cities receive information shared by the European Commission Cities Mission team whenever there is a need

- **To ensure that all cities – including both Mission Cities and non-Mission Cities – are aware of the opportunities at their disposal:**
  - Maximising the traction of the project, for cities to massively engage in the EU Mission and CCC processes, the Platform, and applying for the pilot and twin calls
  - Mobilising cities for climate action
  - Communicating clearly on NZC's offer to cities
  - Creating the conditions to embark cities that are not yet at the forefront of climate action
  - Inspiring cities that aren't part of the Mission to take climate action by showcasing what is happening in Mission Cities

- **To support Mission Cities wishing to communicate to their citizens** on the Mission and the NZC action:
  - Cities themselves will lead on direct outreach to citizens
  - NZC focuses on building capabilities and supporting cities in their engagement efforts and providing communication materials and support as part of Task 12.3.

- **To raise awareness of NetZeroCities** with EU, national and regional policymakers; practitioners, researchers and innovators; NGOs and civil society organisations; and to some extent the general public

- **To demonstrate a clear value for practitioners to engage in a new, ambitious roadmap**, to build capacities and capabilities on innovative forms of practice, and to get access to a wide community of cities

- **To position NetZeroCities as a thought leader** in the climate neutrality and sustainable and smart cities space
  - Building a strong image to be able to influence the conversation
  - Supporting better-informed policies at city, regional, national and EU levels
  - Showing the link and collaboration with other EU missions related to climate change

- **To create visibility and acceptance around critical concepts** such as:
  - Climate-Neutrality
  - Systemic Innovation
  - Social innovation
  - The Climate City Contract

- **To establish NetZeroCities as the reference platform for climate neutral cities**
  - Having a clear narrative on the added value of NZC in a crowded environment of platforms and initiatives
  - Ensuring that the project stands out as a One-Stop-Shop for cities, both Mission Cities and non-Mission Cities

- **To support the exploitation of the NZC platform**, services, pilots and solutions

Other objectives include the following:

- To promote project findings to the professional and general public across the EU

- To disseminate knowledge and findings widely and efficiently to all stakeholder groups

- To raise awareness on the critical role of cities to achieve climate neutrality

- To build a community of practitioners

- Form synergies with other related EU initiatives

3 Communication and dissemination strategy

The overall NetZeroCities communication and dissemination strategy is based on a series of key messages tailored for specific audiences and comprehensive and consistent project description. Both have been implemented throughout the different channels and tools described in a dedicated section in this deliverable.

3.1 Target audiences

The NetZeroCities project aims to reach key target groups through its communication and dissemination strategy including cities, public and private stakeholders, civil society, practitioners, citizens and the media. Each communication action has been targeted to different levels: local, nationwide, European and global. The relevance and importance of communicating/disseminating to each stakeholder group is summarised in the table below.

Throughout the NetZeroCities project, cities remained the main target audience. This includes Mission Cities selected in April 2022, but also Pilot Cities selected in March 2023 and Twin Cities selected in September 2023.

Target audience		Relevance
Mission Cities	Elected officials (mayors, city council members and city representatives)	• The continuous support and buy-in of elected officials are critical for the success of the Mission in all Mission Cities. • They need to have a clear picture of the added value of being part of the Mission and receiving support from NZC
	Staff working on the Mission	• Climate officers / Mission officers within municipalities need to have a clear picture of the key concepts and work to be undertaken. • They need to be embarked with a clear, focused and positive narrative. • Continuous buy-in, ownership is critical for success, and for them to embark other stakeholders within and beyond the municipality.
	Technical staff within cities and municipalities	• The technical staff within cities and municipalities is comprised of experts in many different areas relevant to the climate transition: energy, housing, mobility, climate strategy, etc. • Buy-in from this audience is very important for the success of the implementation of the Mission.
	Local public bodies	• The involvement of bodies such as local development agencies, mobility agencies, public housing agencies and city transport companies is important to implement climate strategy policies and achieve climate-neutrality objectives.
Cities that are not part of the 100+ Mission Cities	Elected officials (mayors, city council members and city representatives)	• Elected officials have the leadership required to engage their city in climate action. • Cities are invited to widely use the Platform, beyond Mission Cities • They can apply for the Twinning Programe calls.
	Technical staff within cities and municipalities	• The technical staff within cities and municipalities is comprised of experts in many different areas relevant to the climate transition: energy, housing, mobility, climate strategy, etc.
	Local public bodies	• The involvement of bodies such as local development agencies, mobility agencies, public housing agencies and city transport companies is important to implement climate

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	strategy policies and achieve climate-neutrality objectives.
Pilot Cities	• Cities in Pilot Cities Programme receive funding and dedicated support to experiment, test and learn ways of accelerating the transition towards climate neutrality
Twin Cities	• Twin Cities, though not necessarily Mission Cities, engage with NZC and cities in the Pilot Cities Programme. They are key stakeholders for the replication of learnings and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 (objective 2 of the EU Cities Mission)
Public stakeholders (EU, national and regional and local decision-makers)	• Cities efforts need to be supported and replicated to achieve the EU's climate neutrality target by 2050. In this sense, other forms of local governments, regions, national governments and European institutions should be targeted to ensure appropriate support is provided to cities at local and national level. • National Platforms supporting the EU Cities Mission and Mission Cities at national or regional level are particularly targeted.
Private stakeholders	• Private stakeholders working with cities are key partners for cities to reach their climate targets • Private finance will be necessary to fund cities' transformative action and help them reach the net zero target by 2030.
Practitioners (researchers, corporates, startups, civil society representative)	• Practitioners in the field of urban sustainability and climate action are targeted via the NZC's Community of Practice (CoP) to support cities and get familiar with the approaches, service and tools provided by the project.
Civil society	• Civil society actors are key to encourage the development of climate action and city policies and programmes tackling climate issues at scale.
Citizens	• Decarbonisation of our cities requires deep citizen engagement to guarantee acceptation but also continuous support and participation.
Media	• Media are key to raise awareness on climate issues and the role of cities in achieving climate neutrality, as well as to increase the visibility of the EU Mission for 100 climate-neutral and smart cities and NZC among key stakeholders.
Consortium members	• Internal communication within the consortium is critical to ensure a common level of information and good coordination towards the implementation of the project activities.

Table 2: Relevance of each target audience

3.2 Key messages

A set of tailored messages for NetZeroCities was developed at the beginning of the project. They have been updated throughout the project duration, based on the results and continuous analysis.

Target audience		Key messages
Mission Cities	Elected officials (mayors, city council members and city representatives)	- As part of the EU's Mission "100 Climate Neutral and Smart City" your city is receiving tailored support and engaging in a Climate City Contract process - NetZeroCities is here to support your city in its journey to become climate-neutral by 2030 with the tools, resources, and expertise you need. - By being part of the Mission, your city is paving the way for an inclusive, thriving, climate resilient and sustainable future, and for other European cities to reach climate neutrality by 2050. - Obtaining the Mission Label awarded by the European Commission showcases your city as a pioneering city in the pursuit of climate neutrality and will help you leverage support.
	Mission Cities Officers & Technical Staff	- NetZeroCities is providing the tools, resources and services to support your city in its journey towards climate neutrality - NetZeroCities is supporting you every step of the way to set up a Climate City Contract to enable a systemic transformation and achieve climate-neutrality. - The Pilot Cities Programme enables you to receive additional expertise and support to test and experiment innovative solutions of your Climate City Contract - Being part of the EU Cities Mission allows you to exchange with peers, promote your work and learn from other cities. - NetZeroCities gives you access to a vast body of relevant knowledge, research, innovation and useful tools, and puts you in contact with your counterparts in other cities, as well as other key actors.
	Local public bodies	- NetZeroCities is supporting your city in its journey towards climate neutrality - You will be able to capitalise on an exhaustive database of innovative solutions to reach climate neutrality. - NetZeroCities gives you access to a vast body of relevant knowledge, research, innovation and useful tools, and puts you in contact with your counterparts in other cities, as well as other key actors.
Cities beyond Mission Cities	Elected officials (mayors, city council members and city representatives)	Apply to our Twin Cities calls to learn and experiment new solutions to climate issues and to position your city as a leader in climate neutrality

		• Our Twinning Programme offers the opportunity to be paired with a Pilot City to share experiences and best practices • The NetZeroCities Platform provides tools and services to help your city regardless of where it finds itself in its journey to climate neutrality • Engage in climate action and pave the way for an inclusive, thriving, climate resilient and sustainable future.
	Technical staff within municipalities	• The NetZeroCities platform provides all cities with online resources to help them achieve climate neutrality. Check out our online Portal! • The NZC Portal provides access to a vast body of relevant knowledge, research, innovation and useful tools, and will put you in contact with your counterparts in other cities, as well as other key actors. • The Twin Cities Programmes led by NetZeroCities enables cities to receive expertise and support to test and experiment innovative solutions
	Local public bodies	• The NetZeroCities platform provides all cities with online resources to help them achieve climate neutrality. Check out our online Portal! • The NZC Portal provides access to a vast body of relevant knowledge, research, innovation and useful tools, and will put you in contact with your counterparts in other cities, as well as other key actors.
Pilot Cities		• Your city has a key role to play as a frontrunner, testing innovative approaches to a rapid climate transition, and sharing your learnings with others for accelerated replication.
Twin Cities		• Your city is joining a growing network of cities engaging with the EU's Cities Mission, and taking the opportunity to learn with other cities. • By engaging with the Twinning learning programme, you are putting your city on track for accelerated climate action.
Public stakeholders (EU, national and regional and local decision-makers)		• Reaching the EU's net zero emissions goal by 2050 will require a collective effort at local, national, and European level. Cities are key to reach climate neutrality targets and will need global policy support to get there. • Climate neutrality by 2030 requires rapid replication of learnings and scale-up of good practices implemented by cities. Cities need your support!
Private stakeholders		• Joining cities' efforts in reaching climate neutrality by 2030 will position your company as a frontrunner in climate action. • Contributing to financing or supporting frontrunner cities' activities is a significant

	- opportunity to capitalise on the magnitude of the transition to climate neutrality - Joining the climate transition will create new business opportunities for your company
Practitioners	Getting involved in the NZC community of practice will enable you to build capacities and capabilities on innovative forms of practice and connect you with a wide community
Civil society	- NetZeroCities provide effective solutions, tools and support for cities to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. - Actions at city level are crucial to reach the EU's climate neutrality target by 2050.
Citizens	- Cities are key to achieving climate neutrality as fast as possible. - Cities can help ensure our decarbonisation efforts are equitable and contribute to the well-being of European communities. - Citizen action will be needed to get everyone on board and reach climate neutrality at city level. You can take action in your city!
Media	- NZC enables European cities and citizens to show the way forward towards an inclusive, thriving, climate resilient and sustainable future. - We provide the tools, resources, and expertise needed for cities to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. - We conduct a Pilot Cities Programme to enable cities to experiment innovation solutions to address climate change; and a Twin Cities programme to share and replicate learnings from Pilot Cities.

Table 3: Key messages for each target audience

3.3 Timeline of deliverables & milestones

An updated timeline gathering all key communication and dissemination activities throughout the project is available below with deliverables indicated in green colour. This timeline has been continuously updated to reflect key activities during the project.

M24
Announcement of the Call for Twin Cities results
D12.3 Updated Communication & Dissemination & Exploitation Plan

M26
D12.10 Proceedings of the 2nd NetZeroCities/Cities Mission Conference

M36
D12.7 Report on three awareness campaigns

M48
3rd NetZeroCities/Cities Mission Conference
D12.11 Proceedings of the 3rd NetZeroCities/Cities Mission Conference

M47
D12.4 Updated Communication & Dissemination & Exploitation Plan

Figure 1: Timeline

4   Management

4.1 Content flow

To facilitate the flow of information, a process has been established to allow all partners to collaborate on content creation and relay the information shared through NZC communication channels. Regular meetings with the Cities Mission Secretariat took place during the project to coordinate on key communication and dissemination activities and have relevant communication materials reviewed and approved by the Mission.

CITIES MISSION

COORDINATOR

CHANNELS:
PROJECT WEBSITE
SOCIAL MEDIA
NEWSLETTERS
MEDIA
EXTERNAL EVENTS
PUBLICATIONS
PARTNER CHANNELS
EU DISSEMINATION
CHANNELS

PARTNERS

CONTENT FLOW   APPROVAL   APPROVAL   DISTRIBUTION

C&D TEAM IN WP12

Figure 2: Content information flow

The project has been using Microsoft Teams to share information across partners. As part of the cross grant agreements Theme structure, each WP has a dedicated MS Teams channel to interact and communicate with all WP members. In addition a folder containing communication and style guidelines, the NZC logo, partners logos, presentations, press releases, roll up, virtual backgrounds, visual resources, etc. was created for all consortium partners.

The WP12 team has also created an editorial calendar to keep track of the project key milestones and the communication activities planned to promote them. Project partners are encouraged to add key outputs of their WPs to the calendar so that WP12 can plan the necessary communication actions.

Regular meetings are organised to coordinate on the WP tasks and update the editorial calendar based on project milestones.

4.2 Role and responsibility of partners in monitoring outcomes

For monitoring and reporting purposes, as well as to ease the flow of information and simplify the communication process between partners, an online communication ticketing system was created, including a 'Communication & Dissemination Tracker'. This form is used by partners to inform the C&D team of their participation in a communication or dissemination activity related to the NetZeroCities project. This is crucial to tracking communication and dissemination efforts for the purpose of internal strategic decisions as well as reporting to the European Commission and is dependent on the participation of partners. WP12 releases frequent reminders that partners can fill out the form when they participate in an event, attend a conference related to the NetZeroCities project or publish an article about the project, among other activities. A reminder is included as a recurrent section in NetZeroCities internal newsletter.

5 Communication and dissemination handbook

This section presents the NetZeroCities project's visual identity and the main communication and dissemination channels and tools.

