



NET ZERO CITIES SGA2-NZC

Summary report on peer- collaboration at sub- European level

Deliverable D1.21

Authors: Abigail Mizzi, Blandine Pidoux, Julien Joubert, Vlatka Vlahek-Berlan (Energy Cities), Melina Aliayi Drescher, Cristina Robledano (UPM), Paul Brunet (ERRIN), Julia Rawlins, Olga Krajewska (ICLEI) Francesca Rizzo (Polimi), Nadine Burbar (Resilient Cities Network), Carina Aschan (RISE)

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
CCC	Climate City Contract
MC	Mission City
MMC	Mission-minded city (cities engaging with the Cities Mission which are not a Mission City)
NP	National Platform
NZC	NetZeroCities

Summary

The EU Cities Mission “100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030” has selected 100 Mission Cities across the EU and 12 from Horizon-Europe associated countries. Since 2024, NetZeroCities (NZC), currently operating the Mission Platform and operating under the SGA2-NZC grant agreement, has expanded its reach beyond the Mission Cities to provide a full suite of tools, capacity-building programmes, peer-learning forums, and technical support to all cities. Under the national platforms support, the goal is to overcome common barriers, such as limited enabling conditions, funding constraints, regulatory gaps and data access, by fostering multi-level collaboration through national platforms that bring together cities, public authorities across levels of government, as well as private-sector, academic, research, and civil-society actors.

This report presents an snapshot of Mission-oriented national ecosystems in 25 European and Horizon-associated countries as of December 2025. For each country, the deliverable outlines the Mission and Mission-minded cities involved to date, the principal topics of collaboration in 2024-2025, and relevant activities, and the strategic priorities and recommendations for the next phase. Themes that cut across all national contexts include (i) strengthening political and financial support structures, (ii) developing integrated data and monitoring frameworks, (iii) scaling up blended finance and procurement tools, (iv) enhancing multi-level governance and policy alignment, and (v) fostering knowledge exchange and capacity building through peer-learning events.

Across the continent, NZC has facilitated the creation or consolidation of national platforms supporting Mission Cities and Mission-minded cities in countries such as Greece, France, Italy, Poland and Turkey. The outcomes were tangible: launch of national city networks focused on climate neutrality (e.g., ClimaNet in Greece and INŞA in Turkey), engagement of about 230 Mission-minded cities with their national ecosystem and in at least one of the 50+ events organised by NZC in 2025 at national level. The report underscores the impact of peer collaboration in accelerating climate-neutral transitions, scaling best practices, and informing national policy design.

The deliverable concludes with a set of actionable priorities for 2026-2027, including: (1) institutionalising national platforms to provide continuous political, financial and technical support; (2) embedding climate-neutrality into municipal budgeting and data systems; (3) scaling blended-finance mechanisms and procurement practices; and (4) enhancing cross-sectoral and cross-level learning networks. These actions will help the EU Cities Mission realise its twofold objectives of achieving 100 climate-neutral cities by 2030 and establishing them as hubs of experimentation and innovation for all European cities by 2050.

Keywords

Climate neutrality, EU Green Deal, EU Cities Mission, Multi-level governance, National policies, Capacity building, Peer-learning, Networking, Financing

AWAITING APPROVAL BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

INTRODUCTION

In 2022, 100 EU cities & 12 cities from Horizon Europe Associated Countries were selected as Mission Cities in the context of the EU's Mission on "[100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030](#)". The objective of the Mission is twofold: to achieve 100 climate-neutral and smart European cities by 2030, and to ensure that these cities act as experimentation and innovation hubs to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050.

Since 2024, and within the context of SGA2-NZC, NetZeroCities, which is currently managing the EU Cities Mission Platform, extended its support beyond Mission Cities to offer *all* cities the tools and resources to accelerate their journey towards climate neutrality. The [support to all cities](#) includes a series of online tools and resources, a capability building program, peer learning opportunities at EU and national levels, a helpdesk and technical support.

To implement climate actions effectively, collaboration between cities and with regional and national stakeholders is often required. Cities face multiple and often common [barriers](#), such as the lack of enabling conditions for innovation and experimentation, difficulties to access funding and financing sources, hampering policies and regulations, capability issues, and limited access to climate data and monitoring/evaluation framework.

To help overcome these barriers, the EU Cities Mission encourages the development of *national platforms*. These platforms are multi-stakeholder spaces that bring together cities, public authorities across levels of government, as well as private-sector, academic, research, and civil-society actors. Their purpose is to collectively accelerate cities' transition to climate neutrality by strengthening collaboration, learning, and capacity building within national ecosystems. National platforms may provide various forms of support, including political and convening support, innovation and "breakthrough" intervention support, financial support, learning and tooling services, and liaison with EU-level processes. Ultimately, the effectiveness of a national platform is measured by its ability to deliver tangible impact for climate-neutral cities in its national context.

Two projects, [CapaCITIES](#) and [NetZeroCities](#) (including in the context of SGA2-NZC), cooperate to provide support for the creation, deployment or consolidation of *national platforms* under the EU Cities Mission. While CapaCITIES focuses on rallying support from national-level actors, NetZeroCities primarily supports cities' collaboration. When SGA2-NZC kicked off in January 2024, several national platforms were active, for instance in Sweden, Spain, Romania, and Austria, while others were under development or emerging.

In 2024 and 2025, NetZeroCities contributed to support the development of national platforms in 25 European and Horizon-associated countries via the activation of peer-collaboration, based on their specific national contexts and their needs.

This publication, developed for cities and stakeholders seeking to understand developments related to the EU Cities Mission in their country, provides an overview of national ecosystems in 25 European countries as of December 2025. For each country, it presents the cities and stakeholders involved to date, the activities and cooperation of topics supported by NetZeroCities and its partners, and key priorities and recommendations for the future. Each country includes a contact point.

ALBANIA

MISSION CITY: Elbasan

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Tirana, Permet, Pogradec, Roskovec

MAIN TOPICS OF COLLABORATION IN 2024/2025

- National-level cooperation, **building a shared understanding of the Mission's objectives and governance structure**. National platforms can support city-level innovation and mobilize resources, creating an enabling environment for coordinated action toward climate neutrality in Albania.
- Sustainable mobility as a key driver of urban transformation. During the annual event held in October 2025 in Tirana, meaningful multi-stakeholder exchanges related to mobility took place. Participants reinforced the importance of multi-stakeholder governance and joint planning for achieving climate neutrality.
- Enhanced visibility of Elbasan's progress as a Mission City. The Elbasan's Climate-Neutral Innovation in Mobility (ECIM) initiative highlights the city's proactive approach demonstrating how targeted mobility actions and local leadership can serve as catalysts for broader urban transformation.
- Pathways for supporting Mission-minded cities through the NZC offer, available tools, learning opportunities, and collaboration channels.

EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS TO DATE

“Co-Creating Climate-Neutral Cities: A National Platform Approach to Sustainable Mobility in Albania” took place on 6 October 2025 during the Walk21 Conference in Tirana, organized by NetZeroCities and the Build Green Group Albania (BGG), in collaboration with the Urban Research Institute (URI) and Mission City Elbasan.

The workshop brought together representatives from 5 municipalities, national institutions, non-governmental organizations and academia, facilitating multi-level and multi-stakeholder discussions on collaborative frameworks. **Total number of participants: 37. Cities: 5** (Elbasan, Tirana, Permet, Pogradec, Roskovec). **National institutions: 2** (National Association of Municipalities, Albanian Development Fund)

MAIN PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Strengthen partnerships with local municipal networks Partnerships with national and local networks of municipalities are essential to ensure consistent engagement beyond single events, facilitate knowledge transfer, and support the localization of the EU Cities Mission activities. Strengthening ties with networks such as the National Association of Municipalities of Albania can provide continuity, build trust, and enhance the outreach and implementation capacity of NZC actions. NetZeroCities will continue supporting these processes through organising national events in 2026 and 2027.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact: ICLEI Europe, Olga Krajewska (olga.krajewska@iclei.org), Bob D’Haeseleer (bob.d-haeseleer@iclei.org)

Join the [country group for Albania](#) on the Mission Portal

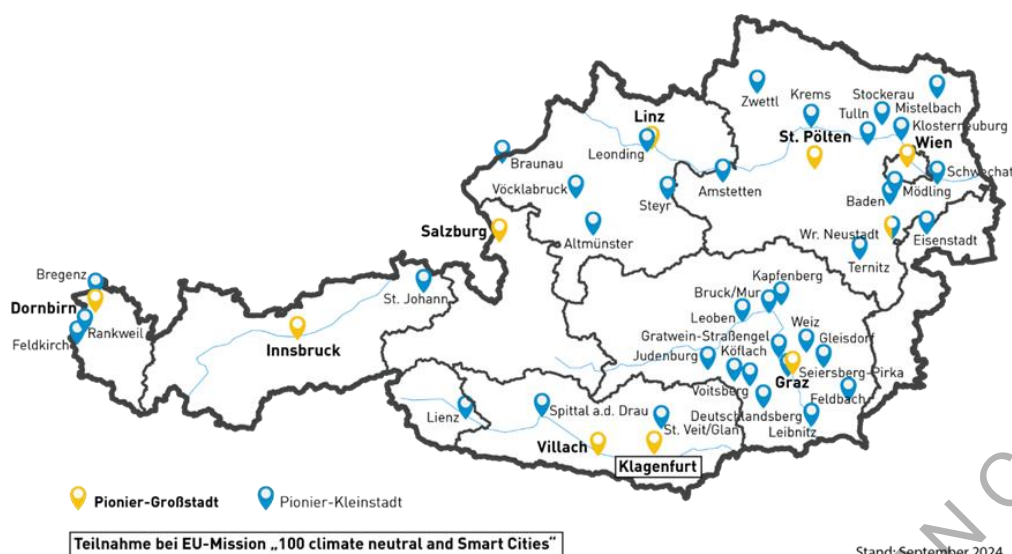


Pictures by Build Green Group Albania

AUSTRIA

MISSION CITY: Klagenfurt

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: The Austrian Climate-Neutral City Mission, “[Klimaneutrale Stadt](#)”, currently involves ten large Austrian cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants (large ‘Pioneer Cities’): Klagenfurt, Vienna, Graz, Salzburg, Villach, Innsbruck, Linz, St. Pölten, Dornbirn and Wiener Neustadt, and 37 smaller cities with 10 000 - 15 000 inhabitants, represented in blue in the graphic below (small ‘Pioneer Cities’).



PARTNERS

The Federal Ministry for Innovation, Mobility and Infrastructure (further referred to as the Ministry for Infrastructure) is facilitating Klimaneutrale Stadt, in cooperation with the national Climate and Energy Fund. The ministry is well-placed for this role, as it has already worked for several years with nine Austrian cities on issues related to climate and smart cities within the Smart Cities Network Austria.

Participating actors: The Salzburg Institute for Regional Planning and Housing is responsible for organising the activities of Klimaneutrale Stadt, together with AustriaTech, a non-profit organisation under the Federal Ministry for Infrastructure, and the Austrian Society for Environment and Technology (ÖGUT). The three actors are complementing each other in terms of expertise, with AustriaTech focusing on mobility issues, ÖGUT on energy and buildings, and the Salzburg Institute for Regional Planning and Housing on governance innovation.

Other national actors, such as the Austrian Research Promotion Agency, the Association of Cities and Towns and the Austrian partners involved in the European Partnership Driving Urban Transitions and the CapaCITIES project, are also supporting Klimaneutrale Stadt.

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2025

Klimaneutrale Stadt organises activities with different formats for the participating cities – ranging from strategic exchange between levels of governance, content-oriented learning formats and networking activities. Peer-to-peer learning and exchanges between the cities is a fundamental part of the activities. As part of these exchanges, thematic meetings are organised between city practitioners and experts to discuss current topics, building on cities’ needs, for example regional climate laws, renovation strategies or innovative mobility measures. In-depth discussions are also regularly organised between the cities and the Federal Ministry for Infrastructure to exchange on challenges and issues that touch on national level competencies, such as barriers to regulation and policy.

