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NET ZERO CITIES

EU MISSION PLATFORM | CLIMATE NEUTRAL AND SMART CITIES

DESIGN YOUR CITY'S NET ZERO STRATEGY: ONLINE PLANNING LAB

DESIGN OF ACCREDITED ONLINE HYBRID COURSE FOR CIVIL SERVANTS
NZC-SGA2 D1.13

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PART OF THE
EU MISSIONS
CLIMATE-NEUTRAL & SMART CITIES

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Executive Summary

The Online Planning Lab is a free online live course targeted to city representatives and policymakers from all EU and affiliated countries. As part of the Horizon Europe project SGA2-NZC, its primary purpose is to share the knowledge and experience gathered by researchers and practitioners within the 112 cities of the EU Mission "Climate Neutral and Smart Cities", in order to equip participants with practical tools and critical concepts to manage a sustainable urban transition to lower their CO2 emissions to 2050 through the development of their city' action plan. While the course is tailored specifically for civil servants of European cities, it is also open to researchers and consultants working on urban transitions.

The live hybrid programme is structured in six modules, each of them composed by one core session, which establishes the key content and concepts of the module, and three to five sessions to deep dive in topics related. In total, six core sessions, and twenty spotlight sessions. The sessions are held twice a week in an online format, and they have a duration of two hours. The course enables a collaborative environment where participants can explore the NetZeroCities tools and resources, exchange experiences and co-develop innovative solutions through interactive live sessions, drawing from the expertise and lessons learned from the 112 Mission Cities. Sessions include interactions with tools, Q&A opportunities, break-out rooms and quizzes. In addition, participants are invited to join dedicated Groups on the NetZeroCities Portal.

Accreditation

The 2025 edition of the online planning lab took place from September to December 2025, twice a week for a total of 26 sessions. Participants who attended all 6 core sessions can request to be awarded a certificate of attendance issued from the Universidad Politecnica de Madrid. Municipalities that had at least one representative in each of the 6 core sessions, receive a certificate of attendance of the municipality issued by NetZeroCities. An online awarding ceremony was held the last day of the course.

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Programme structure and content

Check out the overall Programme Here ⟶

Module 1 ***"How can NetZeroCities support my city's climate transition goals?"***	***Module 1 : Core*** The NetZeroCities program, service offering, systemic approach, what works for Mission Cities	***Module 1 : Spotlight 1*** The Mission Approach and the Climate Transition Team	***Module 1 : Spotlight 2*** Shaping Climate Narratives	***Module 1 : Spotlight 3*** Climate City Contracts
Module 2 ***"How can we develop capacity to work on the climate transition, go beyond working in silos and collaborate with the city's stakeholders?"***	***Module 2 : Core*** Developing a transition team, mapping and activating the ecosystem	***Module 2 : Spotlight 1*** Transition team & climate leadership	***Module 2 : Spotlight 2*** Engaging the private sector	***Module 2 : Spotlight 3*** Citizen engagement for systemic climate action
Module 3 ***"How might we design an effective climate action plan for and with the city?"***	***Module 3 : Core*** Climate Action Plan in the urban planning system	***Module 3 Spotlight 1*** Measuring What Matters: Strategic Monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes for Climate Action Plans	***Module 3 : Spotlight 2*** Co-Designing a Climate Portfolio	***Module 3 : Spotlight 3*** Using NetZeroPlanner to Support Climate Planning, MEL, and Implementation Management to Achieve Net Zero Goals

Module 4 ***"How might we leverage technical solutions, citizens-led solutions and partnerships to reduce emissions?"***	***Module 4 : Core*** Levers of change: Technical solutions, social innovation and multi-actor collaborations	***Module 4 : Spotlight 1*** Passive solutions to reduce energy demand in buildings	***Module 4 : Spotlight 2*** Systemic energy transition at buildings, districts and city level	***Module 4 : Spotlight 3*** Data-driven approaches to energy transition in buildings and districts	***Module 4 : Spotlight 4*** Mobility: Behaviour change and digital solutions to boost public transport use	***Module 4 : Spotlight 5*** Scope 3 and other emission domains

Module 5 ***"How might we leverage technical solutions, citizens-led solutions and partnerships to reduce emissions?"***	***Module 5 : Core*** Introduction to finance: Increase finance knowledge of the public administration and learn about options to finance projects	***Module 5 : Spotlight 1*** Preparing a pipeline of projects for external financing	***Module 5 : Spotlight 2*** Different investor groups and the key priorities and returns profiles for each and instruments	***Module 5 : Spotlight 3*** Financing the ambition: Learning from Mission Cities
Module 6 ***"How might we align local, regional, and national governance to develop effective policies that support the climate transition?"***	***Module 6 : Core*** Multilevel governance, national platforms and policy strategies	***Module 6 : Spotlight 1*** Policy and regulations innovation	***Module 6 : Spotlight 2*** Public procurement – national specificities	***Module 6 : Spotlight 3*** Just transition

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Module 1

“How can NetZeroCities support my city’s climate transition goals?”