5.1 Visual identity and communication materials

The visual identity of NetZeroCities has been set up early on in the project and has been aligned with that of the Cities Mission to enable a better understanding of NZC's role as the Mission Platform. The visual alignment has been implemented following the Visual Identity Guidelines for Horizon Europe Missions. Regular updates have been made as more detailed guidelines were provided by the European Commission throughout the project.

All the communication and dissemination tools described in this deliverable are consistent with the NetZeroCities project's brand identity. A Communication and Dissemination Handbook has been developed and regularly updated to provide partners guidelines on how to use the visual identity of the project, how to present the project, how to use social media, etc.

5.1.1 EU emblem and acknowledgement

In addition, all materials, including scientific papers and publications produced by the project, include the mandatory EU emblem, acknowledgement and required disclaimer with the sentences below (Article 29.4). Moreover, it is important to note that "when displayed with another logo, the EU emblem must have appropriate prominence" (Article 29.4).

Figure 3: EU emblem and acknowledgement

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101036519. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

Figure 4: EU disclaimer

Due to space constraints, the following simplified version of the EU funding acknowledgement is used in social media visuals:

Funded by the European Union

5.1.2 Logo

One of the first communications actions (Task 12.1) was to develop the project's visual identity. To build its brand recognition from the very beginning, a logo was designed on time for the kick-off meeting of the project. It is associated and included in all paper and electronic documentation as well as promotional materials. To ensure a strong project identity, several logo versions were designed, analysed and altered to best represent NZC in the simplest and clearest way possible.

The logo is bold, classic and colourful, and aligned with the Cities Mission's visual identity. Emphasis is placed on the 'ZERO' with the 'O' that serves as both the letter and the logo mark. The logo mark was designed to resemble the SDG wheel and to represent all the different aspects and complexities associated with achieving carbon neutrality in cities: Green is from SDG 13 Climate Action, the yellow from SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, orange from SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, dark orange from SDG 9 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure, fuchsia SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities and blue SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

To highlight NetZeroCitie's role as the Cities Mission's Platform, the following tagline was added to the logo:

EU Mission Platform
Climate Neutral and Smart Cities

The logo is included in all documentation and promotional materials and guarantees the visual identity of the project.

Figure 5: Official logo

Several   other   logo   options   were   designed   to   offer   versatility.

Figure 6: Examples of logo variations

In text, the project should be referred to as NetZeroCities.

5.1.3 Colours

HEX#0d5364
RGB(18, 83, 100)

HEX#558692
RGB(85, 134, 146)

HEX#a2d5d0
RGB(162, 213, 208)

HEX#b0d10e
RGB(176, 209, 14)

HEX#a2d5d0 + #b0d10e
RGB(162, 213, 208) + (176, 209, 14)
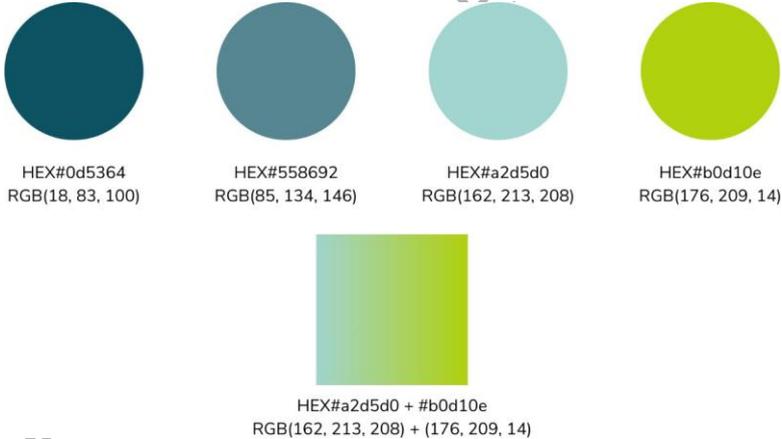
Figure 7: NZC colour scheme

In addition to the colours of the logo, different shades of blue and green will be used as primary colours to match the Mission's visual identity. The above gradient is frequently used as background in visual materials such as social media posts. Single colour backgrounds using #0d5364 and #a2d5d0 are also used to keep the visual materials varied and attractive. Other colours used in the NZC logo such as pink and orange are also used as secondary colours when needed.

5.1.4 Font

The fonts selected for NZC are the following:

- Logo font: Myriad Pro

- PPT fonts: Arial

- Body Text in word documents: Arial

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5.1.5 Project presentation template

A PowerPoint presentation template was designed and distributed to all partners shortly after the start of the project. Easy to use and versatile, the template adds value to the NetZeroCities brand and ensures the project's visibility when presented at events or conferences.

Figure 8: PowerPoint template

5.1.6 Deliverable template

The Word document template was updated to keep it consistent with the NetZeroCities visual identity. The template makes it easy for partners to collaborate on deliverables.
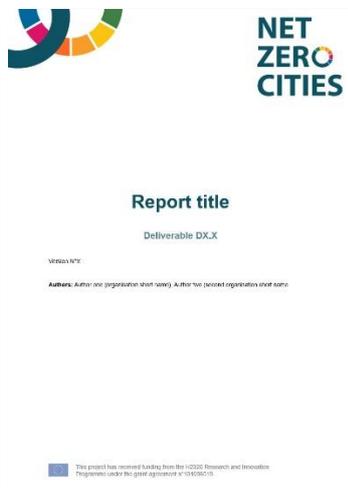
Figure 9: Deliverable template cover

All templates are available on the Teams platform that is being used as one of the main communication channels among consortium partners. A specific folder called Templates is available under the general channel. On this channel, partners can also access the Communication Toolkit folder which contains several communication materials such as the NZC's logo, partners' logos, and the press releases.

5.1.7 Social media visuals

In cooperation with the EU Cities Mission Secretariat and the RTD Graphic Team, several templates for social media visuals have been created. These templates are aligned with the European Missions Visual Identity Guidelines and include a reference to the EU Cities Mission and the EU Cities Mission icon, the Mission branded gradient or colours, the funding acknowledgement and a copyright sentence related to the use of the EU Cities Mission icon. See below a few examples of social media visuals generated from the templates. A new approach was introduced in 2025, using new 'Part of the EU Cities Mission' visuals provided by the European Commission.

Figure 10: Examples of social media visuals

Figure 11: Examples of social media visuals (with 'Part of the EU Mission' visual)

NetZeroCities uses different visual formats on social media, such as GIFs, carousels, square images, etc. The communication team has explored new ideas and formats to engage people interested in climate matters on social media throughout the project.

5.1.8 Other materials

Standard presentation: a standard presentation was developed in English and updated to align it visually with the Cities Mission branding. The standard presentation has been improved and updated over time in order to provide partners with a variety of design options to accommodate different needs depending on the presentation requirements. The presentation has been updated to reflect the broad spectrum of activities undertaken by the Mission Platform under NetZeroCities and subsequent grant agreements (SGA-NZC, SGA2-NZC), providing a consistent narrative across projects.

Partners are able to use this standard presentation at conferences, events, workshops and meetings with stakeholders, and are free to adapt and translate it based on their needs.

Figure 12: NZC Standard Presentation

Flyer: a flyer has been designed to be distributed at workshops and events organised by NetZeroCities, as well as at external events. It includes key messages, objectives, expected impacts and consortium members and contact information. The flyer is printed on demand to avoid waste. It is also available on NetZeroCities website here.

Figure 13: NetZeroCities flyer

Roll-up: a roll-up was designed for display at various events and conferences attended by project partners. It includes visual elements that represent the project, a brief summary, consortium members and contact information. The roll-up was updated and re-printed during the project to accommodate updates in partner's logo. The roll-up is regularly shipped to events the project participates in.

Figure 14: NZC roll up

Illustrations and diagrams for presentations: A series of illustrations and diagrams have been created by Dark Matter Labs and LGI to illustrate and represent some of the key elements of NZC, such as the Climate City Contract, the Climate Transition Map, the concept of System Innovation, the

NET ZERO CITIES

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework, etc. All illustrations are available in the shared Teams for partners to easily access them and use them in their presentations and documents.
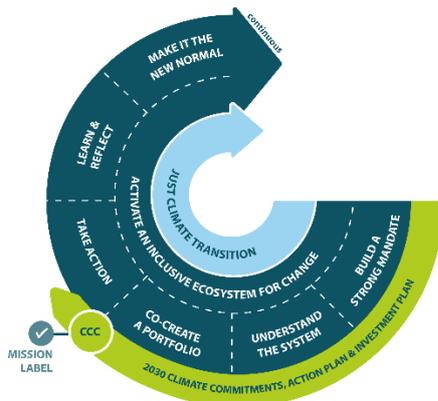

Figure 15: Example of an illustration - Climate Transition Map diagram

5.2 Project description

A text describing NetZeroCities has been drafted in two versions (short and long) **to ensure a comprehensive and consistent message about the project**. The project descriptions can be used by all partners in materials dedicated to promoting, communicating and disseminating the results of NetZeroCities —such as flyers, PowerPoint presentations, and articles published by the partners—and to present the project at events or conferences. They have undergone slight updates during the course of the project to remain as precise and accurate as possible.

Short version:

NetZeroCities is a project consortium managing presently the EU Cities Mission platform. The project supports the 112 European cities known as the Mission Cities in drastically reducing their greenhouse gas emissions to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. The EU Cities Mission supports the European Green Deal in building a low-carbon, climate-resilient future through research and innovation.

Long version:

NetZeroCities is a project consortium, managing presently the EU Cities Mission platform. The project supports the 112 European cities known as the Mission Cities in drastically reducing their greenhouse gas emissions to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. The EU Cities Mission supports the European Green Deal in building a low-carbon, climate-resilient future through research and innovation.

NetZeroCities tailors advanced capabilities related to systemic change, citizen engagement and democratic governance, capital and financial structuring, and social innovation, to ensure cities have access to the best expertise available anywhere in the world. The project recognises the need for cities to develop specific strategies that are tailored to suit local and regional contexts and supports them by developing and promoting new and existing tools, resources, and expertise into a one-stop shop platform that is accessible to all cities through an online portal. In addition, the project supports a series of Pilot Cities to help drive rapid learning about how to achieve climate neutrality at the city scale. Cities benefit from hands-on assistance and dedicated services to achieve their net-zero goals.

NetZeroCities is part of the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme in support of the [European Union's Green Deal](#) *and the EU Mission 100 Climate- Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 launched as part of the Horizon Europe programme, by seeking to scale the activities of this project*

across 100 cities, and to tackle the unprecedented capital investments needed to make such a transformation possible.

5.3 Online resources

5.3.1 Website

The NetZeroCities project website was launched in January 2022: www.netzerocities.eu.

The website is the main primary information source for the project and is where most stakeholders come to find out more about its activities. The design is intentionally tailored to be accessible and appealing, and aligned with the project's communication objectives to engage stakeholders. During the whole course of the project, the website has been continuously updated with news, events, communication items, deliverables and results to keep frequent visitors and target audiences engaged.
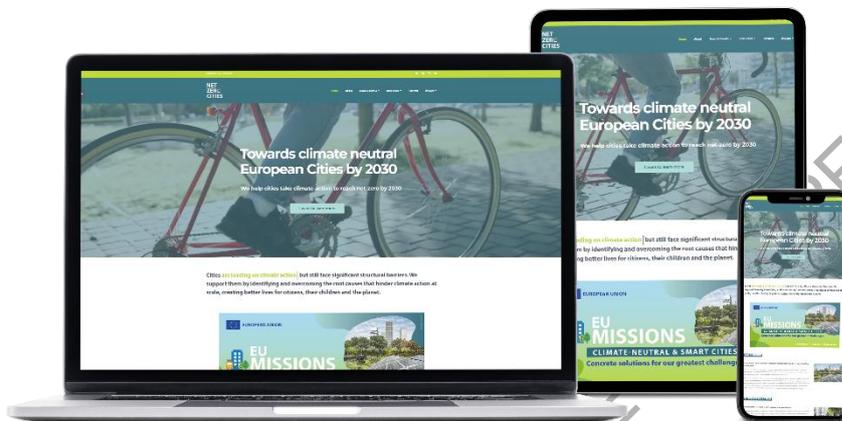
Figure 16: The NetZeroCities website

The website underwent several changes in its structure in the second half of the project. This is to better accommodate the growing amount of information needing to be reflected as the project progressed and as the SGA-NZC and SGA2-NZC grant agreements came into force, noting these projects are also using the www.netzerocities.eu website as the main platform to showcase their activities and results. The current structure of the NetZeroCities is the following:

- Homepage: provides information on the NetZeroCities as the Mission Platform, its context and ambition, the expected impacts and objectives, key definitions such as climate neutrality how to get involved in the project, the latest news and upcoming events, the resources available, the engage section of the website with specific information for cities and practitioners, etc.

- About section:

    o NetZeroCities: presents the role of NetZeroCities as the Cities Mission Platform

    o 112 Mission Cities: page showcasing the 112 Mission Cities participating in the EU Cities Mission.

    o Mayors Advisory Group: presents the Cities Mission Mayors Advisory Group

    o Consortium partners page: presents the consortium

    o Our network: presents initiatives NetZeroCities partners with

- Community of Practice: describes the Community of Practice and how to join it.

- News & Events:

- o News: activities, milestones, results and news related to the project will be featured in articles and posts

- o Events: past and upcoming events internal and external to the project will be updated regularly

- o Cities Mission Conference: this page was created to announce the 2023 Conference and host the event programme

- o Procurement: gives access to request for proposals issued by NetZeroCities via the City Expert Support Facility mechanism

- Resources:

  - o Media: gathers promotional materials, press releases and newsletters

  - o Results & Publications: public deliverables and reports, and publications

- Cities:

  - o What's in it for Cities: page explaining what NZC can offer to cities

  - o Climate City Contract: explains the Climate City Contract Process

  - o Capability building programmes: gives access to Pilot and Twinning Programme pages

- NetZeroCities Portal: direct link to the online Portal

In the footer, accessible on all pages, users can find the EU funding emblem and acknowledgement, name of the coordinator, project email, subscription link to the newsletter, recent posts, links to the project social media accounts and access the partner area.