In 2025, NetZeroCities supported the Klimaneutrale Stadt to improve their strategic communication, branding, and storytelling to better engage the national ecosystem.

Since 2023, Public-Public Partnership (PPP) agreements have been signed between the former Federal Ministry for Climate Action, nowadays BMIMI, and the ten large Austrian Pioneer Cities that are part of Klimaneutrale Stadt. These agreements aim to secure additional resources for capacity building in the

cities, as they allocate up to € 2 M per city (€ 20 M. in total) to ensure necessary personnel capacity and competence development over a period of (up to) five years.

Furthermore, the Climate and Energy Fund provided research and development (R&D) procurement funding of up to € 100 000 to the 38 small to mid-sized cities that are part of Klimaneutrale Stadt (€ 3.2 M in total), to support them in the development of climate neutrality strategies over 12-18 months. Follow-up funding through Public-Public-Partnership (PPP) agreements – closely aligned to the objectives of the large Pioneer Cities – will start early 2026. Here, up to € 500 000 are allocated for a partnership duration of three years (€ 3.6 M in total, with a potential increase of the funds).

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, Klimaneutrale Stadt includes 47 cities, covering approx. 40% of Austria's population and responsible for about one third of Austria's total greenhouse gas emissions.

Klimaneutrale Stadt is working on involving both the private sector as well as the Austrian provinces in its activities to a greater extent. The provinces have shown interest to join Klimaneutrale Stadt, which is important as the provinces have some competences that are relevant to the cities' climate neutrality work.

The current focus of Klimaneutrale Stadt has been on research and innovation; however, the activities will slowly start shifting more towards implementation. Meanwhile, the Federal Ministry for Infrastructure and the supporting partners are collecting information from both the larger and smaller cities to understand their needs for the upcoming years, especially once the 5-year PPP agreement period has finished and the smaller cities have developed their climate neutrality strategies. In 2026, approx. € 60 M are dedicated to research and innovation calls and the upcoming Public-Public Partnerships.

HOW TO JOIN?

Visit <https://klimaneutralestadt.at/en/>

BELGIUM

MISSION CITIES: Antwerp, Brussels Capital Region, La Louvière, Leuven

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Mechelen, Ostend, Ghent

PARTNERS: Mission Board Member Jorn Verbeeck, Climate Risk Assessment Center (CERAC), Belgian Climate Center, Kenniscentrum Vlaamse Steden (KCVS), Association of local authorities in Flanders (VVSG), Chambre des Urbanistes de Belgique (CUB), POLLEC programme in Wallonia, VITO research center, University of Ghent, Impact Finance Belgium (IFB), 100 Neighbourhoods Platform

ACTIVITIES 2023-2025

In December 2023, the four Belgian Mission Cities, Mission Manager Patrick Child, and a range of other cities and partners first convened. Throughout 2024, the group explored the potential to launch a national platform. As of December 2025, work is underway with the partners listed above toward a public launch in early 2026.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Increased coordination to accelerate climate neutrality.**

Cities in Belgium must simultaneously reduce emissions (mitigation), manage climate risks (adaptation), and transform underlying systems (energy, mobility, water, buildings, materials).

2. Mitigation

Cities must:

- Retrofit extensive building stock through collective renovation and neighbourhood-scale approaches.
- Deploy heat networks and renewable heat sources while navigating complex governance and financing frameworks.
- Accelerate electrification of buildings, mobility, and industry, while addressing grid congestion and behaviour change.
- Enable a modal shift through integrated urban mobility planning.
- Reorganize urban logistics via microhubs, shared infrastructure, and public–private partnerships.

Adaptation

Cities must respond to intensifying climate risks and:

- Embed nature-based solutions into spatial planning and procurement.
- Manage heat islands, flooding, and water scarcity through district-scale design.
- De-seal the urban fabric to increase infiltration and resilience.
- Apply water- and soil-led planning in all new development.
- Collaborate across regions and agencies to manage river basin risks.

Circularity

Cities must shift from a linear to a regenerative economy, i.e.:

- Develop spatial infrastructure for reuse, repair, materials hubs, and circular ecosystems.
- Promote circular construction through permitting, design-for-disassembly, and material reuse.
- Strengthen governance over urban material flows and reduce waste.

3. Emergence of new forms of capacity and governance

Achieving these goals requires new forms of capacity and governance:

- Cities must build internal expertise in climate finance, impact investment, energy systems, adaptation, and transition management.
- Governance must shift toward shared ownership across public, private, civic, and academic partners.

- Long-term climate goals require political continuity and stronger mandates.
- Cities need access to integrated data, tools and monitoring systems.
- Multi-level alignment (EU–national–regional–local) is essential.

In 2026, the partners of the national structure will support cities in addressing the priorities identified above and work toward these new forms of capacity and governance.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Marta Arosio, Energy Cities marta.ariosio@energy-cities.eu

Join the [country group for Belgium](#) on the Mission Portal

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

MISSION CITY: Sarajevo Functional Urban Area (FUA, hereafter referred to as Sarajevo), integrated by the three administrations: City of Sarajevo, Sarajevo Canton, City of East Sarajevo.

PARTNERS: Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency (SERDA)

ACTIVITIES IN 2025

Sarajevo submitted their Climate City Contract in 2025, gathering the three administrations of the City of Sarajevo, the Sarajevo Canton, and the City of East Sarajevo.



Picture by Derviš Hadžimuhamedović from Grad Sarajevo - City of Sarajevo

Building on this landmark, Sarajevo partners and NetZeroCities partners organised an event in Tarčin, in November 2025, as part of the *Electromobility Conference* organised by the Chamber of Economy of the Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina. The session brought together representatives from across Sarajevo and partners from NetZeroCities, to share their experiences, challenges, and ambitions in

developing the Climate City Contract (CCC) – aligning local actions, investments, and multi-stakeholders' participation for a climate-neutral city.

Key highlights of the panel discussion included:

- Nermina Suljević, Assistant to the Mayor for Sustainable Development, City of Sarajevo – shared insights on the FUA's journey on developing the CCC. A creative and participatory process led to the creation of a Citizens Assembly, randomly selecting citizens to integrate their voices in the high-level strategic planning of the city. Additionally, Nermina Suljević explained how the CCC integrated the three parts of the FUA – City of East Sarajevo, Sarajevo Canton, and City of Sarajevo. This alignment enables to map out the priorities and commitments in each area to reflect them in the CCC.
- Mladen Đurović, independent professional associate for Energy Efficiency and Management from City of East Sarajevo, presented their contributions and perspectives integrated into the Climate City Contract. Mladen Đurović reinforced that effective cooperation between representatives of these three institutions is essential throughout the entire process, especially at the operational level, to ensure successful implementation.
- Dalila Zečić, Expert Advisor for the Office of the Prime Minister of Canton Sarajevo, showcased the *Mobilities for EU* project and the progress on the Educational Mobility Lab in Sarajevo. The canton is introducing classes into the curriculum of fifth-grade elementary school students taking place at the Educational Park – to be finished by the summer of 2026. This raises awareness on the impact of sustainable transport on the city air quality and how is crucial to approach this systemic change, starting by education.
- Jasmin Gabela, Head of Economic Development, Enova, discussed the technical support process for developing the CCC. He presented the three main field of actions that are targeted in the CCC: 1) built environment: decarbonization of heating and building renovations, 2) mobility and transport: shift to public transport, and 3) energy systems: decarbonization of electricity generation in the commercial sector and households.
- Deniz Celik, City Advisor from NetZeroCities, reflected on Sarajevo's CCC and the Mission's approach that looks beyond single actions to systemic change. Drawing on global trends from Mission Cities, she highlighted Sarajevo's collaborative pathway, bringing together multiple governance levels and stakeholders and emphasized that energy and mobility transitions must evolve together, EV adoption only works with clean power, and integrating cross sectoral solutions can drive both cleaner air and healthier life.
- Senad Mrkaljević, City Finance Specialist from NetZeroCities, presented innovative investment models and financing pathways explored through the CCC development. Senad Mrkaljević also highlighted the differences in financing approaches between EU and non-EU cities, noting how access to funds, instruments, and procedures differs, and how similar mechanisms could be adapted within the Sarajevo context. The importance of acting quickly and in a coordinated manner was emphasized to seize upcoming opportunities and continue advancing the initiatives already supporting the city's climate goals.



Pictures by Chamber of the Economy of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The session preparation and the key take aways reaffirmed the strong commitment of city representatives from the **Functional Urban Area of Sarajevo to take action, implement solutions, and accelerate their journey toward climate neutrality** in close collaboration with NetZeroCities.

The role of **regional cooperation, joint planning, and active local engagement** in driving the transition toward climate-neutral solutions was also highlighted.

To continue this effort, NetZeroCities will organise follow up meeting with the city representatives to keep them informed of future opportunities for cities offered by NZC and CapaCITIES .

Overall, this event was an important starting point to engage all FUA city representatives in the development of a Community of Practice in the country, building on great collaboration between the three administrations, and with other local authorities in the country.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Melina Aliayi Drescher, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid melina.aliayi@upm.es

Join the [country group for Bosnia & Herzegovina](#) on the Mission Portal.

CROATIA

MISSION CITY: Zagreb

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Poreč, Rijeka, Dubrovnik, Šibenik, Popovača, Dugo Selo, Ludbreg, Križevci, Slavonski Brod

PARTNERS:

- ODRAZ – NGO, Sustainable Community Development NGO – Odraz Team is dedicated to contributing to creation of social, economic and political environment enabling sustainable development.
- ZEC – Zagreb Energy Centre operated through networking with the key stakeholders at the local, national and EU level. Cooperation with city services, academia, professional institutional, civil society organisations and EU programs.

ACTIVITIES 2024 - 2025:

Several events and workshops have been organised in connection with the Cities Mission in Croatia, in parallel of the development of the city of Zagreb's CCC. The key learnings include the following:

- Fiscal systems in Croatia are not ready for climate action' acceleration – Croatian fiscal systems at all levels of government (local, regional, national) are still not fully adapted to effectively monitor, plan and finance the increasing expenditures required for the implementation for climate action and the achievement of national and EU climate goals. Significant reforms in budgetary and tax mechanisms are necessary.
- Integration of spatial planning and budgetary planning is essential – For the successful implementation of climate measures, it is crucial to ensure the integration of budgetary planning (the financial perspective) directly into spatial planning (development and infrastructure decision).
- A better piloting of the budgetary lines to reflect climate related spending, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, is needed for a better decision-making process. The goal is to identify, track and measure all budgetary line items that relate to expenditure for climate change mitigation and adaptation, thanks to a "tagging" system. This initiative requires a close cooperation with the Ministry of Finance for successful technical implementation.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following issues are considered as key priorities:

- Maximize the use of EU Missions and Cohesion Policy Instruments as a platform for systematic connection and integration of projects. Achieve the scaling up and transfer of successful solutions and good practices already developed by cities, transforming individual successes into standards at the national level.
- Private finance is critical for achieving CCC targets, but cities lack support to de-risk investments. Cities advocate for stronger guarantees or blended finance tools from the EU to make climate-neutral projects in cities bankable, while cities should prepare projects with clear returns on investment.
- Policy innovation is a must to achieve the Cities Mission goal to address the EU and national legislations – from transport subsidies to building regulations – which still incentivize fossil lock-in.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Vlatka Berlan Vlahek, Energy Cities vlatka.berlan-vlahek@energy-cities.eu

Join the [country group for Croatia](#) on the Mission Portal.

CYPRUS

MISSION CITY: Limassol

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Paphos, Arradippou, Strovolos, Kourion.