The first module of the Online Planning Lab focused on introducing the NetZeroCities systemic approach by deepening participants' understanding of the EU Cities Mission and the critical role cities play in driving urban transformation. In this module, select Mission Cities shared success stories to showcase practical examples of progress towards climate neutrality through the Mission Approach by the stablishment of Climate Transition Teams and the use of Climate City Contracts.

Core Session Page in Portal

The NetZeroCities Program, Service Offering, Systemic Approach, What Works for Mission Cities

The NZC Learning Programme is designed to introduce cities to the broader context of the EU Cities Mission, with a particular focus on its strategic vision and its approach to reach climate neutrality. The session presented an overview of the NetZeroCities offer for new cities to the Mission Platform, including key features, objectives, and upcoming events. Participants were introduced to the structure and focus of the Learning Programme, including the learning pathways, upcoming modules, and had the opportunity to ask questions.

Key Learnings:

1. Be inspired by how Mission Cities have successfully planned for climate neutrality.
2. Learn about the support available from NZC and how to access key learning resources offered to all cities. Connect with other cities through groups and events.
3. Gain ideas on how to build capacity for action, even when resources are limited.

Lecturers: [EuC] Eugenia Mansutti,Charline Mougin, Ida Jusic |
[Polimi] Prof. Sabrina Bresciani Ph.D.
Special Guest: Patrick Child - Deputy Director General at the European Commission
Showcased Cities: Porto (PT), Umeå (SE)

Session Key Resources

- NetZeroCities support for all cities
- NetZeroCities Portal Tools
- Portal group for Mission-minded cities (orientation)

Spotlight Session 1 Page in Portal

The Mission Approach and the Climate Transition Team

The second session of Module 1 of the NetZeroCities Learning Programme focused on deepening participants' understanding of the Mission Approach and the critical role cities play in driving urban transformation. The session introduced the key components of the Mission Approach - such as acceleration, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and systems thinking - and examined how these elements support cities in progressing toward climate neutrality while addressing common challenges. It also provided an overview of the Mission Cities, including their selection process and their role within the EU Cities Mission.

Key Learnings:

1. Be inspired by how Mission Cities have successfully planned for climate neutrality.
2. Learn about the support available from NZC and how to access key learning resources offered to all cities. Connect with other cities through groups and events.
3. Gain ideas on how to build capacity for action, even when resources are limited.

Lecturers: [EuC] Eugenia Mansutti, Maria Giorda, Charline Mougin, Sozvin Al Youssef

Showcased Cities: Aachen (DE), Milan (IT)

Session Key Resources

- Focus on: Systemic Innovation for Cities
- NetZeroCities Climate Transition Map
- EU Cities Mission Factsheet: Meet the cities

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Spotlight Session 2 Page in Portal

Shaping Climate Narratives

In this interactive session on shaping climate narratives, participants discovered practical strategies for creating stories that connect with diverse audiences. They also heard from representatives Valencia, sharing how they communicate climate action in their cities. This session was designed for anyone looking to improve climate communication and narrative building while making their message truly resonate.

Key Learnings:

1. Practical strategies for shaping climate narratives, drawing on real-world examples and relevant literature;
2. Acquire techniques for crafting engaging, impactful messages that resonate with diverse audiences;
3. Develop skills to structure and communicate coherent narratives tailored to specific target groups.

Lecturers: [DemSoc] Alicia Puig, Daniela Amann

Showcased Cities: Valencia (ES)

Session Key Resources

- How can storytelling be a key tool towards car-free cities? The case of Copenhagen
- Persona Template - Step-by-step guide to creating personas
- Shaping Climate Narratives: 8 Tips for Building Trust and Driving Change

Spotlight Session 3 Page in Portal

What are Climate City Contracts? How have European cities used them as innovation and governance tools?

This session covered how Mission Cities make use of the CCCs, which are the documented result of an iterative co-creation process with local, regional, and national stakeholders to reach climate neutrality in the city by 2030. Systemic in nature, this process is led by Mission Cities and involve multiple stakeholders at various governance levels, as well as the wider ecosystem of private and civic stakeholders.