Browser compatibility: the website is compatible with web browsers on all common operating systems. These include various versions of Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Opera and Chrome. The layout of the website is responsive and adjusts based on the screen size of the device it is viewed on, regardless of whether the device used is a desktop, tablet or mobile phone.

Monitoring: to understand how the website is used by visitors, the Ionos analytics tool has been employed.

Since its launch until 20 August 2025 the NZC website has **1.039.954 visitors, totalling 1.206.067 sessions and more than 2.214.098 page views**, exceeding by far the set KPI in the first version of the Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (20 000 page views and 6000 visitors). The most visited pages are the homepage, the Pilot Cities Programme page and the Mission Cities page. The majority of visitors are located in Europe, followed by North America and Asia.

5.4 Social media

Several social media channels, including Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube, are used to communicate on the project and disseminate its results in an effective and impactful way.

The following audiences are targeted and engaged with across all platforms:

- Cities

- Public stakeholders

- Private stakeholders

- Civil society

- Practitioners

- Citizens

- Media

A list of hashtags related to NetZeroCities has been developed and revised with D12.3. These hashtags are used to maximise the project's visibility on all channels. Specific hashtags have been created for specific communication campaigns around key milestones such as the launch of the Call for Twin Cities and the Call for Pilot Cities.

General	Specific
#HorizonEU	#MissionCities
#HorizonEurope	#EUMissions
#H2020	#ClimateNeutral
#Horizon2020	#ClimateNeutrality
#Cities	#PilotCities
#ClimateAction	#TwinCities
#CINEA_EU	#UrbanClimateChampions
#EUGreenDeal	

Table 4: Hashtags

5.4.1 X (former Twitter)

An X (former Twitter) account was created at the start of the project with the handle **@NetZeroCitiesEU**.
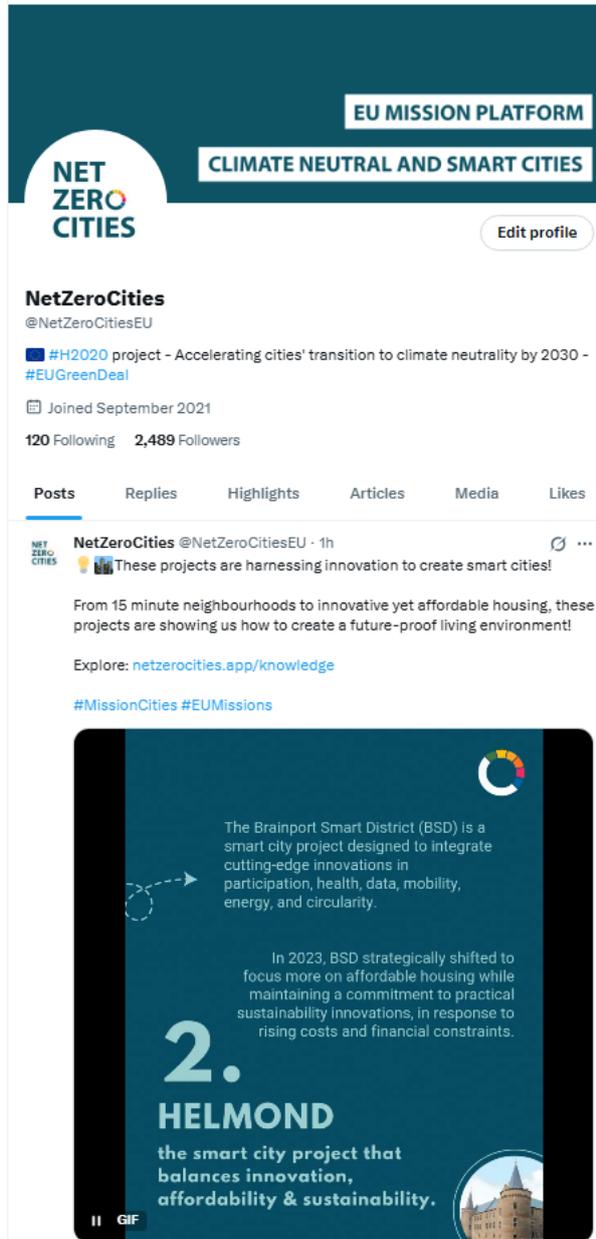
Figure 17: X (former Twitter) account

X has been used as one of the main channels to build a project's online community and to disseminate the results. The three main objectives set for X were to:

- Build relationships and engage with target audiences

- Disseminate knowledge on climate neutrality and cities actions in that matter

- Bring the NetZeroCities results closer to the general public, journalists, and policymakers

The NetZeroCities X account is managed daily. In order to be as responsive, efficient and proactive on the channel as possible, the following actions are taken:

- Target at least three tweet/retweet every week

- Reply to users who tweet or mention @NetZeroCitiesEU

- Follow and engage users who tweet content related to NetZeroCities activities

- Track specific words, mentions and trending hashtags

X serves as a channel for the mass distribution of news published on the website, advertise events that will be attended by NetZeroCities partners and promote content generated by the project. Partners involved in communication activities closely monitor related content posted by other social media accounts to share it on the NetZeroCities X account.

Monitoring: X Analytics has been used to analyse the results achieved. As of 20 August 2025, the NetZeroCities Twitter account has **2,489** followers. The growth in the number of followers has been limited in the final two years of the project following the change in ownership and editorial line of the platform and many users leaving. Moving to the platform Bluesky to promote the activities of the Mission Platform is envisaged under SGA-NZC & SGA2 NZC.

Figure 18:Examples of X posts in the final year of the project

5.4.2 LinkedIn

A LinkedIn page was created for NetZeroCities, with the following handle: **@NetZeroCitiesEU**. The NetZeroCities LinkedIn account is managed daily. In terms of audience, a specific focus on city officials; EU, national and regional policymakers; practitioners, researchers and innovators and public/private stakeholders is operated.

Figure 19: LinkedIn account

In order to be as responsive, efficient, and proactive on the channel as possible, the following actions are taken:

- Target at least five posts or shares every week

- Reply to users who mention @NetZeroCitiesEU

- Follow and engage users who post content related to NetZeroCities activities

- Track specific words, mentions and trending hashtags

Monitoring: LinkedIn Analytics has been used to analyse the results achieved. As of 20 August 2025, the NetZeroCities LinkedIn account has **19,726** followers exceeding both initial and revised KPIs (initial KPI was 2000 followers by M48, revised KPI in M12 was 10000 followers by M48, and revised KPI in M24 was 15,000 followers by M48).
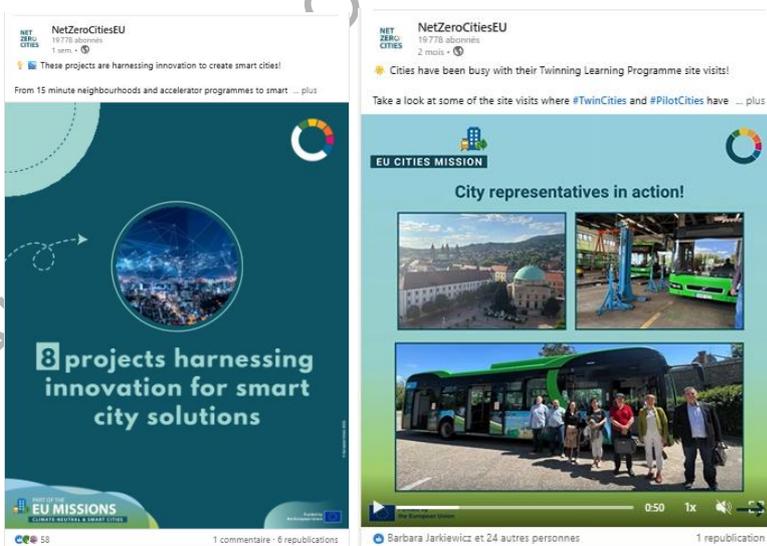
Figure 20: Examples of LinkedIn posts in the final year of the project

5.4.3 Instagram

An Instagram account was created for the NetZeroCities project under the handle **@netzerocitieseu**.

Figure 21: Instagram account

In addition to the target audiences listed above, the Instagram account is used to engage with influencers and the younger generation in the climate change space who are often more active on this platform than on Twitter or LinkedIn.

The rhythm of publications on the Instagram account increased throughout the project. New formats were used to engage with the audience, in particular stories that favour direct interactions with followers.

Figure 22: Example of Instagram patterns used

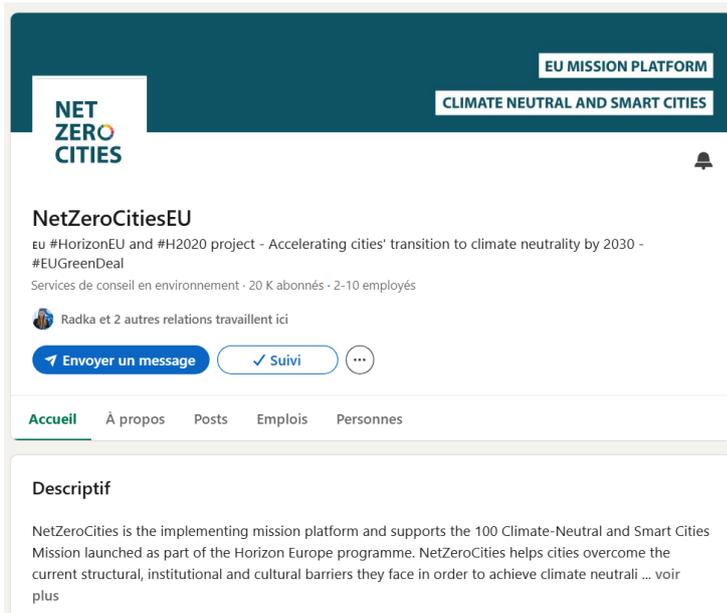The NetZeroCities Instagram account is managed weekly. In order to be as responsive, efficient and proactive on the channel as possible, the following actions are taken:

- Share posts or post original content at least 3 times per week

- Reply to users who mention or send direct messages to **@NetZeroCitiesEu**

- Follow and engage with users who post content related to NetZeroCities activities

- Track specific words, mentions and trending hashtags

The Instagram account has been specifically used for online campaigns (Task 12.5).

Monitoring: As of 20 August 2025, the NZC Instagram account has **1,544** followers.
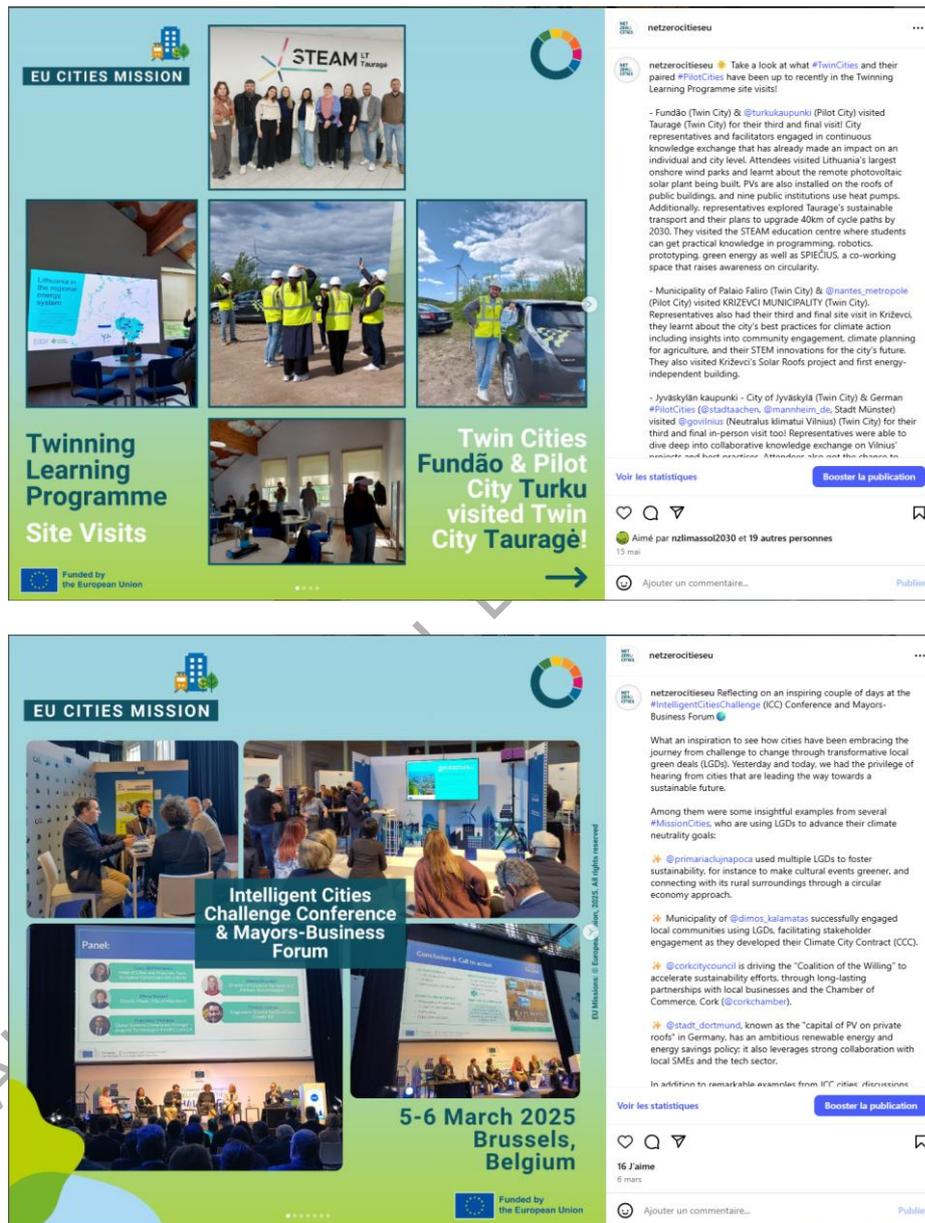
Figure 23: Example of Instagram posts in the final year of the project

5.5 Newsletters

The quarterly newsletters inform the NetZeroCities community on the latest achievements, progress, outcomes and relevant events, conferences, and workshops related to the Mission Platform and Mission Cities' journey to climate neutrality. To develop interest in the newsletter, partners are encouraged to share all relevant information related to the project using an online form as described earlier in this document. Newsletters contain different sections, including:

- An editorial written by the coordinator

- A feature on the results achieved and key project updates

- Highlights from Mission and Pilot Cities

- A recap of the events attended and upcoming events of interest

- A media mentions section

A newsletter subscription form compliant with GDPR regulation is available on the NetZeroCities website to encourage visitors to subscribe to the newsletter in order to receive the latest project results and achievements.