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2025



Participation at Cyprus Cities Forum in Limassol on April 30, 2025

In Cyprus, the 2024 local government reform significantly reshaped municipal governance, merging municipalities and transferring certain powers (building & planning permits) to district-level authorities. This has introduced complexity for local climate action, especially as local governments now operate in a more constrained and redefined institutional environment. Local governments' ability to take autonomous climate action has been recalibrated, some functions such as building licencing, have been shifted upward, which can dilute clarity or slow municipal-level initiatives.

Despite these structural constraints, Limassol stands out as a climate-neutrality frontrunner in Cyprus. It has joined the national platform ClimaNet alongside Greek Mission Cities, helping to bridge national–local collaboration. In April 2025, Limassol hosted the [Cyprus Forum Cities](#), a national gathering focused on strengthening municipal governance, supporting the country's recent local government reform, and accelerating the role of cities in Cyprus' sustainable development agenda. The Forum brought together local leaders, national ministries, experts, and civil society to discuss how newly formed municipal structures can effectively assume broader responsibilities, improve service delivery, and advance climate and resilience priorities.

NetZeroCities contributed to the Cyprus Forum Cities by convening a high-level panel on National–Local Cooperation to Accelerate Climate Neutrality, engaging the mayors of Limassol, Aradippou, and Kourion, alongside a representative from Strovolos, the Ministry of Finance, and Bankers without Boundaries. The session created a dedicated space to explore how Cyprus can align its reform momentum with the ambitions of the Cities Mission, and how metropolitan collaboration within the Greater Limassol area can support more coherent climate planning.

The discussion surfaced several key insights for the national platform work. First, while funding opportunities for climate action are increasing, municipalities consistently highlighted execution capacity, clarity of mandates, and access to specialised expertise as the primary barriers to implementation. Second, the Ministry of Finance underscored the need for coordinated municipal requests and robust investment planning to ensure national instruments can be deployed effectively. Third, cities emphasised that improved national-local coordination, particularly through emerging

structures such as ClimaNet, will be essential to operationalising climate neutrality, strengthening peer-to-peer learning, and building shared approaches across metropolitan areas. These insights are directly informing the next phase of NetZeroCities support in Cyprus, including targeted capacity-building, strengthening the national platform, and facilitating structured collaboration between Cypriot cities and Mission Cities across Europe.

Furthermore, discussions during the Forum highlighted several systemic issues shaping Cyprus' pathway toward climate neutrality. Municipalities emphasized the absence of a clear national agenda for local climate action and the implications of the 2024 local governance reform, which decentralised responsibilities without establishing structured national support. At the same time, strong interest emerged among cities to collaborate more closely on climate-neutrality efforts, reflected in the formation of the Cyprus Climate Neutrality Coordination Committee between Limassol, Strovolos, and Aradippou. The Forum reinforced the growing demand for peer exchange, capacity building, and a more coordinated framework that can guide municipalities toward climate-neutral development.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Cyprus is preparing to host a landmark event on climate neutrality in March 2026 under the Cyprus Presidency of the EU Council, intended as a national moment to elevate climate-neutrality discourse, align actors, and show how municipal practices (especially from Limassol) can scale across Cyprus.
- Continue to develop NetZeroCities support in Cyprus based on learnings of 2025 collaboration, including targeted capacity-building, strengthening the national platform, and facilitating structured collaboration between Cypriot cities and Mission Cities across Europe.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Alvaro Soldevila asoldevila@resilientcitiesnetwork.org and Nadine Burbar nburbar@resilientcitiesnetwork.org, Resilient Cities Network

Join the [country group for Cyprus](#) on the Mission Portal

CZECH REPUBLIC

MISSION CITIES: Liberec

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Ústí nad Labem, Kladno, Jablonec, Děčín, Jindřichův Hradec, Most, Jeseník

PARTNERS INVOLVED TO DATE: Ministry of Regional Development, Energetické Centrum Ústeckého Kraje (ECUK)

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2024/2025

- **Developing capacity-building programme for Mission-minded cities**
Partnership with the Energetické Centrum Ústeckého Kraje (ECUK) began in May 2025, creating a regular coordination mechanism between NetZeroCities, Liberec (Mission City), and the Ministry of Regional Development. This collaboration aims at developing and delivering a capacity-building programme for Mission-minded cities in Czech Republic, including such topics as sustainable finance, local skills and capacities, and political engagement.

The official launch of this work took place at the webinar “The Journey of Czech Cities Toward Climate Neutrality” on 21 August 2025 and gathered Czech stakeholders to explore how municipalities can accelerate progress toward climate neutrality within the EU Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities. The former Minister of Environment of the Czech Republic, Rut Bízková, opened the session by highlighting the vital role of cities and citizens in achieving climate goals and the need to connect local action with EU funding opportunities. NetZeroCities representatives presented key NZC tools such as the Barometer, Solution Outliner, and Engagement Strategy Tools, supporting cities in assessing progress and identifying effective decarbonization pathways. Liberec shared the city’s experience as a Mission City, including its Climate City Contract and ambitious emission reduction targets, as well as the benefits of collaboration within the NZC network. The discussion concluded with ECUK outlining local approaches to energy management and opportunities for Czech municipalities to align with the Mission framework and make better use of EU support for integrated climate action.

The slides and the webinar recording are available [here](#).

- **Funding urban projects for climate neutrality**

To support the development of the national platform for climate-neutral cities in the Czech Republic, initial connections have been established with key financial and institutional actors, including Komerční banka, the State Fund for Investment Support, the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, the International Sustainable Finance Centre, the Integrated Regional Operational Programme, and the Centre for Regional Development. These connections lay the groundwork for coordinated and systematic dialogue and knowledge exchange that will address relevant financial barriers that cities face on their path towards climate neutrality.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Through regular dialogue and exchanges with Czech partners, the following thematic areas have been identified as essential. Task partners will seek to integrate these priorities into the planning of upcoming activities and formats.

Mobilise Mayors to prioritise climate neutrality

Municipal politicians, including mayors, deputy mayors, and councillors, should be encouraged to take visible leadership through a joint declaration or open letter to the national government, outlining the shared ambition of Czech cities to co-create national frameworks that enable local climate action.

Facilitate a collective political call to action, inviting municipalities to join forces and shape the national legislative and policy environment that affects local implementation (e.g., the Energy Act, grid infrastructure, community energy rules).

Strengthen multilevel dialogue and system alignment

Use the emerging national platform to institutionalise dialogue between municipalities, ministries, and agencies, ensuring that local insights directly inform national strategies on climate, energy, and financing. This would contribute to the Czech Republic’s Mission alignment and help cities transition from being “policy takers” to “policy shapers.”

Build municipal capacity for the next funding period

Parallel to the political effort, establish a capacity-building strand focused on preparing cities for future EU funding frameworks and for transitioning “from cohesion to competitiveness.” Key themes could include innovative financing and blending of funds, building transformative partnerships (cross-sector, intergenerational, and inter-municipal), developing long-term investment planning capacity, strengthening leadership skills for systemic change.

Foster transformative partnerships

Encourage cities to engage with industry representatives, youth, academia, and civic society to co-design solutions that go beyond formal cooperation. Such partnerships should generate real co-ownership of climate and energy transitions and strengthen local legitimacy and resilience.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: ICLEI Europe, Olga Krajewska olga.krajewska@iclei.org, Svea Heinemann svea.heinemann@iclei.org

Join the [country group for Czech Republic](#) on the Mission Portal

DENMARK

MISSION CITIES: Copenhagen, Aarhus, Sonderborg

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Joint work with the Danish Climate Alliance (95 member cities) will allow to engage with cities beyond the Mission Cities.

PARTNERS: Concito, Central Denmark EU Office, South Denmark EU office

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2025

In Denmark, the State does not have a real mechanism or policy framework to support local climate action. Multilevel governance in climate policy is mainly structured through the Danish Climate Alliance, a network of municipalities working on climate issues with the involvement of regional authorities.

Through the Climate Alliance, 95 Danish municipalities have developed climate action plans under the DK2020 program, with the goal of aligning with the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. CONCITO and C40 are responsible for developing a common system to assess whether municipalities' climate action plans continue to comply with the Paris Agreement after their revisions.

Over the past 50 years, Denmark has developed a deeply decentralized model through successive municipal mergers, resulting in a small number of local authorities with broad competencies. Since June 2024, a reform of local government competencies has transferred climate responsibilities from the regions to the municipalities. However, this reform remains unclear regarding its implementation and the associated financial transfers.

Danish municipalities are already advanced in mitigation actions and would benefit from a very targeted support from NetZeroCities in some of the topics mentioned below.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NetZeroCities identified that focusing future work around the following priorities would advance collaboration at national level:

- Develop technical expertise on negative emissions, scope 3 emissions, building retrofitting and citizen engagement
- Coordinate different governance levels regarding energy planning and financing to accelerate the transition and optimise investment flows across heating power infrastructures.
- Develop a joint management of land-use, agriculture and biodiversity priorities, between national and municipal actors
- Define governance and funding models to sustain cross-municipal low-carbon mobility initiatives, building on national frameworks and Mission Cities' experience
- Build synergies between mitigation and adaptation actions at local, national and European level
- Strengthen multilevel governance to improve alignment of national regulation and taxation frameworks.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Paul Brunet (ERRIN) – paul.brunet@errin.eu

Danish Climate Alliance contact: Nicolas Francart (Concito) - nf@concito.dk

Join the [country group for Denmark](#) on the Mission Portal

ESTONIA

MISSION CITY: Tartu

The Association of Estonian cities and municipalities (AECM) has a Green Club (R-Klubi) of 17 cities to support them integrating the green transition into the daily management and investment activities of local governments. It involves City of Tallinn, Rakvere city, Toila municipality, Elva municipality, West Harju rural municipality, Võru city, Paide city, City of Tartu, Tori municipality, Saku rural municipality, Märjamaa Municipality, Põlva municipality, Kiili municipality, Saue parish, Narva city, Anija municipality, Põltsamaa Municipality.

R-Club operates under the leadership of local governments with a rotating chairmanship and in partnership with the Association of Estonian Cities and Rural Municipalities (ELVL) and the Environmental Investment Centre (EIK), which contribute to the content, involve international, state and scientific partners in the network's events, and form the club's executive committee.

[Here](#) the link to be part of the R-Klubi. Local governments are welcome!

NetZeroCities collaborates with the city of Tartu, the Ministry of Energy and Tallin University of Estonia to bring the climate neutrality work as a priority in a context where security and safety are the political priorities. A national event will be organised early 2026 to adapt the Cities Mission framework to the national ecosystem and start a Community of Practice using the framework of the EU Mission.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Cristina Robledano, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid cristina.robledano@upm.es

Join the [country group for Estonia](#) on the Mission Portal

FINLAND

MISSION CITIES: Helsinki, Espoo, Turku, Tampere, Lappeenranta and Lahti

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Vaasa, Joensuu, Vantaa, Jyväskylä and Oulu



ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2025

The Finnish Cities Mission network, *ClimateMissionFinland2030*, is chaired by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, with active participation from the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The network also includes partners from NetZeroCities, CapaCITIES project consortium, and Business Finland.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment commissioned a continuation support project to strengthen the climate neutrality and well-being objectives of the Finnish Mission Cities. This initiative was aligned with the **Driving Urban Transitions (DUT)** programme and coordinated by VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, in collaboration with the UKK Institute and Kausal Oy.

The project delivered:

- A generic action portfolio to promote behavioural change towards sustainable urban mobility and enhanced well-being.
- A model to assess the co-benefits of selected measures on mobility and health.
- Capacity-building efforts to support cities in implementing sustainable mobility and health promotion activities.

The project's findings underscore that while sustainable mobility measures—such as promoting active travel and reducing private car use—may have limited direct climate mitigation impact, they yield significant health and well-being benefits. DUT recommends that future mobility, climate action, and urban planning strategies explicitly integrate health benefits to maximize positive outcomes for cities and their residents.

As of 2025, all Finnish Mission Cities have received the official Mission label and developed their Climate City Contracts (CCCs). These cities use the Finnish Cities Mission network as a collaborative platform to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and jointly address challenges.