Key Learnings:

1. The key governance innovations introduced by CCCs;
2. How Mission Cities have used CCCs, tailoring them to their context and ambitions;
3. Actionable insights from CCCs into cities´ climate neutrality action;
4. How CCCs are being replicated and scaled up in various national contexts.

CCC Highlights

Lecturers: [ICLEI] Francesco Palmia, Silvia Gugu Ph.D.

Showcased Cities: Valencia (ES), Leuven (BE), Valladolid (ES), Turku (FI), Eskilstuna (SE), Cluj-Napoca, Brasov (RO) and M100 – Romanian national platform.

Session Key Resources

- Focus on: Climate City Contracts (CCC)
- CCC - 2030 Climate Neutrality Commitments (template)
- Portal Group: Climate City Contracts

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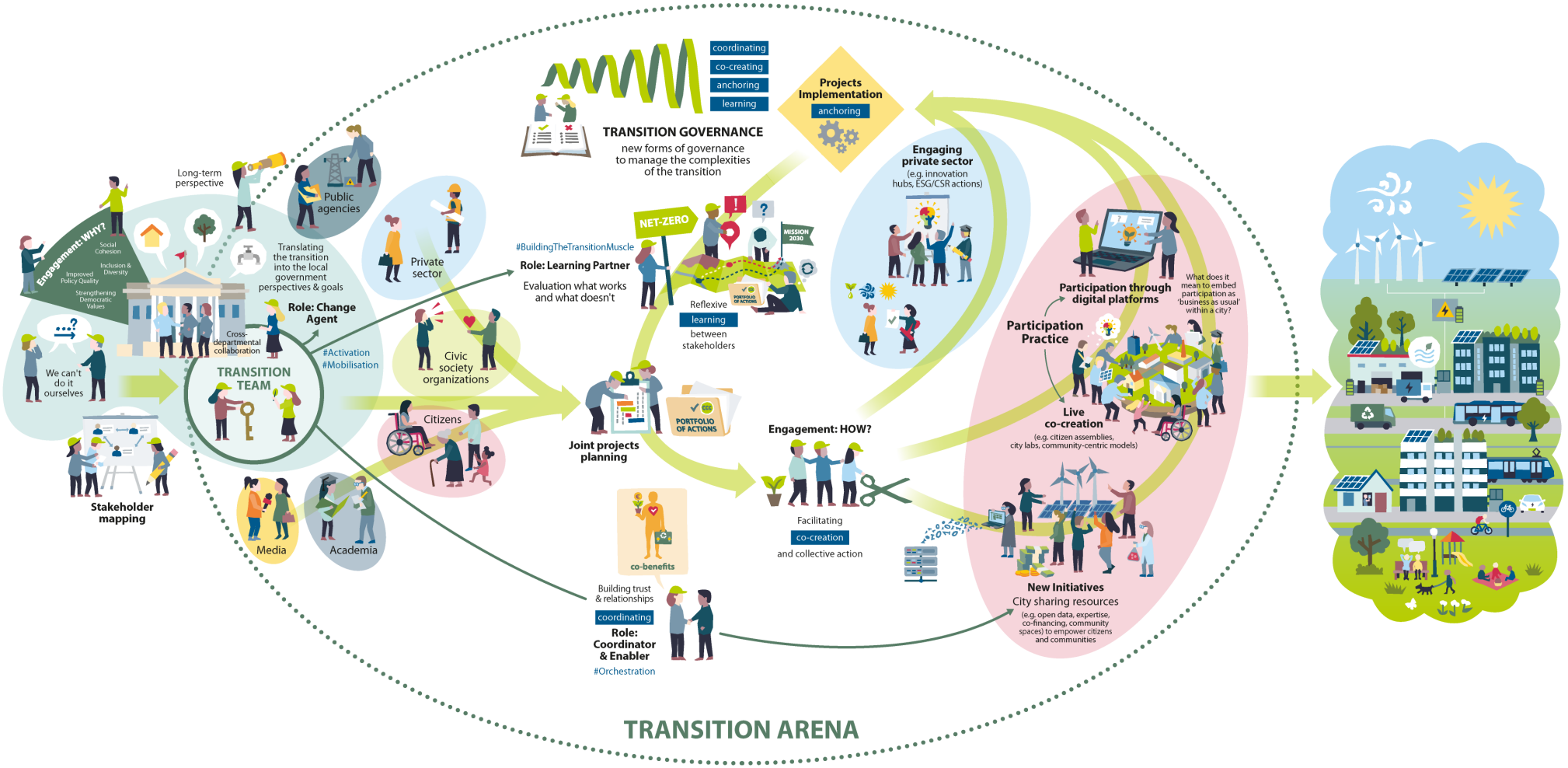

Module 2

"How can we develop capacity to work on the climate transition, go beyond working in silos and collaborate with the city's stakeholders?"