As of 20 August 2025, NZC had 4,867newsletter subscribers.

- The first edition of the newsletter was sent in July 2022. The opening rate of this first newsletter was 34,51% (over 20% is usually considered a very good opening rate) and the click rate was 16,85% (over 5% is usually considered a good click rate).

- The second edition of the newsletter was sent in December 2022. The opening rate of this newsletter was 43.36% and the click rate was 12.92%.

- The third edition of the newsletter was sent in March 2023 with an opening rate of 43.76% and a click rate of 12.87%.

- The fourth edition of the newsletter sent in July 2023, had an opening rate of 41,9% with a click rate of 9,08%.

- The fifth edition of the newsletter, sent in October 2023, had an opening rate of 59,58% with a click rate of 16,82%.

- The sixth edition of the newsletter, sent in December 2023, had an opening rate of 65,76% with a click rate of 26,06%.

- The seventh edition of the newsletter, sent in April 2024, had an opening rate of 51,72% with a click rate of 8,65%.

- The eighth edition of the newsletter, sent in July 2024, had an opening rate of 62,48% with a click rate of 6,84%.

- The ninth edition of the newsletter, sent in October 2024, had an opening rate of 44,96% with a click rate of 5,56%.

- The tenth edition of the newsletter, sent in December 2024, had an opening rate of 46,87.

- The eleventh edition of the newsletter, sent in April 2025, had an opening rate of 57,53%.

- The twelfth edition of the newsletter, sent in July 2025, had an opening rate of 65,86%.

WP12 continuously monitored the statistics of the next newsletters to identify possible areas of improvement to optimise future editions.

5.6 Videos

A series of videos has been produced throughout the NetZeroCities project, in particular a set of 2-3 minutes videos presenting the project. A YouTube channel, also referred to as "NZC TV" has been created to disseminate all the videos produced in the project.
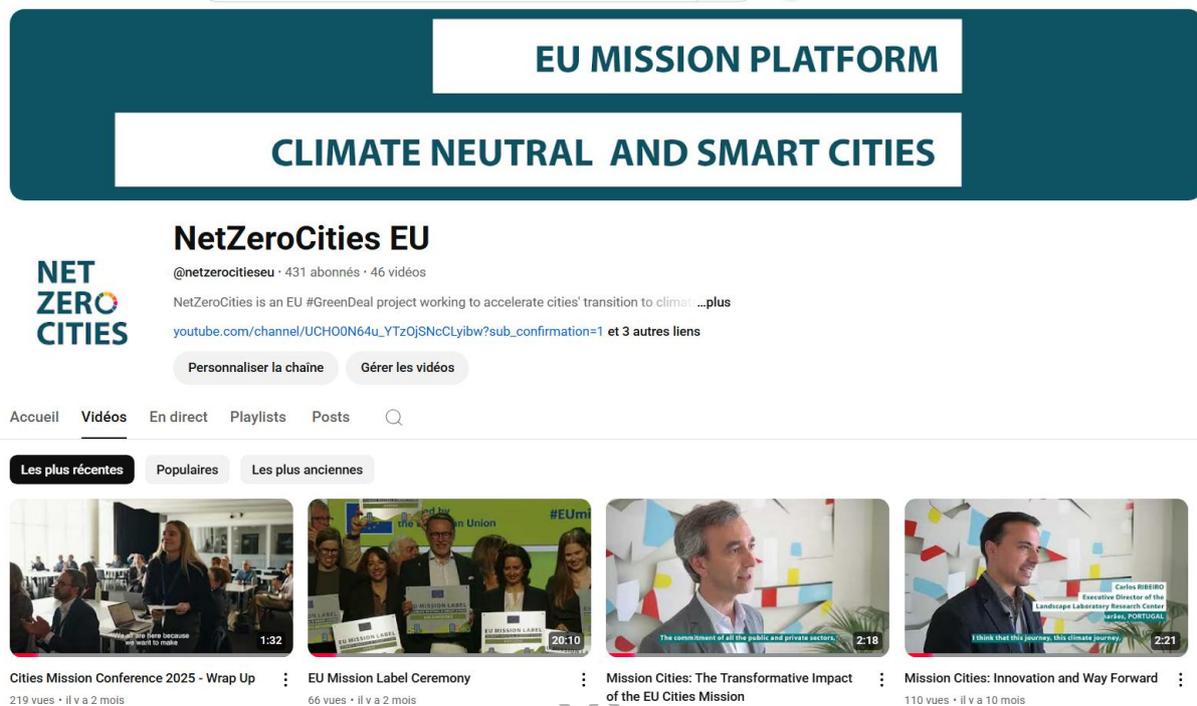
Figure 24: YouTube channel

As of 20 August 2025, NZC YouTube channel has **431** subscribers and has received a total of **30,300 views**. This includes views of videos developed under SGA-NZC and SGA2-NZC which are also hosted in the channel.

Videos developed

The first video presenting NZC's ambition and expected outcomes was published in June 2022 and is available via this link on YouTube. As of 20 August 2025, the video has been viewed 3,852 times (+1,681 compared to September 2023) and has received 38 likes.

Three additional videos have been prepared and published to promote some of the key concepts in NetZeroCities: systemic innovation, social innovation, and citizen and stakeholder engagement.

- The first video that focuses on social innovation was published on 17 March 2023 and is available via this link. As of 20 August 2025, the video has been viewed 1017 times (+472 compared to September 2023) and has 16 likes.

- The second video that showcases the theme of systemic innovation was published on 31 May 2023 and is available with this link. As of 20 August 2025, the video has been viewed 1,040 times (+684 compared to September 2023) and has received 9 likes.

- The third video in the series on citizen and stakeholder engagement was published on 17 August 2023 and is available via this link. As of 20 August 2025, the video has been viewed 664 times (+418 compared to September 2023) and has 8 like.

In addition, NetZeroCities produced a video in which Mission Cities representatives reflect on their successes and challenges to date and their expectations about the EU Cities Mission. This video was published on 25 November 2022 and is available here. As of 20 August 2025, it has been viewed 269 times.

All explanatory videos about NetZeroCities and its main concepts are available on the NetZeroCities website under the media section and have been widely disseminated on NetZeroCities social media channels (X, Instagram, LinkedIn) where they have gained a bigger viewership.

Public webinar recordings, such as information sessions on the Pilot Cities Programme, are publicly made available on the YouTube channel. Other webinars, such as those targeting the Mission Cities, are made available to the selected cities via a private link.

5.7 Press releases

To ensure efficient communication and visibility in mainstream and specialised media in the field of climate neutrality and cities, as well as the project itself, press releases are distributed as often as necessary considering project milestones. As of 20 August 2025, NZC has obtained over 700 media mentions in different media across Europe.

The first press release was shared on 1st October 2021 announcing the project's kick-off. In September 2022 a second press release was published to announce the Call for Pilot Cities. Two additional press releases have been published to announce the results of the Call for Pilot Cities in March 2023, and to announce the Open Call for Twin Cities in May 2023. In September 2023, a press release announced the selection of 40 cities into the Twinning Learning Programme. Press releases were also issued on the occasion of Mission Label Award Ceremonies.

All press releases were sent to a list of media outlets and made publicly available on the project's social media platforms and website landing page and dedicated space for press releases on the media section of the website.

In order to distribute the press releases, a GDPR compliant list of targeted journalists has been created and curated to reach out to the most relevant media and journalists in both general and specialised press. Partners are also invited to share the press releases with their own media contacts. This is coordinated by WP12 with the purpose to leverage partner's network and obtain a broader media coverage for the project.
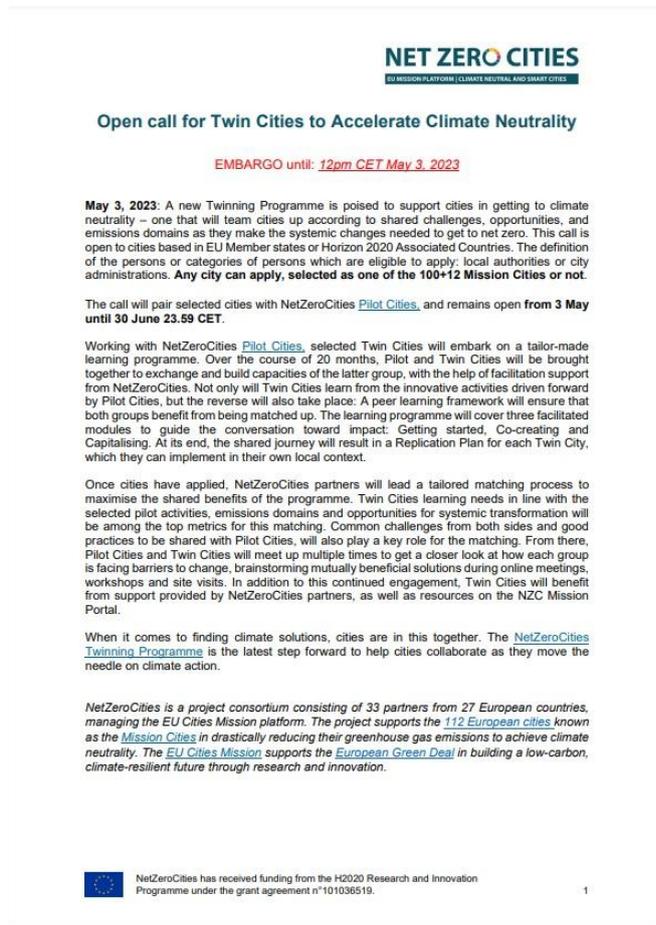
Figure 25: Press release announcing the launch of the Call for Twin Cities

5.8 Editorial Content

The project has developed editorial content to highlight its work and that of cities involved. WP12 partners have regular meetings to discuss editorial opportunities and shared plans around content production, and to align content across channels. The internal NZC Editorial Calendar is the main tool used to identify, specify and prioritise upcoming opportunities. The content-gathering process reaches out to other WPs using meetings, surveys, as well as information group chats and discussions.

Content produced from M1 to M18 is described in deliverable D.12.6 "Report on content production".

During the project, content has been created in various formats, such as the following:

- **Stories and interviews from pilots and twin cities, for instance**:

  o [53 to Zero: How NetZeroCities Pilot Cities Are Scaling Up the Climate Transition](#)

  o [Stronger Together: Multi-City Pilot Cities Teaming Up](#)

  o [Expanding Horizons: Pilot Cities Programme Involves Non-Mission Cities](#)

  o [From Energy to Cooling, Pilot Cities Test Out Climate Neutrality Activities](#)

  o Podcast episode in ICLEI's 'Voices of Sustainability': [Dijon's leap to cross sector climate governance](#)

  o [Embracing Unity in Diversity: A Twinning Trio's Journey Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Futures](#)v

- o [Innovating Together: The Twinning Learning Programme Bridges Budapest and Eskisehir Towards a Sustainable Future](#)

- **Spotlight series articles on significant project results, for instance:**

  - o [City-Driven Solutions for Climate Neutrality: NetZeroCities City Panels](#)

  - o [Cities as Ecosystems for Social Innovation](#)

  - o [Why Climate Neutrality Requires Systemic Innovation](#)

  - o [Climate Neutrality and the Future of Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement](#)

  - o [EU Mission Label award can 'unlock' cities' potential on climate neutrality](#)

  - o [Stockholm and Sønderborg – big and small Nordic Mission Label cities show the power of collaboration in climate action](#)

  - o ['Grassroots, new routes? Citizens and stakeholders take the lead on climate neutrality in Parma, Lyon, Guimarães, and Bristol](#)

  - o [From Climate City Contract to Implementation: What's next for cities with the EU Mission Label?](#)

  - o [Transition teams: Spotlight on the crews steering cities to climate neutrality](#)

  - o [Mission-driven policy innovation: accelerating cities' journeys to climate neutrality](#)

- **Videos (see section 5.6 for more details), for instance:**

  - o [Creating an Ecosystem for Change: The NetZeroCities Approach to Social Innovation](#)

  - o [Using Systemic Innovation to Radically Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#)

  - o [Climate Neutrality and the Future of Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement](#)

- **Infographics** to explain the project's approach, ambition level and flow of the programme

- **Multimedia case studies (WP5),** featured on the NetZeroCities Portal's Knowledge Repository, as well as on the [results and publications page](#) of the NetZeroCities website.

Multiple additional website articles were written throughout the project to report on events attended, opportunities for cities, and general project news, etc. A few additional pieces will be written by the end of the project (September 2025), in particular to report on Pilot & Twins stories.

5.9 City communication

5.9.1 Communications to cities

Since the announcement of the selected cities to join the 100 Climate-neutral and Smart Cities Mission, regular communication with the selected cities has been maintained.

In May 2022, a welcome email was sent to selected cities introducing NetZeroCities and informing them of the upcoming activities such as the peer learning programme and the webinars. Since then, cities have been sent monthly to bi-monthly regular emails on key resources, activities and deadlines. Topics include:

- The Cities Mission Conference
- The CCC process, including submission windows, support available, processing for CCCs to be reviewed (Completeness Check and European Commission review and Mission Label process).
- NZC portal, sections available and updates: Knowledge Repository updates, CCC Resource Pack, Finance Guidance Tool, FAQs, etc.