Mission Cities convene monthly to advance the development and implementation of their CCCs. These meetings are tailored to the cities' needs and have previously focused on investment planning and transport-related challenges. The network typically holds two national meetings per year, to which Mission-minded cities participate, featuring updates from NetZeroCities and progress on CCCs. In addition, Mission Cities have hosted thematic events and contributed to national conferences through workshops and sessions.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, along with supporting organisations, has engaged in a joint meeting with National Platforms from Austria, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden—facilitated by NetZeroCities. Bilateral dialogues have also taken place with Viable Cities, the Swedish National Platform, focusing on key development themes such as national support structures, communication and branding, and city-level activities.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking ahead, there are plans to formalize and expand Nordic cooperation. The initial focus will be on arranging both in-person meetings and online meetings between Finland, Norway, and Sweden, with the aim of fostering mutual learning, policy alignment, and joint capacity-building. The aim of the collaboration is to facilitate the exchange of best practices, strengthen national-level support mechanisms for Mission Cities across the Nordic region, explore opportunities for joint initiatives, funding applications, and research collaborations.

HOW TO JOIN?

NetZeroCities contact partner: Carina Aschan, Viable Cities, carina.aschan@viablecities.se

Join the [country group for Finland](#) on the Mission Portal

FRANCE

MISSION CITIES: Metropolises of Angers Loire, Bordeaux, Dijon, Grenoble Alpes, Nantes, Cities of Lyon, Marseille, and Paris; Urban Community of Dunkirk

MISION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Metropolises of Montpellier, Orléans and Strasbourg, Municipality of Courcy, Communauté d'Agglomération de la Rochelle, City of Issy-les-Moulineaux

PARTNERS: The national City Mirror Group involves different partners: the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Ecological Transition and Biodiversity, the Ministry of Territorial Planning and Decentralisation, National Agency for Territorial Cohesion, National Agency for the Ecological Transition, National Agency of Research, France Villes et territoires Durables, France urbaine, Energy Cities, ANRT, CEREMA, CSTB, Banque des Territoires, Région Ile de France, I4CE, Université Gustave Eiffel, PEPR « Ville durable », PIN Ville.

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2024 - 2025

In 2024 and 2025, activities focused on the topic of the **investment needs at local level** to achieve climate neutrality. Indeed, French cities look for solutions to better assess and address the funding gap. The development of different methodologies in France to develop investment plans for climate actions showcases the various goals of such exercise: evaluate, monitor, decide and orientate investments, mobilise partners and support them. There is no nationally defined methodology yet for local authorities to evaluate climate investments' needs at local level. Such methodologies exist at national level, and prospective exercises are made by the Ministry of Economy and Finances ([multiannual financing strategy of the ecological transition](#)), or by I4CE ([climate investment assessment](#)). French Mission Cities

are pioneers on this topic, thanks to the development of their Climate City Contracts and its investment plans.

NetZeroCities led sessions to develop finance and funding capacity building: Dijon Metropolis presented the methodology they developed in-house, while Paris presented a [study developed](#) with a research partner, and I4CE presented the [methodology](#) they developed to align municipal multiannual investment plan with climate goals. Regardless of the methodology used, **developing climate investment plans at local level helps to enhance collaboration between the municipal financial and climate departments and break internal governance silos.**



Picture of Mission Cities event organised in Marseille, 2nd April 2025.

A comparative analysis of the CCG investments plans using [NetZeroPlanner](#) and national assessments show that results are overall in line, in terms of sectors requiring the most of investments (buildings first and then transport), the net socio-economic benefits of the investments (compensating the costs), and the share of cities in the investment efforts to be made (around 10 – 15% of the total investment needs). However, these results are relatively lower in terms of volumes of investment required, than comparable results made at national level. This can be explained by the fact that NetZeroPlanner used average assumptions for the European context but doesn't include specific assumptions for France.

When considering different decarbonisation levers, it is key to assess the capacities of actors to act and the profitability of these actions from their perspective, and not only from a socio-economic perspective. The General Secretariat of the Ecological Transition started such [analysis](#); but doesn't consider the financial support of local authorities to these actors. A detailed analysis of the different levers is required, as well as reconsidering the public support according to the financial capacities of the different actors to further develop a just transition perspective in local climate strategies.

The analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the decarbonisation (the co-benefits) at local level represents a powerful narrative for municipalities to engage with local stakeholders. For instance, the Paris' climate action plan would lead to: 2 billion savings per year on energy bills by 2050, 1.3 billion euros of co-benefits (better air quality and human health, reduction of noises, etc.), around 3 billions of economic value created, and between 13 000 and 16 000 jobs created in Paris region.

The capability building activities described above have been connected to other activities organised by NetZeroCities in France, such as a roundtable on improving framework conditions for local climate actions. Recommendations from this dialogue, to improve national and local public financing of the ecological transition can be found [here](#). These activities allowed to clarify the needs from local authorities towards the national government and reinforced the community of practices among cities and partners engaged, which are key aspects to better engage national policy makers.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions would be beneficial to support French cities to achieve climate neutrality:

- Develop a version of NetZeroPlanner (or a similar tool) adapted to France, to provide a robust methodology and some standardised data for local authorities to easily develop local investment plans.
- Develop a common framework between the government and local authorities, for engaging public funds to fund climate actions, which is missing in the French context, reducing the impacts of both actors, and feeding distrust between the two government levels.
- The portfolio approach of the CCCs requires to be translated into investments, thanks to private-public partnerships, and cities are looking for support to better engage private actors. New governance models are required, and cities look for risk management strategies to maximise private investments thanks to public support.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Julien Joubert, Energy Cities julien.joubert@energy-cities.eu

Join the [country group for France](#) on the Mission Portal.

GERMANY

stronGER cities
for a climate-neutral Europe

MISSION CITIES: Aachen, Dortmund, Dresden, Heidelberg, Leipzig, Mannheim, München, Münster

MISION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Berlin-Pankow, Mainz, Wolfsburg, Hamburg, Würzburg

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2024 - 2025

- **New formats being established for multi-level governance driven by cities seeking faster progress**
New ways of working between Mission Cities and the national level, such as dialogue formats on the regulatory environment and finance (City-Industry Dialogues, Better Funding Dialogues) are being tested and refined. These complement the existing National Steering Committee which meets twice per year, as well as the annual Urban Planning Summit and Urban Lunch Talks.
- **StronGER cities Secretariat and alliance of key actors**

Alongside established collaboration among the German Mission Cities at operational level, which is being facilitated by a Secretariat function, the benefits of regular exchange between a wide range of stakeholders is evident. For example, exchange is taking place at mayoral level, as well as between EU initiatives in Germany (URBACT, DUT) and private sector, think tanks and civil society. In order to create opportunities for cooperation, an alliance of key actors is being built to ensure that the dialogue formats, such as the City-Industry Dialogue and Better Funding Dialogue, are embedded in the ecosystem and build on existing efforts, e.g. of the German Association of German Cities.

- **Visibility of the Cities Mission and MMC offer**

NetZeroCities support has also responded to the stronGER cities request for greater profile and visibility in Germany, especially in Berlin. In addition, a programme of Mission-minded cities learning events has been developed and is being promoted via informal partnerships, such as URBACT, and LUBW. Activities at national and regional events, such as the Bundeskongress in Rostock (Sept. '25), have been used to promote stronGER cities and the Mission-minded cities offer. Additionally, a Landing Page for the German cities on the NZC Portal is under development.

- **Added value of the Mission, especially learnings from CCCs.**

Data and learnings from the CCC process can inform the future governance developments needed for the transition, including management of EU funds. The CCCs can be a model for other governance levels to adopt in order to effectively disseminate funding and ensure a strategic partnership with cities in the transition.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- NetZeroCities should continue to help facilitate alignment between levels of government (especially Mission Cities and the national level) in terms of regulation and fiscal policy via existing fora, such as the Lenkungsforum (Steering Committee) and by investing in the stronGER cities Secretariat which is proving to be beneficial for collaboration among the German Mission Cities, and demonstrates a useful communications channel with other actors, notably the national ministries.
- A Champion at the national level could significantly help to capitalise on the opportunities provided by the Cities Mission for the benefit of all levels of government and other stakeholders. For example, by scaling tried and tested tools and approaches, such as the CCC which is an instrument which can effectively help the national government fulfil its legal and non-binding obligations (i.e. German Climate Law, CHAMP...).
- A key focus needs to be on streamlining and simplifying access to funding for cities (considering capacity limitations). Currently many cities, in particular smaller ones, do not have staff to consolidate and communicate their needs to the national level, or access external funding. Other issues where NZC can help address challenges include Monitoring, Reporting, Verification, Standardisation, engaging the private sector and finance institutions and communicating results and learning from the Cities Mission.
- The following topics are a selection of issues that have been identified by stronGER cities to be discussed in the context of multi-level governance in order to advance the transition to climate neutrality: regulatory sandboxes in national building codes, the distribution of the special fund for infrastructure and climate neutrality (SVIK) between federal state and local

governments, and the consultation of local governments for the national Social Climate Fund plan.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Julia Rawlins Julia.Rawlins@iclei.org and Laura Broo Laura.Broo@iclei.org, ICLEI

Join the [country group for Germany](#) on the Mission Portal

GREECE

MISSION CITIES: Athens, Ioannina, Kalamata, Kozani, Thessaloniki, Trikala

PARTNERS: Ministry of Energy & Environment, Green Fund, CERTH

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2024/2025

- Greece is making progress in aligning national and municipal efforts to accelerate the transition toward climate neutrality. Through work with the six Greek Mission Cities, common priorities have been identified that call for stronger coordination with the national government. These include enabling access to finance, clarifying the legislative framework for energy transition, and supporting institutional capacity at the local level.
- The establishment of [ClimaNet](#) in early 2025, a network bringing together the seven Mission Cities of Greece and Cyprus, marks a critical step toward institutionalized dialogue on climate neutrality. The initiative offers a platform for collective advocacy and coordinated policymaking between municipalities and the Ministry of Environment and Energy, ensuring that city needs are better reflected in national climate and energy policies.
- The comparative analysis of the Greek City Climate Contracts (CCCs) and the insights from city consultations revealed clear areas where national intervention can accelerate implementation: from developing a national framework for municipal renewable energy deployment and storage to enhancing access to dedicated funding and blended finance mechanisms for local climate investments.
- Municipalities across Greece share strong ambition but face limited technical resources and fragmented responsibilities. National-level guidance, training, and data-sharing mechanisms, particularly for the built environment, energy retrofits, and adaptation planning, would empower cities to implement more comprehensive and integrated solutions.
- The work with the Mission Cities is leading to the development of a Common Agenda: a shared set of priorities for national support that will inform upcoming engagement with the Ministry of Environment and Energy and the broader ClimaNet platform once it is functionally at capacity. This agenda aims to position Greek Mission Cities as frontrunners in shaping the country's transition governance, reinforcing the Mission's role in guiding systemic change.
- NetZeroCities and ClimaNet organise the first National Cities Mission Event in Greece (27–28 November 2025, Athens), a two-day forum convening national ministries, Mission Cities, and local stakeholders to reflect on progress, align on shared priorities, and chart practical

pathways for national–local collaboration. The event will build on the outcomes of the Mission Cities interviews and the comparative analysis of the Greek CCCs, translating identified barriers and opportunities into a joint action agenda.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the next year, the priority for NetZeroCities, in close collaboration with ClimaNet and the six Greek Mission Cities, is to enable the implementation of the Common Agenda by working with the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MEEN) and other national actors to translate shared needs into concrete support mechanisms. Based on the CCC analysis and the in-depth interviews with the cities, three clusters of national-level action emerge as particularly critical:

- Strengthening the enabling framework for project delivery**
Greek cities consistently highlighted barriers stemming from fragmented permitting processes, unclear responsibilities, and the absence of standardised technical pathways for implementing climate-neutral projects across energy, mobility, and the built environment. A key priority is to work with MEEN and relevant agencies to design clear guidelines, standard models, and fast-track procedures that can accelerate municipal implementation, particularly on energy storage, small-scale renewables, public fleet electrification, and municipal building renovation.
- Expanding access to finance and improving the financing environment for cities**
Cities identified financing as the most persistent roadblock to delivering mature climate projects. Strengthening national–local collaboration will therefore require coordinated funding windows adapted to municipal capacities; better alignment between national programmes, RRF opportunities, and EIB advisory services; and the establishment of clearer financial instruments that support bundled projects, energy communities, district-level interventions, and nature-based solutions. A key recommendation is to integrate the findings of the analytical work into upcoming Better Funding Dialogues and to position the National Event as a milestone for reshaping Greece’s municipal climate-finance ecosystem.
- Building institutional capacity and supporting data-driven planning**
All Mission Cities stressed the need for sustained technical assistance and improved access to national data (e.g., building stock, vulnerable households, public spaces, green assets). In the next year, NetZeroCities and ClimaNet will prioritise strengthening municipal capacity through structured knowledge exchange, targeted advisory sessions on priority themes, and collaboration with national organisations that can provide datasets and analytical support. This work will help cities operationalise their transition pathways and develop investable project pipelines.

 - Assess and strengthen Greece’s national financial framework for climate neutrality, especially regarding public financial instruments, regulatory clarity, and enabling legislation.
 - Involve other Mission-minded Greek cities to share experiences, replicate successful models, and build collective capacity.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Nadine Burbar nburbar@resilientcitiesnetwork.org, Resilient Cities Network

Join the [country group for Greece](#) on the Mission Portal

HUNGARY

MISSION CITIES: Budapest, Miskolc, Pecs

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Ajka, Budapest 3rd district, Budapest 5th district, Budapest 7th district, Budapest 11th district, Debrecen, Dunaujvaros

PARTNERS: ABUD Kft, BLOKOM Nonprofit Ltd

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2025

A first meeting took place in Budapest on 7 October 2025, gathering the 3 Mission cities and 11 other stakeholders and Mission-minded cities representatives. The meeting was organized by NetZeroCities in collaboration with the [ASCEND project](#) (of which the city of Budapest is a partner) and focused on the topic of Positive and Clean Energy Districts (PCEDs). The cities of Budapest and Pecs presented their developments as Mission Cities, and participants could learn more on the EU Cities Mission and concrete capability-building opportunities offered by NetZeroCities.



Meeting in Budapest on 7 October 2025

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide expertise on concrete topics such as PCEDs

- Improve the governance via the involvement of further stakeholders at national level

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Marta Arosio, Energy Cities, marta.ariosio@energy-cities.eu

Join the [country group for Hungary](#) on the Mission Portal

ICELAND

MISSION CITY: Reykjavik

PARTNERS: Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Environment and Climate, Association of Local Authorities, Iceland Tourism Cluster

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2025

Iceland has an explicit commitment to reach carbon neutrality no later than 2040, enshrined through its Climate Act and reflected in the country's Long-Term Strategy and updated NDC. The national plan emphasises rapid decarbonisation of transport and industry, and a mix of emissions reductions and enhanced removals as part of the pathway to neutrality.

Reykjavík, like the national government, has set an ambitious target of carbon neutrality by 2040 and maintains an action plan that prioritises early, visible interventions (building stock measures, transport decarbonisation, and municipal operations).

Building on the national commitment and Reykjavik's municipal programme, NetZeroCities has been supporting a focused exchange on how national frameworks and municipal actions can be better aligned. This work emphasises practical, municipality-ready instruments (finance, technical assistance, regulatory clarity) that enable local delivery at scale.

As part of this workstream, NetZeroCities convened a high-level panel on national–local collaboration at the Arctic Circle Assembly in October 2025, using tourism as a transition lever to explore sectoral pathways for low-carbon development. The panel brought together senior representatives from the Ministry of Industries, the Ministry of Energy & Climate, the Mayor of Reykjavík, the Head of the Association of Local Authorities, and the Head of the tourism cluster. The session focused on how tourism-driven investments and national policies can be aligned with local climate priorities through better collaboration across different government bodies. The discussion facilitated the understanding that Iceland's path to climate neutrality depends on stronger national–local coordination, especially in aligning policy frameworks, funding instruments, and sectoral strategies. Reykjavík emphasized the need for long-term, predictable collaboration with ministries to unlock investments in mobility, land use, and energy systems, while the Association of Local Authorities highlighted the structural capacity gaps between municipalities and the importance of shared tools and coherent support mechanisms.

Tourism emerged as a pivotal transition lever: its footprint on mobility, infrastructure, and land demands creates both challenges and opportunities for emissions reduction. Speakers agreed that integrating climate targets into tourism policy, strengthening cross-sector governance, and co-designing destination-level solutions with municipalities are essential steps. EU Mission insights reinforced the value of systemic governance models and national platforms in accelerating city-led climate transitions.



Picture of Mission Cities event organised in Reykjavik, 16th October 2025.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NetZeroCities identified that focusing future work around the following priorities would advance collaboration at national level:

- Establish a light-touch national coordination mechanism: Create a structured channel between ministries, municipalities, and key sectors to align climate-neutrality planning, funding streams, and regulatory processes.
- Strengthen intermunicipal capacity and shared support systems: Provide technical assistance, planning tools, and pooled resources to help smaller municipalities develop credible climate pathways and implementation plans.
- Develop a climate-smart tourism transition framework: Support Iceland in linking tourism policy with municipal climate goals, focusing on sustainable mobility, destination management, and public-private investment models.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Nadine Burbar nburbar@resilientcitiesnetwork.org, Resilient Cities Network

Join the [country group for Iceland](#) on the Mission Portal

IRELAND

MISSION CITIES: Dublin, Cork

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Galway

PARTNERS: Department of Climate, Energy and Environment (DCEE)

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2025

A co-creation process was conducted with the Irish Mission Cities—Dublin and Cork—as well as Galway, different NetZeroCities partners, and representatives from the Irish Department of Climate, Energy and Environment (DCEE) to define priorities of collaboration at national level.

This co-creation process revealed the following points:

- Irish Mission Cities are frontrunners in the climate transition process. They consistently work to make climate policy a cross-cutting topic. Therefore, NZC support focuses on addressing implementation barriers and scaling up their good practices.
- Communication between cities and the [National Mirror Group](#) (established in May 2024) has been regular and effective, playing a key role in elevating local climate priorities to the national level.
- Coordination within NetZeroCities is essential to foster systemic change, it is important that cities are aware about all the services provided by NZC and CapaCITIES to integrate to their implementation strategies and take the most of it.
- The Community of Practice should serve as a platform to facilitate communication between cities; while ensuring it does not add additional complexity to the process.

This process led to following results:

- **Trust as a Foundation:** Building trust among national and local stakeholders was essential to ensure cities that the support provided would align with their mandates and responsibilities.
- **Effective Coordination:** Open and consistent communication with the national mirror group — comprising city representatives and DCEE officials — strengthened confidence in the community of practice process and improved coordination.
- **Targeted Support for Cities to scale up the Mission:** Cities more actively engaged in the Mission require dedicated support to reinforce their leadership role, demonstrate scalability to emerging mission-minded cities, and foster a stronger national ecosystem around climate neutrality.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Priorities for the collaboration at national level are:

- Capacity-building activities on key topics identified by cities, like energy communities;
- Coordination of activities with the Capital Hub and understanding cities project's pipelines, to further develop financial capabilities with cities and partners.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Melina Aliayi Drescher, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid melina.aliayi@upm.es.

Join the [country group for Ireland](#) on the Mission Portal!

ITALY

MISSION CITIES: Bergamo, Bologna, Florence, Milan, Padua, Parma, Prato, Rome, Turin

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Arezzo, Cinisello, Genova, Cesena, Campobasso, Nichelino, Ugento, Rimini, Mantova, Lecce, l'Aquila, Verona, Legnano, Reggio Emilia, Trento (LetsGOv Follower Cities Observatory)

PARTNERS: RENAEL (National Network of Local Energy Agencies), ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities), University of Bologna, ENEA (National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development)

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2024/2025

In 2024 and 2025, the national collaboration focused around the [LetsGOv pilot project](#) on governance innovation for the energy transition, coordinated by the City of Bologna under the NetZeroCities Pilot Programme, and involving the nine Italian Mission Cities. The project helped cities prototype new governance approaches across three thematic areas — citizen engagement, data, and finance — and strengthened their capacity to act collectively. It also created a channel for knowledge exchange with 17 Mission-minded cities that joined the LetsGOv Followers' Observatory, coordinated by the University of Bologna. These follower cities closely observed the final phases of the project, participated in dedicated training and exchange sessions, and contributed to validating approaches and lessons learned. Although the project concluded in May 2025, its final publications and policy recommendations ([available for download on this page](#)) continue to inform work at the national level.

The main learnings of these projects include:

- **Strengthening internal governance:** Cities need more effective cross-departmental cooperation and shared organisational ownership of climate neutrality, supported by tools such as interdepartmental task forces and coordinated leadership–technical alignment.
- **Building multi-level and territorial cooperation:** Successful climate action requires stronger collaboration between municipalities, regions, and territorial actors through joint pilot projects, shared services, and phased governance arrangements that build trust and integrated solutions.
- **Embedding social and territorial equity in climate action:** Cities must address social vulnerability and territorial disparities, mobilise civil society, and ensure flexible support mechanisms so that the transition is inclusive, locally legitimate, and feasible across areas with different capacities.

NetZeroCities organised the first national Cities Mission event in June 2025, in partnership with RENAEL and the Italian Ministry for Environment and Energy Security. The event gathered mayors, ministries, and national stakeholders, demonstrating how the Mission Cities' experience can inform national strategies and benefit all Italian municipalities. During the event, cities presented several key policy recommendations to improve the national enabling environment for climate-neutrality in cities. These included:

- **Strengthening multi-level governance** through more structured and continuous coordination between cities, regions and the national government, to ensure that national legislation and policy frameworks keep pace with European directives on the energy and climate transition;

- The establishment of a national working group on data, tasked with developing protocols with data-holding entities, shared guidelines and practical tools to support all Italian municipalities in collecting and managing the data needed for monitoring local energy and climate policies;
- The creation of a national working group on climate and energy finance, to identify innovative financing models for the public sector, overcome existing barriers to their adoption by municipalities, and review the financial support schemes available to households, businesses and public housing.



National Mission Cities event in Rome – June 2025

Since September 2025, NetZeroCities has also facilitated a new exchange format called “Climate Breakfasts – Col’Azione Climatica”, designed to help cities share learnings and exchange on common priorities. The first sessions focused on the development and operations of municipal and multi-city energy one-stop-shops, the collaboration mechanisms between Spanish cities in the context of CitiES2030, and the integration of Climate City Contracts and SECAPs, both in terms of emissions inventories and action plans.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking ahead, Italian Mission Cities have identified a set of shared priorities to guide the next phase of their collective work towards climate neutrality. Building on the results of the Climate City Contracts and the LetsGOv project, a central priority is to strengthen multi-level governance through the establishment of a permanent inter-ministerial dialogue dedicated to climate neutrality. Such a mechanism would ensure that the practical experience and needs of cities are consistently integrated into the design and implementation of national strategies and plans — including the forthcoming National Building Renovation Plan (as foreseen by the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive) and the National and Regional Partnership Plans that will steer the allocation of EU Cohesion Funds in the 2028–2034 programming period.

Another priority is to scale up the emerging Italian Platform for Climate-Neutral Cities, transforming it into a structured and financially sustainable mechanism that can formalise collaboration between Mission and Mission-minded cities, ministries, agencies, and other national actors. The platform would serve as a coordinated framework for technical assistance, knowledge sharing, and policy alignment across levels of governance. The priority topics for knowledge sharing exchanges between cities could include those that were identified as part of the work conducted so far, such as the involvement of local banks and insurance companies in financing climate projects; strategies to promote collective self-consumption and energy communities in cooperation with condominium administrators and heritage authorities; the tackling of energy poverty through locally replicable actions; or how to effectively communicate local policies for climate-neutrality to citizens.