- Invitation to webinars and information sessions on various aspects (CCC, Pilot Cities, etc.), and presentations and recordings of the different events organised.
- Events of interest.

Cooperation with city advisors and alignment on the key messages and information to be disseminated to cities is sought to ensure focused consistent and efficient communications towards cities. Cooperation with other WPs is also key for efficient communications towards cities to be able to plan effective outreach.

5.9.2 Materials to support cities

NZC has been supporting cities in their local campaigns about being part of the Mission and receiving support from NZC by providing brand material (Task 12.3).

WP12 developed the Communication Playbook that provides materials and guidance to help cities communicate their work with NetZeroCities and the EU Cities Mission. This tool aims to help cities create buy-in and enthusiasm with municipality, local, and external stakeholders as they conduct their work as part of the EU Cities Mission. The Playbook contains communication guidelines and tips, an elevator pitch and a series of messages tailored to audience groups. The Communication Playbook was updated to include sections translated in all EU languages.
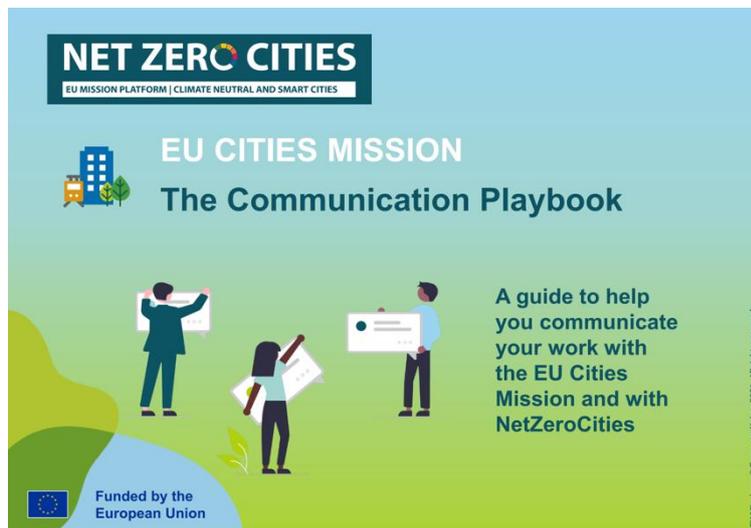
Figure 26: Communication Playbook

A visual kit, including a visual bank and an editable presentation was designed in June 2022 (Deliverable 12.12) to support cities in their local communication actions. It has been updated throughout the project Made in the form of a Pitching Deck, the kit includes a visual bank that contains visuals to explain what NZC is about, pictures to communicate on climate neutrality and editable visuals to promote cities being part of the Mission. The editable presentation provides material to explain why a shift in approach is needed in climate action and to present what joining the Cities Mission means for cities. This pitching deck has been included in the Communication Playbook as one of the key tools cities can use.

Figure 27: Pitching Deck for Mission Cities

In addition, various communication toolkits linked to specific announcements such as the Pilot Cities Programme or the Twinning Learning Programme were designed and distributed to cities.

A comprehensive communications offer for cities, detailing the different support activities the consortium can provide, was compiled in 2024.This communications offer is now available on the Portal on a page titled "City communications support: How can we help you?".

6 Awareness raising campaigns

In order to reach out to the general public, specific awareness-raising campaigns have been developed on a regular basis. The purpose is to inform all target audiences of key project milestones, progress and achievements. Each awareness campaign develops messages that are clear, straightforward and close to cities and other stakeholders' concerns. Communication toolkits have been shared with partners to ease the dissemination of campaigns and increase their visibility and reach.

The communication channels previously described in this document are heavily mobilised to make the awareness campaigns a success:

- **Social media**: the social media channels of the project (X, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube) are used to connect with the key stakeholders and with the general public and create a two-way dialogue. Messages are targeted according to audience profiles. As social media is the main communication channel for the awareness campaigns, dedicated hashtags have been created for some campaigns.

  o LinkedIn has been used as the strongest social media platform for NZC. It is an established channel to position the NZC project as a credible, reliable voice in the area of climate action and urban sustainability.

  o X has been used to create a follower base firstly by following similar projects, organisations and thought leaders in the field and then by sharing relevant information from the NZC project and beyond to establish it as an interesting, thought-provoking commentator on this topic.

  o Instagram is used to reach out to stakeholders and citizens interested in net zero and climate neutrality topics in order for them to share the campaigns' key awareness raising messages and for them to take action. Instagram is used in particular to reach out to young people, people interested in the fight against climate change.

- **Partners' networks**: NZC partners are contacted to disseminate key messages and materials to their own audiences, thus amplifying outreach. Communication toolkits will be used to help partners share the campaigns with their own networks.

- **Multipliers**: Once NZC is a recognized voice in the field of climate neutrality, the project is in touch with multipliers to share the campaign messages with their online communities. Online general/science/technical magazines and relevant blogs with a general audience have also been contacted and targeted to act as relays to promote the campaigns and the key messages of the project.

Success metrics have been followed to adjust the campaigns, if necessary, to deliver traction, make the biggest impact and encourage audiences to get involved in NZC and join the journey towards climate neutrality.

According to the grant agreement, three campaigns were planned

- A campaign to promote the launch of the NZC Platform and announce the Calls

- A campaign dedicated to cities and selected pilots.

- A campaign promoting "urban climate champions" using an Instagram wall

Campaigns conducted to date:

Several campaigns have been launched to 1) promote the Cities selected to join the Mission 2) the launch of the Call for Pilot Cities and selected Cities, 3) the Call for Twin Cities and selected cities 3) achievements from cities 'Urban Climate Champions'. For these campaigns a list of target audiences and key messages was identified, and a detailed content calendar was developed to include a list of topics to be covered, the tweets and LinkedIn posts to be published, the visuals to be used, etc.

Campaign on the 112 Mission Cities

A campaign to promote the cities selected to join the EU Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission was launched on NZC social media.

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

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

The main hashtag used for this campaign was #MissionCities.
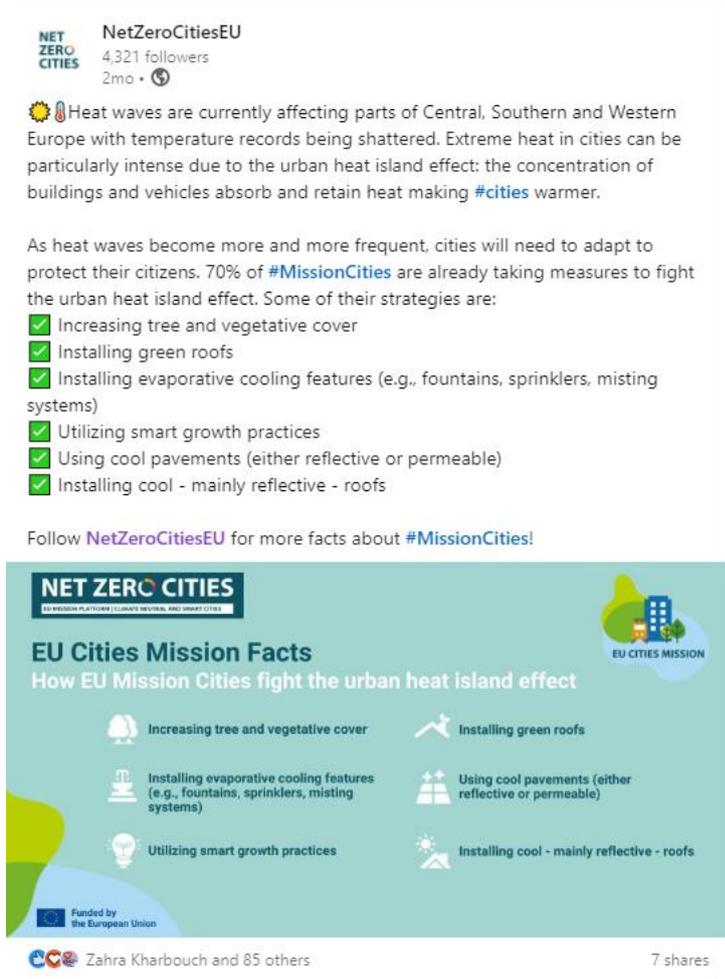
Figure 28: Example of an EU Cities Mission campaign post

Campaign on the Call for Pilot Cities

This campaign targeted all cities, including Mission Cities. Other target audiences that were identified were City Panel members, members of networks involved in NZC and individuals interested in joining NZC Community Practice, among others.

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

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

The hashtags used for this campaign were #PilotCities #MissionCities and #EUMissions.
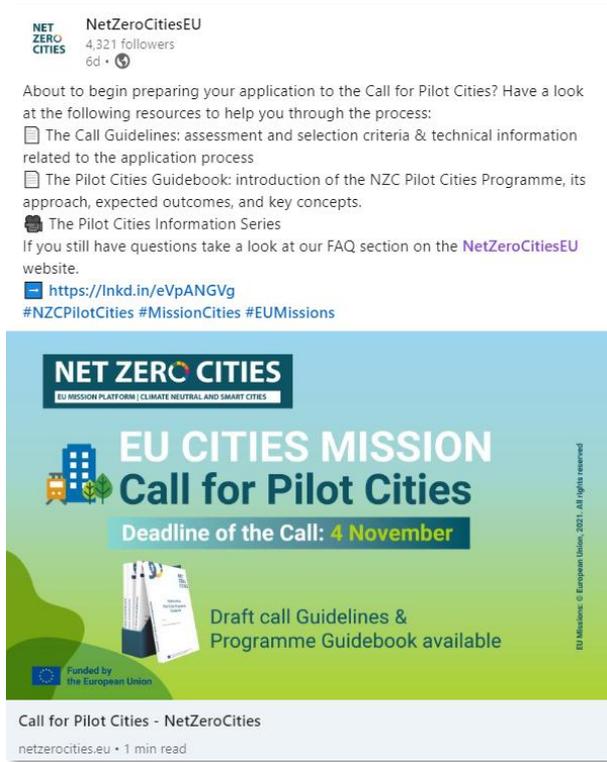
Figure 29: Example of a Call for Pilot Cities campaign post

<u>Campaign to announce the results of the Pilot Cities and promote the selected cities</u>

The selection of Pilot Cities was announced on 1 March 2023 via the following channels:

- A press release
- A website article
- A webpage presenting the selected cities
- A social media campaign
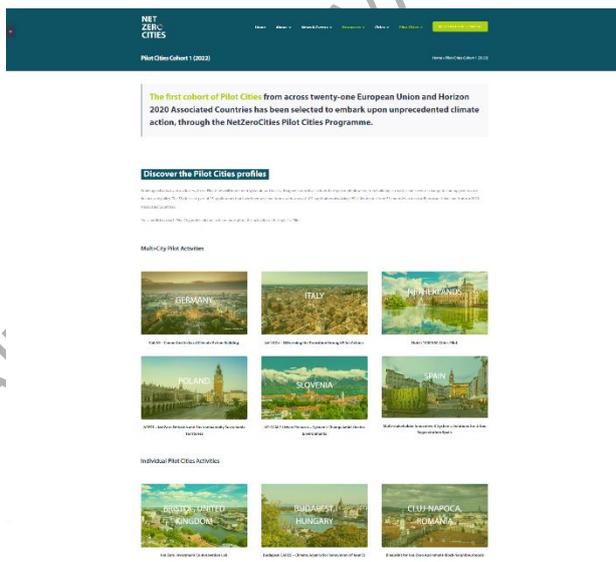
Figure 30: Webpage presenting the Pilot Cities

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

Figure 31: LinkedIn carousel

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

In addition, WP12 produced two communication toolkits: one for consortium partners to act as multipliers of the campaign and one to support Pilot Cities in communicating their selection for the programme. The communication toolkits included a text describing the Pilot Cities Programme, the NetZeroCities project and the EU Cities Mission, ready to use visuals, sample social media posts, a list of accounts to follow and the press release issued by NetZeroCities.

Campaign to announce the launch of the Call for Twin Cities

The launch of the Call for Twin Cities was announced on 3 May 2023 via the following channels:

- A press release
- A website article

- A page dedicated to the Twinning Programme on NetZeroCities website
- Pages presenting the Pilot Cities profiles to facilitate the application to the Call for Twins
- A social media campaign

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

- What's in it for cities
- Pilot cities projects
- Eligibility requirements and call documents
- Webinars about the call
- The Twinning Programme roadmap