Finally, two Italian pilot projects were launched in 2025 under the Enabling City Transformation Programme — [NetZeroDistricts](#) (Bergamo, Parma, Prato and Rome) and [CLIMB](#) (Milan) — both testing city-wide, systemic approaches to decarbonisation and regeneration. Their results will be shared in 2026.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Francesco Ripa, Politecnico di Milano, francesco.ripa@polimi.it

Join the [country group for Italy](#) on the Mission Portal.

LITHUANIA

MISSION CITIES: Vilnius, Tauragė

MISSION MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Alytus, Visaginas, Gargždai

In Lithuania, the Energy Institute provided seed funding to support the [Green Municipalities Network's](#) exchanges and learnings, which currently operates on a voluntary basis. The Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), the largest technical university in Lithuania, plays a key role in this ecosystem. The [Institute of environmental engineering](#) at KTU, leads initiatives that involve a wide array of stakeholders, including citizens, and emphasizes community-driven approaches to innovation and climate action.



The **National Network of Green Municipalities** includes the five larger cities in Lithuania and several smaller ones (24 in total). The network is now hosted under KTU. An emerging group of discussion started in November 2025 with a first call to gather the 9 cities who applied to be a Mission city back in 2021 (Alytus, Gargždai, Kaunas, Kėdainiai, Klaipėda, Panevėžys, Visaginas). Together, Mission cities and Mission-minded cities will identify potential areas of joint work and needs, to bring the climate neutrality work as a priority in a context where security and safety together with energy disconnection from the IPS/UPS system are at front.

This informal group will be working together with NetZeroCities to organise an in-person gathering early 2026 in coordination with KTU and the national network of Green Municipalities.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Cristina Robledano, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, cristina.robledano@upm.es

Join the [country group for Lithuania](#) on the Mission Portal

MALTA

MISSION CITY: Gozo

MISSION MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Bormla, Kirkop, Msida, Mellieha, Gzira, Birgu, Marsaxlokk, Fgura, Marsaskala, San Lawrenz, Qormi, Munxar, Naxxar, Isla, Siggiewi, Floriana, Xghajra, Sliema, Qrendi, Zurrieq

KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2025

A national event was organised in the Mission City of Gozo Region on the 13th of June 2025 within the [Council of Europe's Conference](#) on Multilevel Governance approaches to address environmental challenges. The event brought together key stakeholders within the Maltese national ecosystem, including:

- **20 Local Councils:** Bormla, Kirkop, Msida, Mellieha, Gzira, Birgu, Marsaxlokk, Fgura, Marsaskala, San Lawrenz, Qormi, Munxar, Naxxar, Isla, Siggiewi, Floriana, Xghajra, Sliema, Qrendi, Zurrieq
- **3 Regional Councils:** Tramuntana, Punent, Nofsinhar
- **Other regional and national agencies:** the Gozo Regional Development Authority, Environment and Resources Authority, XjenzaMalta and the Planning Authority



Presentations by Ms. Abigail Mizzi (NZC) and Mr. Juergen Attard (GRDA) during the national event – Gozo, June 2025

The main topics of discussion at this conference included:

- Showcasing **concrete examples** of how multi-level governance in climate and energy can be applied with a strong focus on **local government participation**. The example of the Spanish national platform CitiES 2030 was well received due to its clear and tangible governance model for inspiration.
- Local councils shared the array of their **political challenges**: from lack of competencies to exclusion from large-scale national projects and/or policies which affect their territories. Together, potential solutions were explored such as finding better ways of working closer together, learning from local council clusters where this collaboration is already happening such as in the Cottonera area which gathers 4 local councils: Birgu, Bormla, Isla and Kalkara. Regional councils can also better facilitate the coordination and collaboration between local councils falling within the same region.
- Local councils highlighted ongoing challenges around **citizen engagement** in key activities, projects, or else in ensuring civic responsibility. As local councils navigate complex approval processes which involve multiple agencies and Ministries and often require national level sign-off, projects are too often not realised or heavily delayed. This means that momentum stalls, communication with residents becomes harder, or else residents grow frustrated with the lack of progress. Encouraging behavioural change proves equally difficult: many residents demand more parking space while also complaining about the lack of more green and open space, despite land being scarce.
- Best practices were shared, such as how local councils engage with schools, band clubs, religious and other local organisations to help spread the message, keep residents engaged, and spread a sense of civic responsibility.

- **Data silos** were another challenge explored by local and regional councils. This has been a barrier strongly faced by GRDA, the entity in charge of drafting Gozo's Climate City Contract. Effective planning, including financial planning, is challenging when data exists in silos and needs to be gathered; different Ministries and/or entities must be involved. Malta's first digital twin, spearheaded by the Gzira local council and planned to be further extended nationally, is aiming at bridging this gap.
- **Better funding & staffing is a core need for local councils in Malta.** Local councils elaborated on how city funds are often not sufficient for basic infrastructure needs such as waste management or road maintenance, especially as most grapple with drastic population growth. Solutions explored included better coordination with national government for better public financing, training to understand alternatives, and financing options for cities, in particular for those with less than 20,000 inhabitants.

MAIN PRIORITIES & AREAS OF COLLABORATION FOR THE FUTURE

- Learning from the **GRDA's process towards achieving climate neutrality for Gozo.** Together with local and regional councils in Malta, an important exercise would be to understand how some of the actions identified in Gozo's CCC can also be relevant and replicated in other regions in Malta.
- Although Maltese local councils lack formal climate and energy mandates, climate and energy planning frameworks can help prioritise projects, communicate on climate, and attract funding. **Developing joint planning tools would be useful for small municipalities** to collaborate more effectively on shared plans and solutions.
- Many challenges exist, but so do local initiatives and aspirations in many local councils to connect with their residents, **paying particular attention to vulnerable groups.** A small showcase space will highlight past, ongoing, and future local projects and aspirations. By involving key stakeholders like Xjenza Malta, research institutions, and ministries, local councils can align their ideas with available funding and related initiatives.
- Improving funding for local authorities and projects will be a key focus of discussion during the next event, which will bring together key ministries responsible for energy, environment, climate, transport, and EU funds.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner: Abigail Mizzi, Energy Cities abigail.mizzi@energy-cities.eu

Join the [country group for Malta](#) on the Mission Portal

NETHERLANDS

MISSION CITIES: The Dutch National Support Structure (NSS) brings together seven Mission Cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Eindhoven and Helmond, as well as Groningen.

PARTNERS: The platform is coordinated by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), which has been contracted by the Dutch national government to lead this work. In addition to the cities themselves, key partners include the Dutch Association for Municipalities (VNG), the Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, and the Ministry of Climate and Green Growth.

ACTIVITIES AND LEARNINGS IN 2024/2025

During 2024 and 2025, the platform has focused on several important activities. These include developing the National Support Structure (NSS), assisting cities with their Mission Label applications, and conducting deep dives into critical topics such as biobased building, emission-free mobility, and financing innovations. The platform has also carried out action research on city-driven challenges, analysed all Dutch Climate City Contracts (CCC), and worked towards establishing uniform monitoring and data standards. Collaboration on EU strategy and financial support has been a priority, alongside applying for the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) and setting up a national learning network.

In 2025, NetZeroCities supported the platform in developing the governance of the platform and the involvements of the different Ministries.

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking ahead, the main priorities are to implement the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), adapt the National Support Structure to the new phase of work - shifting from finalising CCCs to implementation - and to develop a comprehensive work programme for 2026.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partner Carina Aschan, Viable Cities, carina.aschan@viablecities.se or Wouter Eisen at Wouter.eisen1@rvo.nl or Jannes Vermeer at Jannes.vermeer@minbzk.nl

Join the [country group for The Netherlands](#) on the Mission Portal.

POLAND

MISSION CITIES: Kraków, Łódź, Rzeszów, Warszawa, Wrocław

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INCLUDED TO DATE: Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Katowice, Lublin, Poznań, Szczecin, Rybnik

PARTNERS INVOLVED TO DATE: Union of Polish Metropolises, Energy Forum, Warsaw University of Technology, National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR), Ministry of Climate and Environment, Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy.



MAIN TOPICS OF COLLABORATION IN 2024/2025

The activities below have been developed by NetZeroCities partners in collaboration with the Union of Polish Metropolises (UPM) which has been financially supported by NetZeroCities to develop them.

Capacity building and knowledge exchange for cities

The objective was to strengthen cities' competences through the development of the Community of Practice, thematic working groups, and targeted training sessions. Focus areas included energy management, climate policy implementation, eco-strategy, and data-driven decision-making to accelerate climate neutrality. NetZeroCities organised the following activities for cities:

- **Kick-off of the 2025/2026 programme:** On 17 Sept 2025, the Eco-Strategy Team of the Union of Polish Metropolises (UMP) launched substantive cooperation with a Community of Practice of Polish cities under the EU Cities Mission. UMP aims to integrate its Energy, Climate and Environment Commission with finance, EU funds, Urban Planning and Smart-city Commissions. This cross-sectoral strategy strengthens cities' readiness for dialogue with the national government and key stakeholders, making climate neutrality a shared priority across municipal departments.
- **Training for Cities on Urban energy management.** A two-day training (21–22 Oct 2025, Warsaw) organised by UPM equipped municipalities with practical tools for managing energy in complex urban systems. Sessions covered modern energy-management methods, digital utility billing, organisational reforms for the transition, and step-by-step approaches to deploying distributed energy systems. Participants examined local-government energy self-sufficiency, legal frameworks, challenges and opportunities. Curated by Tomasz Bońdos, Director of Energy Management at Bydgoszcz, the event gathered representatives from Polish metropolitan cities to exchange best practices and craft actionable transition strategies.
- **Digitalisation, data management, energy transition:** On 7 Oct 2025 in Warsaw, the UMP's "Smart City & Information Society Commission" met with its Energy, Climate and Environment Commission, joined by municipal representatives and NCBR experts. The session examined how digitalisation and data management can support the energy transition in Polish cities. Participants reviewed [NetZeroCities-NEEST](#) tech solutions, discussed upgrades to the Central Building Emission Register (CEEB) and the challenge of accessing building energy-consumption data, and explored ways to unify municipal data platforms and improve local energy management. The dialogue produced joint recommendations to strengthen smart, sustainable urban transformation across Poland's metropolitan areas.

Multi-stakeholder and public-private collaboration

The goal of this workstream is to enhance the cooperation between cities, national government, private sector, utilities, housing cooperatives, research institutions, and NGOs to co-create innovative solutions, facilitate green investments, and implement climate actions effectively. NetZeroCities organised different collaboration moments:

- **Consultation on the model of the national platform in Poland:** On 5 Feb 2025, a meeting with the Polish Mission Cities aimed to shape the vision for a national platform and advance the Better Funding Dialogue. Participants reviewed preliminary proposals, discussed key issues, and offered input, suggestions, and feedback. The objective was to encourage collaboration, ensuring that both the platform and the dialogue align with the needs and priorities of Polish cities.
- **National event at the Local Governments Climate Congress in Łódź :** On 20 May 2025, a national event in Łódź was held in conjunction with the Local Governments' Climate Congress and under the patronage of the Polish EU Council Presidency. It included an **Information Session for Mission-minded cities and interested stakeholders** and a City-Industry Dialogue. During the information session, participants received updates on Climate City

Contracts, the outcomes of the NetZeroCities multi-city pilot project in Poland ([NEEST](#)), a presentation of the Mission approach and opportunities for Mission-minded cities, providing a comprehensive overview of ongoing initiatives and opportunities for urban climate action.

The **City-industry dialogue** brought together Polish cities, industry leaders, representatives of the National Chamber of Commerce, National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, Lewiatan Confederation of Employers, the Responsible Business Forum, with representatives of the European Commission to examine how the EU Cities Mission can open lead-market opportunities for European industry under the Clean Industrial Deal, amid current geopolitical tensions. The round-table strengthened city-industry collaboration for the EU Competitiveness Agenda, tackling four key areas: data and analytics; efficient, circular materials and services; infrastructure modernisation and operations; and skills and workforce development. Participants also discussed scaling finance by linking demand and supply through existing and new financial instruments.



Local Governments Climate Congress in Łódź

Financing and legal mechanisms for climate projects

The goal of this workstream is to address barriers to accessing EU and national funds, streamline application processes, explore off-balance sheet models (PPA, ESCO), green bonds, and legislative adjustments to support investment in climate-neutral infrastructure and services. NetZeroCities organised two Better Funding Dialogues.

- The **first Better Funding Dialogue** session took place on 11 April 2025 in Warsaw, bringing together officials from the Ministries of Funds and Regional Policy, Climate and Environment, the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, and Pomeranian regional authorities. The meeting aimed to strengthen dialogue between cities and funding institutions and to explore how the post-2027 EU financial perspective (2028-2034) can better support local authorities. Participants discussed challenges such as simplifying fund access, reducing administrative barriers, enhancing municipal capacity, and promoting cross-sector cooperation; case studies highlighted innovative public-private financing models and produced recommendations for giving cities a stronger voice in EU funding programs.

- The **second Better Funding Dialogue** was organised as part of the national event 20 May 2025 in **Łódź**. Participants received preliminary recommendations for the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework, reflecting earlier discussions, and were asked to provide feedback before wider publication. The meeting also set up the next dialogue - co-organised with the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy - to further discuss and implement these recommendations at both national and EU levels.

Strategic planning and policy alignment

The goal of this workstream is to link Climate City Contracts and local climate strategies with national priorities, urban development plans, and EU policy frameworks, and to ensure coherent long-term planning, and develop advocacy, and systemic recommendations for sustainable urban transformation. Under the **Environment for Development Partnership**, the Polish Dialogue Platform for Climate-Neutral Cities launched its first online session on 8 Sept 2025 to align national and local policies, co-organised by the Ministry of Climate and Environment and CapaCITIES. This event inaugurated a bi-monthly series to strengthen cooperation among national and local climate-neutral stakeholders. Presentations highlighted [Klimada 3.0](#) (Institute of Environmental Protection, IOŚ-PIB) and the Social Climate Fund (Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy).

MAIN PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Funding & financing

Polish Mission Cities, UMP and NZC partners presented the following recommendations to the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy:

- The finance-dialogue recommends a more flexible, city-oriented EU Multiannual Financial Framework: align programmes, give metropolitan authorities a stronger role in fund planning, and create dedicated instruments for urban transformation (energy, housing).
- Pilot schemes, simplified procedures, and wider access for cities of all sizes are urged, together with building local administrative capacity, improving communication, and keeping cities active partners in shaping EU and national investment priorities.

Barriers to EU-fund applications

- Polish local governments face short deadlines, complex and unclear paperwork, lack of co-financing resources, and pre-finance requirements.
- They also struggle with ambiguous eligible-cost lists, delayed criteria publication, limited consultation, excessive bureaucracy, rigid DNSH rules, low urban allocations, and overly detailed regulations.
- Staffing shortages, long evaluation and contracting timelines, and inconsistent rule interpretation across institutions (e.g., NFOŚiGW, MJWPU) further reduce effective use of funds.
- Cities call for simpler procedures, better coordination, and more flexible, integrated financial instruments to support climate and urban transformation.

Multilevel collaboration for climate-neutral cities

- The NetZeroCities NEEST pilot (five Polish Mission Cities + NCBR) stresses the need for a dedicated platform that links national and local governments in joint climate action.
- It proposes a clear implementation plan for Poland's NECP, Climate City Contracts to guide and finance transitions, a national heating strategy, digital tools for integrated planning, and improved data sharing.

- The project also calls for comprehensive support for building renovation, a holistic urban transformation approach, and standardized technical/financial solutions to make climate action consistent, transparent, and scalable across Polish cities.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCites partners: Olga Krajewska ICLEI Europe olga.krajewska@iclei.org, Tymoteusz Marzec, Unia Metropolii Polskich, t.marzec@metropolie.pl

Join the [country group for Poland](#) on the Mission Portal!

PORTUGAL

MISSION CITIES: Lisbon, Porto, Guimarães

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Abrantes, Braga, Cascais, Figueira da Foz, Loures, Maia, Matosinhos, Sintra, Tomar, Torres Vedras, Valongo, Viana do Castelo, Vila Franca de Xira, Vilanova de Famalição, Vilanova de Gaia, Intermunicipal community of Coimbra region

PARTNERS INVOLVED TO DATE:



The Portuguese national platform - Cities for Climate Network ("[Cidades pelo Clima](#)") - was set up in May 2024 by cities and regions and held a first in person event in March 2025. Its secretariat is run by the IN+ Center for Innovation, Technology and Policy Research (research center of Engineering School of the University of Lisbon).

The ongoing activities of the platform are organised in 4 [thematic working groups](#) (Energy, Buildings, Mobility and Carbon Removal) plus another transversal one that started in September 2025 to support interested Mission-minded cities to develop their Climate City Contracts, building upon existing planning instruments such as the CoM Action plan and the mandatory Municipal Climate Action Plan imposed by the Portuguese Climate Law. By the end of 2025, 13 out of 22 member cities of the Portuguese national platform are officially participating in this working group.

Capacity building provided to cities is structured around [4 lines of actions](#):

- Tools and templates: Emissions inventories, modelling of climate action scenarios at urban scale, and assessment of environmental and economic impacts, using [MEM+](#) (Monitorization of Municipal Emissions - available since December 2024).
- Development of new financing instruments and support for the structuring of investment plans.

- Collaborative development of solutions and mobilisation of citizens.
- Multi-level governance.

Cities for Climate received funding from the Environmental Fund managed by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action (EUR 435 000 until the end of 2025), complemented with own resources of IN+. Funding application for 2026 activities has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Energy in September 2025.

MAIN PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

For the development of the Mission-minded cities' CCCs, learn from the process led in Romania and Spain with MMCs.

There is an opportunity to improve orchestration of NZC support provided both individually and collectively to cities, ensuring coordination with the national level, and involving the most relevant stakeholders to optimize efforts.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Cristina Robledano, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid cristina.robledano@upm.es

Join the [country group for Portugal](#) on the Mission Portal

ROMANIA

MISSION CITIES: Cluj-Napoca, Bucharest (District 2), Suceava

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: [Alba-Iulia](#), [Bistrita](#), [Braşov](#), [Bucharest](#), [Buzău](#), [Constanța](#), [Iasi](#), [Oradea](#), [Reșița](#), and [Timișoara](#)

PARTNERS INVOLVED TO DATE:



The Mirror Mission Cities Hub ([M100](#)) was established in December 2023 with governmental backing. Its Secretariat is run by the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI). UEFISCDI is also the coordinator for the CapaCITIES 2.0 project.

National participation from six ministries: Investments & European Projects, Energy, Research, Innovation & Digitalisation, Development & Public Works.

Partnership with actors like Urbanize Hub, the Romanian Architects' Order, NTNU, Nordic Edge, and RANNIS

On capacity building:

- The Secretariat fosters a capacity-building and peer learning programme through forums, workshops, and expert sessions, allowing cities to connect.

- Ten Romanian MMCs received support from the M100 Platform to create integrated Climate City Contracts. After expert review and refinement, they will earn the National Mission Label M100 for their commitment to climate neutrality by 2035.
- Mission cities (Cluj-Napoca, Suceava, Bucharest-district 2) have received targeted support for CCC implementation through peer exchange and joint activities.
- NetZeroCities has organised an Innovation studio in September 2025 on Fragmented Governance for Urban Mobility, Smart & Green Procurement, District Heating Systems, Retrofitting Multi-Family Housing.

Financial and institutional support combines EEA/Norway Grants, the Social Climate Fund, and inter-ministerial resources, enabling cities to advance decarbonisation across key sectors by 2030 (536 M€ through Social Climate Fund and 320 M€ through EEA and Norway Grants).

There is an opportunity to **strengthen the frequency of interaction among Mission Cities and Mission-minded cities**, building on the synergies created through the Innovation Studio run by NetZeroCities.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Cristina Robledano, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid cristina.robledano@upm.es

Visit M100 [Contact page](#)

SLOVENIA

MISSION CITIES: Kranj, Ljubljana, Velenje

MISSION-MINDED CITIES: Maribor, Celje, Lendava, Goriska, Gorenjska, and Podravska Region

PARTNERS INVOLVED TODAY

- The Institute for Spatial Policies (IPoP), the national contact point for European Urban Initiative – EU and URBACT, provides cities with project preparation support.
- Jozef Stefan Institute has provided assistance and guidance to the Slovenian Mission Cities on the development of their CCC.

ACTIONS AND LEARNINGS IN 2025

- Despite the absence of a formal structure, the Mission Cities (Kranj, Ljubljana, Velenje) have a **strong collaboration ongoing**, supported by the leadership of three motivated Mayors who understand the importance of cooperation to successfully achieve their Mission objectives, find solutions to common challenges as well as attract mutual investment and funding rather than competing for it.
- Slovenian Mission Cities are targeting different emission domains and have different priorities; yet they are leveraging NetZeroCities resources to find collective solutions that can be further extended to other communities. They did so by **creating innovation hubs / one-stop-shops where they can share knowledge and data, gain new insights from**

other cities and be able to disseminate findings across other Slovenian cities and beyond.

- Funding assistance is still lacking and there are no targeted funds from Slovenian national government for the implementation of the Mission. The main source of funding for Slovenian cities to implement climate related project are EU funds. Some additional funding sources which indirectly could support the Mission's objectives are the Eco Fund – Slovenian Environmental Public Fund and Cohesion Funds.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continued support in identifying grant opportunities and technical assistance.
- Mobilise sufficient funds and aligning local, national and EU financing streams.
- Support on Multilevel governance, improved communication at local, national, and EU level.
- Empowerment and capacity building –public sector's challenges to attract talent.
- Dissemination of NetZeroCities tools such as additional technical tools, KPI frameworks and digital platforms to improve data collection, monitoring and decision making at the municipal level.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact NetZeroCities partners: Vlatka Berlan Vlahek, Energy Cities vlatka.berlan-vlahek@energy-cities.eu

Join the country group for Slovenia on the Mission Portal

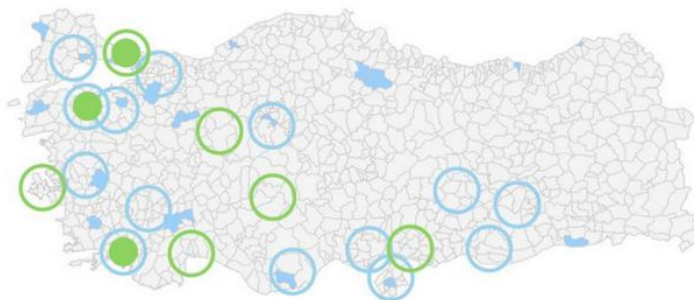
TURKEY

MISSION CITIES: Istanbul, Izmir

MISSION-MINDED CITIES INVOLVED TO DATE: Antalya, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Konya, Bandırma, Menteşe, Sisli (Accelerator Cities), Ankara, Adana, Balıkesir, Bursa, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Hatay, Kocaeli, Malatya, Manisa, Mersin, Muğla, Şanlıurfa, Tekirdağ, Amasya, Burdur, Çanakkale, Çorlu, Edirne, Gulnar, Isparta, Niğde, Nusaybin, Zonguldak, Bakirkoy, Beylikdüzü, Buyukcekmece, Bornova, Çankaya, Cine, İznik, Hopa, Kadıkoy, Kartal, Karşıyaka, Konak, Küçükcekmece, Merzifon, Nilüfer, Ortahisar, Salihli, Suluova, Tepebaşı, Yenişehir, Yalova (Newcomer Cities).