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

See below a few examples of social media posts that were published.
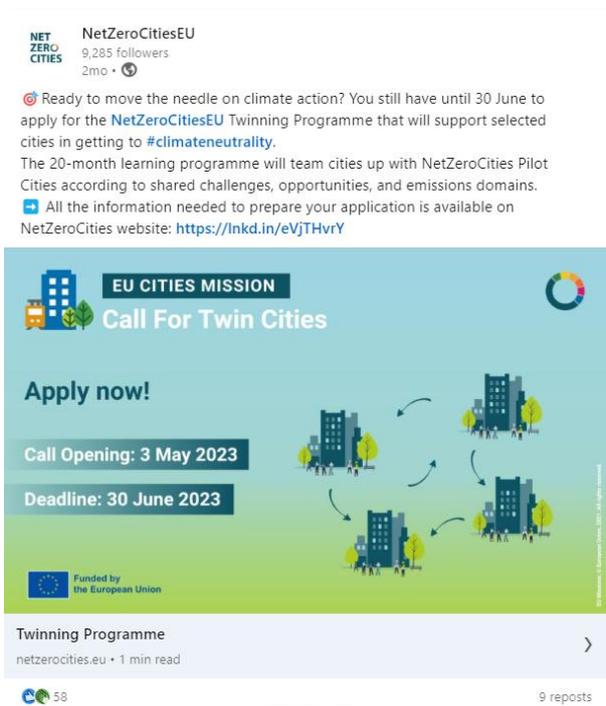
Figure 32: Social media post example 1
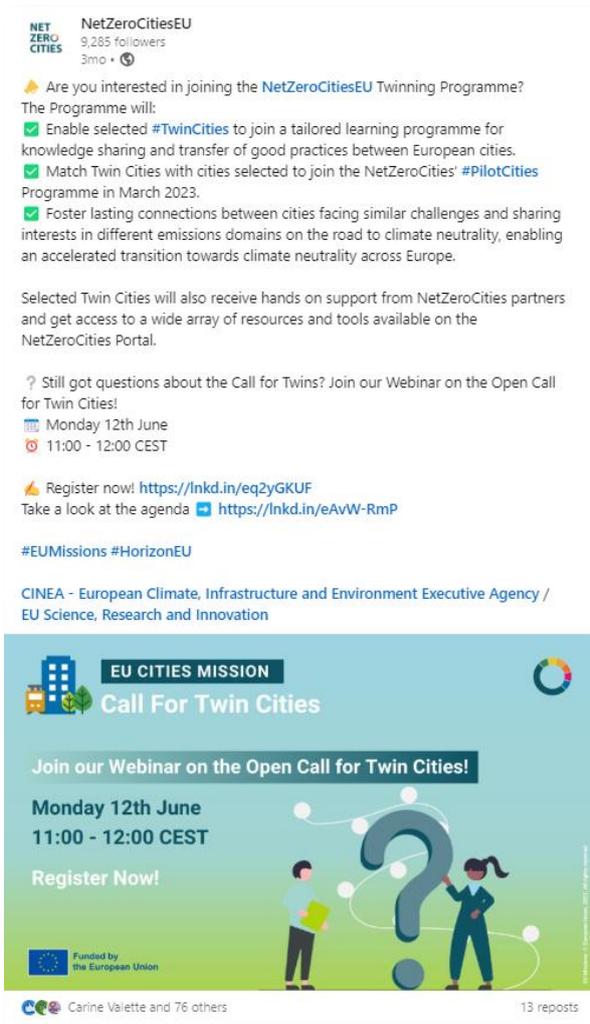
Figure 33: Social media post example 2

In addition, a campaign promoting the results of the Call for Twin Cities was launched in September 2023 to highlight selected cities. This included:

- A press release
- A website article
- A webpage presenting the selected cities
- A social media campaign

Urban Climate Champions

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

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

Instagram 'Stories' featuring the #UrbanClimateChampions campaign have reached more than 5,000 accounts in 'Impressions' when sharing the post to the 'Story' feature, the most engaged 'Story' of this

campaign was the Valladolid post. The campaign also gained 10+ profile visits and a total of 100 'Likes' over the campaign.

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

Figure 34: Promoting Urban Climate Champions on the NetZeroCities Instagram account

Finally, a campaign highlighting the case studies produced by WP5 has been ongoing in 2024-2025, showcasing inspiring examples of climate action from a variety of cities across Europe. Each post is thematised and provides several city examples.
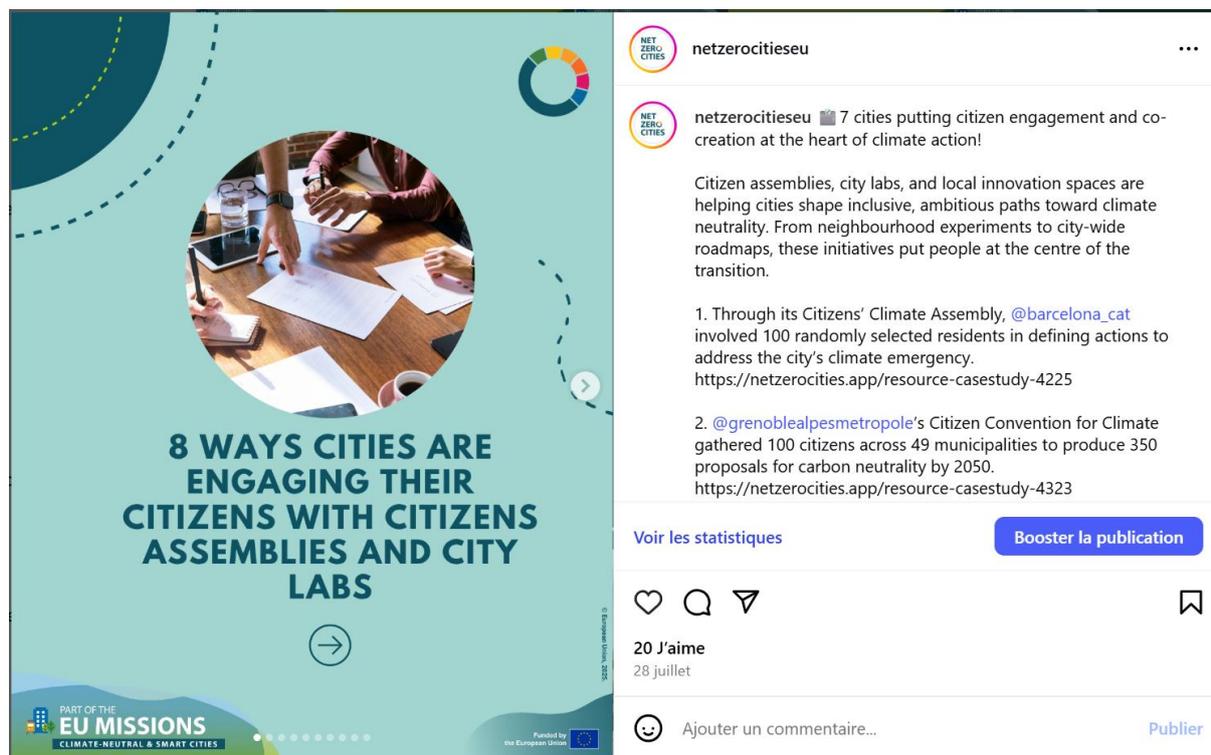
Figure 35: Case studies campaign

7 Dissemination channels and content

7.1 Interactions and exchange with other related projects

NetZeroCities aims to foster a close collaboration with relevant networks, clusters, and initiatives at European and national/regional levels to share information and exploit synergies and additional dissemination channels.

Networks within the project, such as Climate-KIC, ICLEI, Eurocities, Energy Cities, Viable Cities, OASC, Climate Alliance, ERRIN, Resilient Cities Network and Viable Cities are used on a regular basis to disseminate the project messages, contents and results.

Several networks, clusters, initiatives, and platforms at the European and national/regional level have been identified from the project start for collaboration:

Initiative/ Stakeholder	Short description	Interest for NetZeroCities	Relationship status
Deep Demonstrations of Healthy, Clean Cities	15 European Cities pioneering **strategic innovation** for systemic change to reach carbon neutrality by 2030	Direct link with NetZeroCities' systemic innovation approach	Programme of CKIC
Covenant of Mayors for	Brings together thousands of local and regional authorities	Engage local politicians in commitment to ambitious	Energy Cities has been leading the Covenant of

Climate and Energy (CoM)	voluntarily committed to implementing **EU climate and energy objectives** on their territory. The initiative has three main pillars: mitigation, adaptation and energy poverty	climate and energy goals, large EEU coverage of smaller and bigger cities; SECAP development helpdesk, tools (SECAP development, funding & financing), peer learning	Mayors Office – EU since its creation, in a consortium with Eurocities, ICLEI and Climate Alliance
EC Joint Research Centre	The EC's science and knowledge service to provide **independent scientific advice** and support to EU policy	Interactions with JRC will be sought during the project design phase, particularly on metrics	Climate Alliance has been closely working with the JRC in the CoM since 2008
Horizon 2020 and other EU projects	Green Deal and H. Europe projects. A non- exhaustive list of relevant EU projects where some partners participate includes: • ATELIER • ASCEND • CLEVER cities, • CLIMABOROUGH • ExPEDite • GreenInCities • MAKING-CITY • SPARCS, • POCITYF, • RESPONSE, • SHARING CITIES, • FUSILLI, • PACE, • UNALAB, • SISCODE, • Nature4cities, • NEUTRALPATH • SmartEnCity • SUN4Ukraine • TIPS4PED • U_CAN • UPPER • URBREATH	Synergies need to be sought and learnings shared	Partners participate and establish contacts with a large number of other projects
CapaCITIES and CapaCITIES 2.0	CapaCITIES coordinates actions across climate neutral city initiatives in Europe in order to exploit synergies between them and align efforts towards the goals of the mission including city networks, the UAEU partnerships, the CoR, and others.	Coordination on national level work	Regular exchange with consortium partners, some members are part of both projects

Urban Transition Mission and Urban Transition Mission Center	The Urban Transitions Mission (UTM) brokers solutions, approaches, and knowledge for net-zero transitions at each stage of a city climate action journey (global level).	Act as multipliers, access from NZC portal to UTMC portal.	Regular exchange with consortium partners, some members are part of both projects
ELENA (European Local Energy Assistance)	Provides **technical assistance** for energy efficiency and renewable energy investments targeting buildings and innovative urban transport	Synergies can be established, and learnings shared on the best practices regarding the set-up and implementation of the support mechanisms	**The EIB supports the project** (letter); EuC, CA and EnC have strong relationships with the EIB and ELENA unit, REGEA supported investments in 62 municipalities
SEIF (Sustainable Energy Investment Forums)	Engages national interests for large-scale sustainable energy **investment and financing**	Learn about analysis of the needs and financing instruments. It reaches a larger territorial coverage across Europe	Climate Alliance
EUCF (European City Facility)	Assist municipalities with fast and simplified **financial support** for developing investment concepts for local sustainable energy projects	The proposal can learn from the investment concepts developed by the EUCF. The proposal can benefit from the investors network mobilised by the EUCF	Energy Cities lead consortium delivering EUCF and are supported by Climate Alliance as a consortium member. REGEA is a National Expert
CIVITAS	City Network on cleaner, better **transport** in Europe and beyond, 800+ innovative transport measures and solutions tested in 80 Living Lab cities in Europe since 2002	Lessons learned on building and maintaining an ever-growing community of sustainable urban mobility practices (e. g. peer-learning and online training)	Rupprecht and ICLEI have managed CIVITAS projects and Eurocities was responsible for the capacity learning activities among local authorities
Green Digital Charter	Currently supported by the GuiDanCe project, it provides a practical framework to deliver on climate objectives through **digital technologies**	Feedback on linking ambitious carbon footprint reduction objectives with the deployment of large-scale pilot projects within cities or districts	Initiated by Eurocities in 2009
Smart Cities Marketplace (combining Smart Cities Information System (SCIS) and EIP on Smart Cities and Communities)	Initiatives demonstrating and replicating **smart city solutions**: technologies and approaches, co- design with citizens and local ecosystem for scaling up	Knowledge development: systemic approach to tackling challenges, citizen engagement and co-design, governance, finance, funding and business models, data and digitalisation	Eurocities has been part of the consortium delivering SCIS and EIP-SCC. Energy Cities is part of SCALE, which coordinates collaboration between the SCC01 projects
Positive Energy Districts project (SCC projects,	Demonstrates concepts and **technologies** to achieve a positive energy balance	Learn how PEDs can contribute to climate neutrality in cities and what	CARTIF, VTT, AIT, TEC, LGI

IEA Annex 83 on PEDs, JPI Urban Europe, EERA)	contributing to climate neutrality in cities.	are the most common technologies (input to WP10) and strategies to engage citizens (input to WP6- WP9)	are involved in PEDs SCC projects. VTT leads the IEA Annex on PEDs where CARTIF, TEC and AIT contribute
Green City Accord	EC initiative to mobilise European mayors committed to **safeguarding natural environment** (quality of life, implementation of EU environmental laws locally). Accord cities commit to step up efforts in water, air, nature and biodiversity, circular economy and waste, noise by 2030	Green City Accord is developing indicators across 5 urban environment themes which will be relevant for the development of indicators in WP2. It is also providing a helpdesk and online resources for cities, which will be signposted to by the platform	Eurocities is lead partner, managing communication, dissemination of best practices, knowledge transfer, skills exchange; ICLEI is partner for monitoring framework, support structures, helpdesk, and conceptualising knowledge- based strategies
European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards	Awards programme for **best practice performance** cities (small and large) on a range of indicators, including climate mitigation and adaptation. Peer-learning and knowledge exchange	Best practices and lessons learned from winners and finalists of these awards will be showcased via the portal. Important network of leading cities, valuable in the co-design and implementation of NetZeroCities	ICLEI and Eurocities delivered the 2- year pilot of the secretariat for European Green Capital Network
Network Nature	EU platform for **Nature-based solutions**	NBS are an integral part of the solutions portfolio in NetZeroCities	ICLEI is co-lead of Network Nature
Sustainable urban mobility indicators (SUMI)	Technical assistance to urban areas for pilot application of sustainable **urban mobility** indicators endorsed by the EC	Integrate SUMI indicators, starting from those SUMI indicators mentioned in the Mission Report	Rupprecht coordinated the project, Eurocities and UITP were partners
SOLUTIONSplus	The project drafts roadmaps and joint global **urban e-mobility** programme	Build upon the global platform for e-mobility solutions developed in SOLUTIONSplus	UITP coordinates the demonstrations, VTT and Rupprecht are partners.
EU Platform on Sustainable Finance	Advisory body to the EC on the EU sustainable **finance** taxonomy	Multi-sector collaboration to advise Commission on sustainable finance policies	CKIC is part of Technical Working Group
Climate Impact Forecast tool	**Life cycle assessment** for companies.	Calculate the CO2eq. reduction potential of innovation, evaluate and select innovation.	CKIC uses it to evaluate impact of its start-ups

URBAN2030 - Localising the Sustainable Development Goals	The URBAN2030-II Project aims at fostering the achievement of SDGs in European cities and regions.	Better connection with SDGs framework	EC Initiative
The Community of Practice on Cities	The Community of Practice on Cities is an initiative of the European Commission, open to external stakeholders Its scope is to map and integrate available JRC scientific knowledge and DG REGIO expertise on cities, and to anticipate needs for knowledge on cities matters and urban policy objectives in a holistic way.	Connection to additional stakeholders and policy	EC initiative
The City Science Initiative	The City Science Initiative aims to strengthen the ways in which science and research can help address urban challenges.	Better linkage with science and research	EC initiative

Table 5: Related projects/initiatives NZC will interact with

Interactions have also been sought with others: ELTIS, New European Bauhaus, CRAFT, Impact Hub, InvestEU, Intelligent Cities Challenge, City Finance Lab, Driving Urban Partnership, etc.

7.2 Conferences and events

Presence at external events

Presenting the NetZeroCities results at conferences and/or having a booth to disseminate the knowledge gained is key to maximising the project's impact. Attending conferences and events also creates the opportunity to engage closely with stakeholders.

The project consortium attends events that are relevant to the topic and through which target groups can be reached. The interest and readiness of the consortium is evaluated when determining whether to present at key international events as well as how best to present (public intervention and/or hosting a booth). The most relevant events taking place over a 12- month cycle are identified and event organisers contacted to ensure the project is properly represented.

An online form (described earlier in this document) was created to track and monitor partner participation in international and national conferences. A database with a list of all the events identified is used by the ExCom to decide on NZC's participation.

During the course of the project, NetZeroCities was present at several events and conferences, including, for instance:

Event	Date
Smart City Expo World Congress Barcelona	15-17 November 2022
2022 edition of EuroPhilantopics by Philea	6 December 2022

CAPACITIES Kick off meeting	6-7 October 2022
Limerick Symposium on Integrating the New European Bauhaus	13 October 2022
Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission Baltic Conference	17 October 2022
Covenant of Mayors Investment Forum	18 October 2022
UN Climate Change Global Innovation Hub Cities Day at COP27	8 November 2022
Smart City Expo World Congress Barcelona	15-17 November 2022
2022 edition of EuroPhilantopics by Philea	6 December 2022
Mayors for Economic Growth Partner Dialogue on city transformation	28 February 2023
Cities Forum 2023	16-17 March 2023
Covenant of Mayors - Europe 2023 Conference "Cities on the frontline of the energy crisis" & Meeting of the Second Chamber of the Covenant of Mayors	30 March 2023
Łódź Climate Summit	18-19 May 2023
Assises européennes de la transition énergétique in Bordeaux Métropole	23-25 May 2023
Urban Future 2023	21-23 June 2023
Urban Digital Innovation Executive Leadership Programme	18-22 September 2023
3ème édition : Villes Durables en actions - Régénération : (p)réparer les territoires pour affronter les défis de l'Anthropocène	25-26 September 2023
Swiss Green Energy Symposium	27-29 August 2024
Milano Green Week	26-29 September 2024
Smart City Expo World Congress 2024	4-7 November 2024
Intelligent Cities Challenge Conference and Mayors Business Forum	5-6 March 2025
Urban Future 2025	21-23 May 2025
16th Annual International Sustainability Transitions (IST) Conference	24-26 June 2025

Table 6: Non-exhaustive selection of events attended by NetZeroCities

NetZeroCities events

NetZeroCities held three Cities Mission Conference as part of communication and dissemination activities, in close collaboration with the EU Cities Mission. These hybrid events aimed to attract a minimum of 150 participants. The events target Mission Cities primarily but also a wide range of stakeholder groups in order to ensure dissemination of the project findings, including local, regional and national public authorities; EU institutions; policy makers; research and academia; businesses including SMEs; industry; civil society and finance.

On 13 June 2022, a first Cities Mission Conference was held in Brussels called "Let's Go! Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission Kick Off". This in-person event in Brussels focused on launching the Cities Mission and providing a space for cities to meet each other and network. It was followed by the NetZeroCities Online Conference, from 20 to 27 June 2022, a series of focused webinars deep diving into some of the core concepts and details of the NetZeroCities programme. Event pictures are available **here**. Recordings were also made available on NZC YouTube channel: part 1 & part 2.The event is described in more detail in Deliverable 12.9. "Proceedings of NetZeroCities conference n°1".

On 26-28 June 2023, the European Commission and NetZeroCities hosted the Mission in Progress: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Conference 2023 that brought together the 112 cities selected to participate in the Mission for 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030 and the 53 Pilot Cities in the

NetZeroCities Pilot Cities Programme. Proceedings of this second event are available in Deliverable 12.10 "Proceedings of NetZeroCities conference n°2".

Figure 36: Invitation to and programme of the Cities Mission Conference 2023

Figure 37: Save the Date for the Cities Mission Conference 2023

Following the two-day conference, all video material was edited into digestible videos for audiences to re-watch, and public content was made available on the NetZeroCities YouTube channel and on the Portal Knowledge Repository. All city-related or non-public content was only placed on the Portal for

specific audiences. These public videos, along with an article with the main takeaways, were published on the NetZeroCities website and through the NetZeroCities social media channels.

A third major event took place on 6-8 May 2025, in Vilnius Lithuania. This 2025 edition of the Cities Mission Conference was hosted by the European Commission and NetZeroCities with the theme "**Harnessing City Successes: Advancing Climate Action for 2030**". The event aimed to spotlight the progress and ambition of Mission Cities and their partners as they strive to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. It brought together 900+ participants. They formed a diverse audience of city practitioners, political leaders, industry innovators, financial experts, civil society representatives, and European Commission officials. The event featured dynamic formats, including keynote addresses, interactive workshops, high-level political dialogues, and site visits, ensuring engaging and impactful discussions. Proceedings of this third event are available in Deliverable 12.11 "*Proceedings of NetZeroCities conference n°3*".
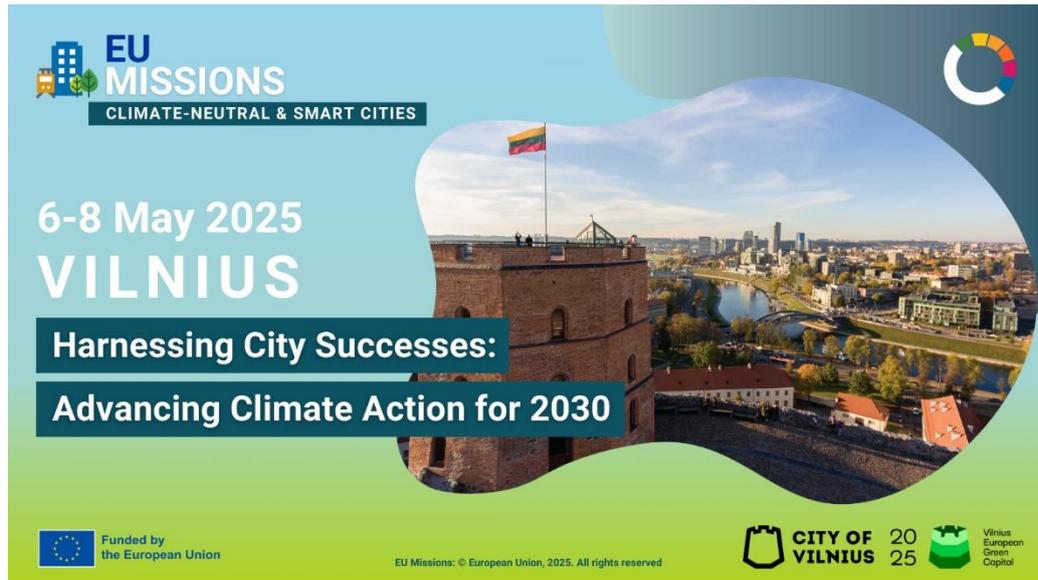
Figure 38: Official visual for the Cities Mission Conference 2025

Following the conference, recordings of public sessions were made available on the NetZeroCities YouTube channel. Pictures are available on the NetZeroCities Flickr account. All city-related or non-public content was only placed on the Portal for specific audiences. These public videos, along with an article with the main takeaways, were published on the NetZeroCities website and through the NetZeroCities social media channels.
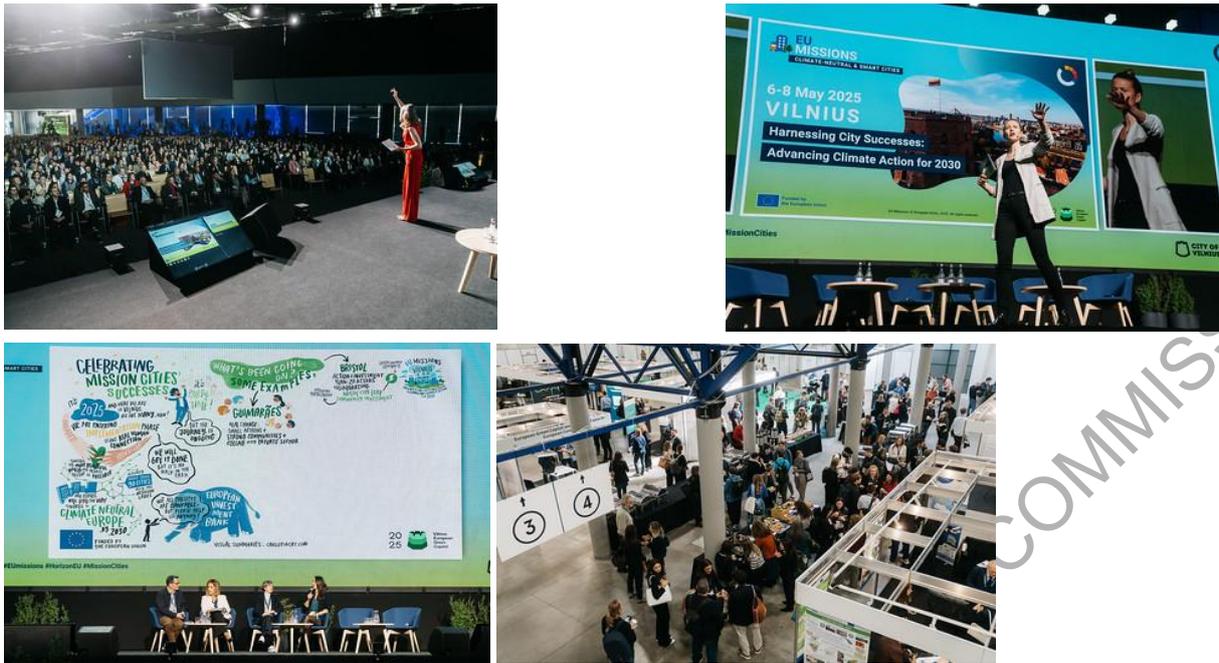
Figure 39: Pictures of the Cities Mission Conference 2025

7.3 European dissemination channels

EU dissemination channels considered for dissemination have been:

Magazines	Research*eu results magazine	www.cordis.europa.eu/research-eu/home_fr.html
	Horizon – The EU Research and Innovation Magazine	https://horizon-magazine.eu/
Portals	CORDIS	www.cordis.europa.eu/home_fr.html
	Horizon 2020 newsroom	www.ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/newsroom

Table 7: EU dissemination channels

7.4 Scientific publications

Several scientific publications were prepared by lead academic partners involved in the project. These publications will include the main findings of the project's deliverables and may be presented in some of the conferences listed in section 7.2 of this document.

NetZeroCities follows the Horizon 2020 open access policy by providing online access to scientific information that is free of charge to the end-user and that is reusable. Partners' own repositories may also be used, noting that all information generated in NetZeroCities will adhere to open access policies and all partners will refrain from holding any such information proprietary or trade-related.

In the context of this project, scientific information refers to peer-reviewed scientific research articles, articles, conference papers and research data. The NetZeroCities project will combine different measures to foster open access to knowledge as much as possible. Scientific publications produced in

NetZeroCities target the scientific community, and the community of urban practitioners and innovators, for example:

Journal	Interest for NZC
Sustainable Cities and Society (SCS)	Smart cities governance; resilient environments; energy efficient, low/zero carbon, green buildings/communities; climate change mitigation and adaptation in urban environments
disP – The Planning Review	Scientific journal addressing the topics in the areas of urban development, city and town planning, environmental planning, environmental economics and transportation planning.
Urban Planning	International journal covering sustainable solutions for landscape planning and design.
European Public & Social Innovation Review	A fully peer reviewed and interdisciplinary biannual journal on theoretical and empirical articles, case studies and provocative papers to disseminate new knowledge, practices and experiences in the social innovation field.
European Planning Studies	Spatial development processes and problems, and policy implementation in Europe (urban planning, service design and cities development).
Sustainability	International, cross-disciplinary, scholarly, peer-reviewed journal of environmental, cultural, economic, and social sustainability of human beings.
Journal of Cleaner Production	International, transdisciplinary journal focusing on cleaner production, environmental, and sustainability research and practices.

Table 8: Scientific publications

Project partners have been encouraged to regularly share information about their scientific publications when related to NetZeroCities and urban climate issues via the online form described in section 4.2. Publications are listed on the project website, and dissemination through the annual newsletter and on all social media channels. Some scientific publications written during the project include:

- Ulpiani G, Vetters N, Shtjefni D, Kakoulaki G, Taylor N. **Let's hear it from the cities: on the role of renewable energy in reaching climate neutrality in urban Europe**. Renew Sustain Energy Rev 2023;183.

- Ulpiani G, Vetters N. **On the risks associated with transitioning to climate neutrality in Europe: a city perspective**. Renew Sustain Energy Rev 2023;183

- Ulpiani G, Vetters N, Maduta C. **Towards (net) zero emissions in the stationary energy sector: a city perspective.** Sustain Cities Soc 2023

- Della Valle N, Ulpiani G, Vetters N. **Assessing climate justice awareness among climate neutral-to-be cities**. Humanit Soc Sci Commun 2023;10:440.

- Möslinger M, Ulpiani G, Vetters N. **Circular economy and waste management to empower a climate-neutral urban future**. J Clean Prod 2023;421:138454.

- Rodríguez Ochoa D, Arranz N, Fernandez de Arroyabe JC. **The role of Horizon (2020) in achieving climate-neutral urban objectives: A study of 14 Spanish cities innovation networks**. J Clean Prod 2023;432:139820.