PARTNERS INVOLVED TO DATE: Marmara Municipalities Union, Union of Turkish Municipalities, TÜBİTAK, Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.





Geographical distribution of all municipalities participating in İNŞA, including both Accelerators and Newcomers.

Legend

- Accelerators (6 Metropolitan Municipalities & 3 District Municipalities)
- Newcomers (14 Metropolitan Municipalities & 31 Provincial and District Municipalities)

Participating municipalities in İNŞA

MAIN TOPICS FOR COLLABORATION IN 2024/2025

1. Build national momentum for climate-neutral cities

Collaboration with the Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU) began in mid-2025, resulting in the successful launch of the national open call for Turkish cities to join the national network launched by NetZeroCities. The initiative attracted strong engagement, with 54 cities selected in September 2025, representing Accelerator Cities (Mission and Twin Cities) and Newcomer Cities alike, demonstrating widespread local commitment to climate neutrality.

2. Build effective partnerships

A strong partnership between MMU (NetZeroCities) and TÜBİTAK (CapaCITIES) was established early, ensuring seamless coordination and joint organisation of activities and events. This collaboration fostered coherence between local and national actors, reinforced the credibility of the national network, and was recently joined by the Union of Turkish Municipalities.

3. Launch of the Turkish Climate Neutral Cities Network (İNŞA)

The official launch of the Turkish Climate Neutral Cities Network (İNŞA) on 1 October 2025 at MARUF2025 in Istanbul marked a major milestone. The event gathered all participating cities, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, and the European Commission. A high-level needs assessment with cities provided clear insights to shape the forthcoming capacity-building and technical assistance programme.

4. Advance multilevel climate governance

During a high-level roundtable on 3 October 2025, city leaders and national representatives (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate, and TÜBİTAK) discussed future governance structures for the national platform. Cities highlighted the

need for stronger national support and enabling regulatory frameworks to act effectively on climate neutrality commitments.

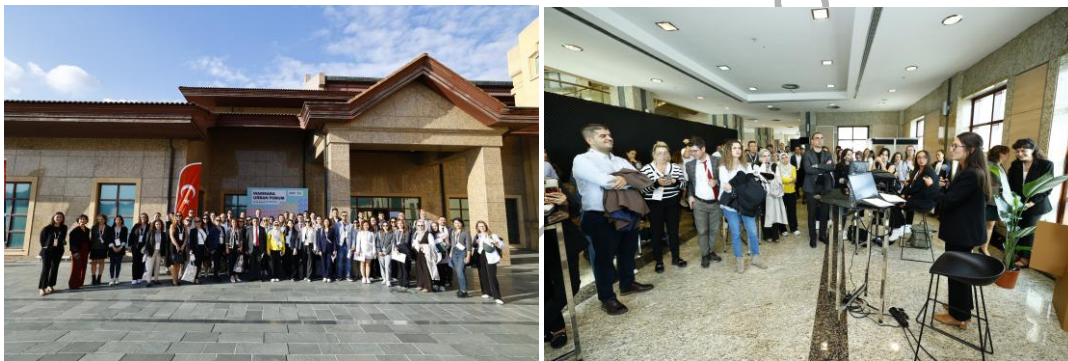
5. Explore strategic opportunities under the new Climate Law

The recent adoption of Turkey's Climate Law creates new institutional and legal mechanisms - such as provincial coordination units and mandatory provincial action plans - offering a unique opportunity to integrate İNŞA's network governance and align city-level efforts with national climate policy.

EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS TO DATE

Launch of the Climate-Neutral Cities Network (İNŞA)

Held during MARUF25 on 1 October 2025 in Istanbul, the launch officially introduced İNŞA as Turkey's national community of practice for climate-neutral cities. The session gathered 94 participants, including representatives from 43 municipalities, national ministries, the EU Commission, and international organizations. It provided a space for cities to connect, exchange early experiences, and align around a shared understanding of climate-neutral transition pathways.



Launch of the Climate-Neutral Cities Network (İNŞA) - October 2025, Istanbul

İNŞA x CapaCITIES 2.0: High-Level Roundtable for Climate-Neutral Cities

Organized on 3 October 2025, this closed roundtable brought together 46 participants, including senior representatives from 19 municipalities, two ministries, TÜBİTAK, and the European Commission. The meeting initiated a strategic dialogue on designing a multi-level climate governance platform for Turkey, aligning municipal actions with national and EU-level objectives and exploring the potential bridging role of İNŞA within this ecosystem.



Climate 101.5°: Tipping Point of the Future

This [high-profile panel](#) on 2 October 2025 brought together over 100 participants, including representatives from 19 municipalities and 22 national and international institutions. Featuring speakers from the Mission Cities - Istanbul, Izmir, and Warsaw - the discussion focused on how cities can adapt to the growing impacts of the climate crisis, translating scientific scenarios into actionable urban strategies. The session highlighted the importance of national-local coordination and showcased Mission Cities' leadership in guiding other municipalities.



Mentor Meeting: Bursa & Warsaw

As part of the İNŞA mentoring component, the first mentor exchange between Bursa Metropolitan Municipality and Warsaw took place during MARUF25. The session marked the start of structured peer learning, enabling practical knowledge transfer on municipal climate governance, project development, and international collaboration within the Cities Mission framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Strengthening access to finance**
 Develop targeted training on climate finance, proposal writing, and fund-mapping. Support municipalities in identifying and accessing national and international funding opportunities. Facilitate project development workshops to enhance readiness for investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, and green infrastructure.
- Building technical capacity**
 Provide hands-on training and e-learning modules in climate action planning, emissions monitoring, renewable energy, sustainable mobility, and data-driven decision-making. Establish mentorship and peer exchange formats to transfer practical expertise and showcase best practices.
- Enhancing institutional coordination and governance**
 Support municipalities in integrating climate objectives across departments and governance structures. Offer capacity-building activities on coordination mechanisms, workflow integration, and strategic planning for climate neutrality.
- Fostering project development and innovation**

Mentor municipal teams in designing and implementing pilot or innovative projects. Promote replication of successful case studies and innovative solutions, including nature-based approaches and green infrastructure.

- **Expanding digitalisation and data management**
Strengthen local capacities in emissions inventories, digital tools, and data systems for climate action monitoring. Provide technical support on reporting, evaluation, and use of digital platforms for evidence-based decision-making.
- **Deepening community engagement and awareness**
Build municipal skills in participatory planning, stakeholder mobilization, and communication for behavioural change. Encourage partnerships with citizens, businesses, and local organizations to co-create climate solutions.
- **Increasing international engagement and partnerships**
Facilitate participation in international networks, consortia, and funding programmes. Provide guidance and support for developing collaborative projects and applications to global climate initiatives.

HOW TO JOIN?

Contact: Olga Krajewska ICLEI Europe olga.krajewska@iclei.org, Özge Sivrikaya, Marmara Municipalities Union: ozge.sivrikaya@mbb.gov.tr

Join the [country group for Turkey](#) on the Mission Portal.

CONCLUSION

By supporting the development of vibrant communities of practice, including cities, national policy-makers, researchers, private sector's representatives, or citizens, NetZeroCities contributes to develop institutional capacities and individual capabilities to accelerate climate actions in many countries.

In 2024 and 2025, NetZeroCities actively supported national ecosystems in 25 European and Horizon-associated countries (as of December 2025) thanks to its work on peer-collaboration at national level. Through coordinated efforts that brought together cities, national representatives and other key actors under a shared Mission framework for climate neutrality, the initiative has enabled the development or consolidation of national platforms in countries such as Greece, France, Italy, Poland and Turkey. This coordination has yielded measurable outcomes, notably the establishment of national climate-neutral city networks (e.g., ClimaNet in Greece, INŞA in Turkey) and the involvement of approximately 230 Mission-minded cities in national ecosystems, each participating in at least one of the 50+ NZC national events held in 2025.

These national-level events have been key moments to transfer lessons learnt by Mission Cities, refine needs and priorities to accelerate towards climate neutrality, and propose solutions to align local and national policies. While in early 2024, the development of national Mission Cities platforms was only in discussions in many countries, such as in Greece, there is now a formalised collaboration between Greek and Cypriot Mission Cities thanks to the ClimaNet Network, and regular dialogues with different Ministries. In a similar way, while in 2024 the collaboration of the Polish Cities was mainly happening between them in the framework of the NetZeroCities pilot project [NEEST](#) and for the development of their respective CCCs, the collaboration now includes 8 additional Polish cities and key stakeholders (Union of Polish Metropolises, Energy Forum, Warsaw University of Technology, National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR), Ministry of Climate and Environment, Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy), which highlights the added-value of this new partnership.

The focus on peer-collaboration between cities as facilitated by NetZeroCities aims at reinforcing the role and actions of local authorities by putting their needs at the centre of climate and energy policies, because of their critical role in terms of climate investments, either directly or as supporter to local private actors (companies, citizens, etc.). The actions presented in this report showcases the strong wish to accelerate the cooperation between local authorities, by Mission Cities and Mission-minded cities, and highlight some gaps in different countries to support them in an efficient way. The activities proposed demonstrate the eagerness to learn from each other and the relevance of the Mission approach for Mission-minded cities, centred around policy innovation, investment planning, economic incentive and local commitments. While needs and contexts are different in all countries, many topics are recurrent and remain a priority:

- Improving access to funding for local projects, by channelling public and private capital, and developing blended finance instruments to derisk investments
- Providing additional technical assistance to accelerate the engagement of stakeholders in developing bankable projects, linked with renewable energy, buildings' renovation, decarbonised mobility, etc.
- Developing knowledge management tools and facilitation access to data to take informed decisions, especially regarding GHG inventories
- Aligning EU, national and local policies towards common goals and approaches, to raise ambitions of climate actions

- Mitigation of the impacts of the transition on vulnerable groups and embed climate justice in climate policies
- Recognition of municipal actions and increase of their resources to improve their attractiveness.

National platforms, as formulated by the Mission approach, have a critical role to play to achieve the Cities Mission's objectives, especially to address the financial, technical and legislative barriers identified. The alignment of national public funding and national legislation on the EU objectives is critical for cities to succeed. To increase the impact of this work, further develop national ecosystems, and embed the Mission approach, it is recommended to:

- Increase the communication of the Mission activities at national level and in national languages
- Secure the political commitment of national governments, to institutionalise the dialogues and the innovations of the EU Cities Mission
- Involve the private sector and regional governments more actively in the activities
- Engage national financial institutions in addressing funding gaps
- Encourage national stakeholders to develop national support programs, focusing on peer cohorts of cities and supporting city champions on the different identified decarbonisation levers at local level.

Actions started by NetZeroCities to support peer-collaboration at national level, together with many partners and stakeholders across different European and Horizon Associated countries, showcase the importance of building trust and alliances and the need of boldness to challenge the status quo, to scale local climate actions to achieve the climate goals despite national and international contexts which can hinder them. Collaboration and cooperation are even more necessary and remain essential to maintain the initial level of ambition of the Mission.

FURTHER READINGS

Spotlight on National Platforms <https://netzerocities.app/resource-casestudy-4416>

National Platforms to Transform Cities Using Collective Experimentation and Scale: The Case of Sweden and Spain <https://netzerocities.app/resource-4705>

Recommendations and best practices for regional and national endorsements and commitments in the Climate City Contracts <https://netzerocities.app/resource-4467>

Accelerating Just Transitions: Insights for Cities and National Platforms <https://netzerocities.app/resource-4634>

Gap Analysis Report and Detailed Workplan – Part 1 <https://netzerocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/SGA2-NZC-D1.20-part-1.pdf>

Non-Mission Cities Needs & Pathways - First Report <https://netzerocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SGA2-NZC-D1.1-Non-Mission-Cities-Needs-and-Pathways-1.pdf>