- Mondal, R., Bresciani, S., & Rizzo, F. (2024). **What Cities Want to Measure: Bottom-Up Selection of Indicators for Systemic Change toward Climate Neutrality Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 40 European Cities**. *Climate*, *12*(3), 41.

- Bresciani, S. (2024). ***Assessment Framework for People-Centred Solutions to Carbon Neutrality: A Comprehensive List of Case Studies and Social Innovation Indicators at Urban Level.*** Springer Briefs in Applied Sciences and Technology. Springer Cham. ISBN 978-3-031-53111

- Romero-Muñoz S, Alméstar M, Sánchez-Chaparro T, Muñoz Sanz V. **The impact of institutional innovation on a public tender: The case of Madrid Metropolitan Forest**. *Land* 2023;12(6):1179.

- Bresciani, S., Rizzo, F., & Deserti, A. (2022). **Toward a Comprehensive Framework of Social Innovation for Climate Neutrality: A Systematic Literature Review from Business/Production, Public Policy, Environmental Sciences, Energy, Sustainability and Related Fields.** *Sustainability*, *14*(21).

- Bresciani, S., Tjahja, C., Komatsu, T., & Rizzo, F. (2023). **Prototyping for Policy Making: Collaboratively Synthesizing Interdisciplinary Knowledge for Climate Neutrality**. In: International Conference 2023 of the Design Research Society Special Interest Group on Experiential Knowledge (EKSIG) *Conference proceedings* (pp. 104-116), Politecnico di Milano, Italy. ISBN: 9788894167436

- Ulpiani G, Rebolledo E, Vetters N, Florio P, Bertoldi P. **Funding and financing the zero emissions journey: urban visions from the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission**. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, Nature Journal.

- G.Doci, H. Dorst, S. Hillen, T. Tjokrodikromo – **Urban transition governance in practice: exploring how European cities govern local transitions to achieve climate neutrality**. Frontiers Sec. Innovation and Governance.

8 Exploitation

The exploitation strategy of NetZeroCities builds on two pillars:

- **Exploitation through open source and open ecosystems:** NetZeroCities embraces an open approach. All results and deliverables, unless explicitly stated otherwise, are made fully public and openly available on the project website. This includes the services, methodologies and capacity-building material, the web portal and its source code (and placed on a Github repository), the platform design, and recommendations from the project and its advisory boards.

  o All public deliverables submitted during the first two years of the project are made available on NZC website under the resources section. When not yet validated by the European Commission, they include a watermark and a disclaimer stating that they have not been validated by the European Commission and therefore cannot be considered as the final version.

  o The Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 license will be used: it allows to distribute, remix, adapt, and enhance the original work, as long as a credit is provided for it. This fosters collaboration and helps accelerate the transformation to socially innovative and climate neutral cities by bringing actors to the platform, making available the project's Key Exploitable Results (KERs), and enabling practitioners and innovators to reuse and co-improve. No Foreground Intellectual Property is expected to be patented or subject to other protection measures. The use of Background IP or existing know-how shall be made available free of charge to the partners within the consortium for the achievement of the objectives.

- **Exploitation of and through the one-stop-shop platform:** The consortium, notably the service delivery partners are committed to, together, sustain and scale up the Platform beyond the project period in their normal operations, both in private business as well as public research work.

  o The Platform is expected to continue to support cities at least until 2030. Towards this aim, the partners are committed to engage in a constructive and open manner in the planning of a sustainable business model; to license the required background IP for further use of the possible platform entity with the same conditions that are present in the grant and consortium agreement; and to transfer ownership of all project results to the platform entity. Initial governance considerations and potential business model scenarios are explored early in the project as the ambition is for most services provided by the one-stop-shop platform to sustain beyond the end of the Project.

T3.4 One Stop Shop Platform Business Plan and Sustainability has explored different options for long-term business models post-Horizon grant funding. The work done in T3.4 culminated in **D3.7 Exploitation and Business Model for the Future of the Platform and Project Results** which was submitted in M30 (March 2024). The deliverable outlined four potential business models, derived from an analysis of city needs and benchmarking of existing services:

- Digital Platform with Specialist Advisory Services

- Portal with Helpdesk Support

- Signposting & Connecting Marketplace

- NetZeroCities Academy

	Who delivers?	Which services?	To whom?	Primary revenue model?
Digital platform including specialist advisory services	Consortium	NZC Services and Support, including peer-learning and exchange	Cities	Likely to require substantial public funding (EU, national)
Portal including helpdesk support	A management organisation formed from the consortium, project partners as service providers	NZC Services and Support Other services as required	Cities	Membership fee
Signposting & connecting	Management organisation formed from the consortium, project partners as service providers Complemented by a pool of other European experts	Matching cities with expert services (among NZC project partners and other European experts)	Cities	Transaction fee for purchased support services
NetZeroCities Academy	Education unit	Education and certification for willing experts from cities and consultancies	Cities, consultants	Attendance fee

Table 9: Summary of business model characteristics

The four models serve as starting points for discussion rather than final solutions. Based on initial findings, a hybrid approach integrating elements from multiple scenarios is recommended to better address evolving city needs and enhance platform resilience.

In June 2024, LGI and Eurocities presented the four models to the Strategic Management Committee (SMC). The SMC identified several points of interest and flagged areas for further exploration as part of the ongoing refinement of the exploitation strategy.

- **Capital Hub alignment:** The SMC raised questions about the alignment of the **Capital Hub** created under SGA-NZC with the overall exploitation and business model framework. Specifically, they pointed out the need to define how the Capital Hub would conceptually interact with the four scenarios and what role it might play in revenue generation. A potential opportunity identified was the Capital Hub's brokering function, which could generate commission-based revenue streams. Additionally, the SMC suggested exploring gaps that the Capital Hub could address under a different funding structure—particularly areas not currently supported by the constraints of the EC grant.

- **Potential audiences and future opportunities:** The committee highlighted the importance of considering **cities that are not part of the Mission** as a potential audience for the platform in the future. They noted that activities in **SGA2-WP1** could be leveraged to test engagement approaches for these cities, providing valuable insights into how the platform could expand its offerings and

reach beyond Mission Cities. This could play a key role in ensuring the platform's scalability and relevance post-2030.

- **Certification and the CCC label:** The **CCC label** was also identified as a potential element of the long-term business model. The SMC noted that there might be future demand for certification or verification services associated with the CCC label. Exploring this avenue could help monetize the platform's expertise while enhancing its credibility and value to cities and other stakeholders.

These points of interest will guide the next steps in refining the exploitation strategy and ensure alignment with the platform's evolving object. Building on the work done in NetZeroCities, the exploitation strategy will continue to be developed in SGA-NZC T9.7 and SGA2-NZC T3.4. This process has already been initiated: in October 2024, SGA-NZC T9.7 facilitated a consultation workshop during the Consortium meeting in Lyon, France. Participants worked in breakout groups using a Business Model Canvas (BMC) exercise to explore the long-term strategy for the different services, covering value propositions, revenue streams, costs, and necessary resources. This collaborative format provided key insights to inform the exploitation strategy.

Going forward, task partners will update the benchmark conducted in SGA2-NZC T3.4, map the market (potential collaborators and competitors), and further develop potential legal structures and constraints (intellectual property, ownership/commercialisation of city datasets, etc.).

9 Revised key performance indicators

Throughout the project, some of the key performance indicators listed in the initial Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (M3) have been revised. This was the case with the Updated Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plans submitted respectively in M12 and M24. Revisions occurred when KPIs had already been achieved or were close to being achieved. The column "number achieved" shows the numbers achieved for each activity as of 20 August 2025. Most KPIs were achieved or even exceeded.

Activity	Description	Initial Target (M3)	Revised target (M12)	Revised target (M24)	Numbers achieved (M48)
Visual Identity	Design visual identity (logo, graphic charter)	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Flyer / Roll-up	Design & print project flyer and roll-up for events	Used in 8+ events	Used in 8+ events	Used in 20 events	Used in 20+ events
Public website	Central communication hub for promoting NZC	At least 20.000 page views & 6000 visitors	150 000 views and 60 000 visitors a year minimum.	300 000 views and 130 000 visitors a year minimum	Over the course of the project until 20 August 2025, the website has obtained **1.039.954 visitors**, totalling 1.206.067 sessions and more than 2.214.098 page views. In the final year of the project (Oct 2024-20 August 2025), the website had **503,116 visitors** and 994,990 page views.
Twitter	Build online community to support engagement	At least 1.5k followers	5000 followers on Twitter by M48	5000 followers on Twitter by M48	As of 20 August 2025, NZC has **2,489 followers** on X (Twitter). Growth was lower than expected as many users left the platform in recent years.
LinkedIn	Build online community to support engagement	At least 2k followers	10Kfollowers on LinkedIn by M48	At least 15K followers by M48	As of 20 August 2025, NZC has **19,752 followers** on LinkedIn
Instagram	Build online community to	At least 1k followers	At least 1k followers	At least 1500 followers by the	As of 20 August 2025, NZC has **1,544 followers** on Instagram.

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	support engagement / Broadcast the campaign promoting "Urban Climate Champions"			end of the project	
"NZC TV"	Streaming channel on website and YouTube channel, for project and other relevant videos	At least 3k views	At least 10000 views by M48	At least 25000 views by M48	This KPI has already been reached. As of 20 August 2025, NZC YouTube channel has 431 subscribers and 30,300 views.
Community of Practice	LinkedIn Group or other tools / Build online community to support animation of the Community of Practice	At least 1k practitioners interested to join	At least 1k practitioners interested to join	At least 1k practitioners interested to join	961 individuals registered to receive information on the CoP as of 20 August 2025
400 individuals are part of the CoP group on the NetZeroCities Portal
Spotlights & stories and interviews	A series of at least 10 spotlights and 10 stories and interviews from the pilots	Portfolio of spotlights and stories	Portfolio of spotlights and stories	Portfolio of spotlights and stories	As of 20 August 2025, 10 spotlight articles, 3 of them including explanatory videos, have been produced.
7 content pieces related to Pilot & Twin Cities have been produced and more are planned by the end of M48.
Press releases	Shared with target media and journalists	50 media mentions	At least 400 media mentions by M48	At least 600 media mentions by M48	As of 20 August 2025, the project has had over 700 media mentions
E-newsletters	E-newsletters	At least 3k Subscribers	At least 4000 subscribers by M48	At least 4000 subscribers by M48	As of 20 August 2025, NZC had 4,867 newsletter subscribers
NZC conferences	Three conferences (M8, M24, M48) with specific objectives for each (WP12)	At least 150 participants per conference	At least 150 participants per conference	At least 400 participants per conference.	350 people attended the kick-off event physically and around 698 people participated online (M8). Over 450 participants attended the Mission in Progress Conference in June 2023.
900 participants registered for the 2025 edition of the Cities Mission Conference in May 2025.
External events	Present in conferences and events to disseminate the project's objectives and results.	At least 20 events	At least 40 events	At least 40 events	40+ events attended
Publications	Publications Scientific and non-scientific publications Research	At least 10 publications	At least 10 publications	At least 10 publications	13 publications

Table 10: Key performance indicators

NET ZERO CITIES

10 Conclusion & Recommendations

Reviewing the outcomes of communication, dissemination and exploitation activities undertaken throughout the project, it is noticeable that our target audiences have demonstrated a keen interest in the Mission Cities' journey towards climate neutrality and the pivotal role of NetZeroCities in supporting them. This engagement is reflected in consistent likes, reactions and comments on the content and publications generated by NetZeroCities.

Initially, considerable effort was invested in explaining the EU Cities Mission's objectives and NetZeroCities's role in supporting cities. Over time, communication activities have evolved to spotlight efforts made by Pilot Cities, present NetZeroCities City Advisors, promote the NetZeroCities Portal as a one-stop-shop for climate neutrality or explain concepts such as social innovation, systemic innovation, or Climate City Contracts, among others. Pilot and Twins' peer-learning journey was highlighted, as well as case studies and achievements from Mission Cities in their climate neutrality pathway. By presenting real-life examples from Mission Cities and Pilot Cities, we have intended to put a face and voice to the collective effort, creating compelling narratives that resonate with the public.

The initial KPIs set at the project start have been exceeded, as well as most of the KPIs updated in D12.2 and D12.3.

Recommendations for the future

Looking ahead and in the context of the ongoing SGA-NZC and SGA2-NZC projects, as well as the upcoming SGA3-NZC the following recommendations can be formulated:

- **City success stories and real-life examples** are key drivers of audience engagement. Spotlighting cities, their achievements, and the individuals working toward climate neutrality is critical for strong storytelling that inspires action from decision-makers in cities, other levels of government, the private sector, academia, and other key stakeholders. As more and more cities progress and hit significant milestones towards climate neutrality, the opportunities to capture and promote their stories steadily increase—and should be fully leveraged.

- **Highlighting local voices** is essential to connect with citizens and build acceptance and support for the climate transition. Developing two-way engagement and encouraging more city-generated content—by inviting cities to share their own stories more and participate more actively in campaigns—would be highly valuable.

- NZC has successfully built a large and active community across its **social media platforms**, providing a strong foundation for outreach and visibility. This community can be further expanded with efforts focusing on **consolidating this presence**: strengthening consistent messaging across platforms, targeting specific audience segments, and using analytics to guide content strategies. Beyond growing follower numbers, the priority should be to foster **meaningful interaction**—through polls, live discussions, or thematic campaigns—that turns passive audiences into active participants.

- **Multimedia strategies** that combine articles with infographics, videos, GIFs, and other engaging formats boost audience interest and should be further pursued.

- **Leveraging multipliers and influencers** is an effective way to reach a broader audience of cities and stakeholders with climate ambitions, as well as the general public. This approach can be further enhanced to increase the impact of campaigns. The **media** also remain a powerful lever for broader outreach and should be consistently mobilised.

- **Events** offer a strong opportunity to enhance visibility, particularly through high-profile gatherings.

- **The continuous monitoring of KPIs** enables rapid adjustments to communication and dissemination strategies. Regularly assessing outreach is essential to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of communication and dissemination measures.