"How can we develop capacity to work on the climate transition, go beyond working in silos and collaborate with the city's stakeholders?"

The second module of the Online Planning Lab focused on strengthening the ability of cities to lead systemic and collaborative climate action. Through interactive sessions and real-world examples, participants learned how to inspire colleagues, build cohesive transition teams, and foster collaboration across departments. The module also helped participants understand how to strengthen their leadership and mandate to drive the climate transition within municipal structures.

Core Session Page in Portal

Developing a transition team, mapping and activating the ecosystem

In this interactive session on leading urban climate transitions, participants explored what a transition is and what it takes to lead one. Participants learned strategies to inspire colleagues, build a committed transition team, and draw lessons from Mission Cities - understanding what worked, what didn't, and why. City representatives from Vitoria-Gasteiz and a Budapest shared their experiences, making this session ideal for anyone leading urban climate efforts who wants to move beyond silos and foster real collaboration.

Key Learnings:

1. Grasp what a transition is - and what it takes to lead one.
2. Understand who needs to be involved, actors both inside and outside the city.
3. Discover ways to inspire colleagues and build a committed transition team.
4. Take away lessons from Mission Cities - what worked, what didn't, and why.

Lecturers: [DML] Alex Anghel | [DemSoc] Daniela Amann, Aurora González | [TNO] Gabi Doci Ph.D.

Showcased Cities: Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES), Budapest (HU)

Session Key Resources

- Transition Team Playbook
- Canvases and Toolkits on the green transition designed by the Danish Design Centre
- Moderation and Meeting Tools including Ice Breakers, Teambuilding, etc.

Spotlight Session 1 Page in Portal

Transition team & climate leadership

This session allowed participants to understand how to strengthen their role in leading the climate transition through building a stronger mandate and fostering collaboration across teams.

Key Learnings:

1. Explore how to strengthen your mandate and build internal support.
2. Understand how building relationships can lead to better collaboration and outcomes.
3. Identify the competencies needed to lead the transition

Lecturers: [DML] Alex Anghel, Anette Olovborn | [Demos Helisinki] Janne Rinne

Showcased Cities: Turku (FI)

Session Key Resources

- Transition Team Playbook

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Spotlight Session 2 Page in Portal

Engaging the private sector

There are multiple ways to involve the private sector, across various types of projects. When crafting an engagement strategy, transition teams must consider two key aspects. First, ensuring that the selected projects contribute meaningfully to the decarbonization of the city's most carbon-intensive sectors, while also offering viable alternatives to high-emission practices. Second, the strategy must be designed to wisely allocate the municipality's available human and financial resources. This means identifying high-leverage projects—those where a strategic input can deliver significant impact.

Key Learnings:

1. Identify the necessary roles and skills within the transition team;
2. Develop an effective private sector engagement strategy;
3. Design an incentive portfolio;
4. Explore various engagement models;

Lecturers: [DML] David Brito | [TNO] Gabi Doci Ph.D.

Showcased Cities: Win win textiles - Guimarães(PT)

Session Key Resources

- Detailed Summary: Private Sector Engagement in the EU Cities Mission

Spotlight Session 3 Page in Portal

Citizen engagement for systemic climate action

In this interactive session, participants dived into three game-changing themes: how to professionalise and systematise citizen participation, how cities can step into their role as true enablers, and how governance systems can earn legitimacy and trust that lasts well beyond election cycles. Through vivid case studies and real-world stories, they saw how cities are making this happen as they shared their journeys, challenges, and breakthroughs.

Key Learnings:

1. Learn about the different roles cities can play in citizen engagement - enabling action, hosting transition governance processes, or establishing professional and systematised participation practices.
2. Learn from real-world examples of Mission Cities and explore the enabling conditions for effective, long-term engagement.
3. Gain access to practical tools that support designing strategies to build lasting relationships with citizens and stakeholders.

Lecturers: [DemSoc] Daniela Amann, Carlotta Fontana

Showcased Cities: Gothenburg (SE), Košice (SK)

Session Key Resources

- Focus On: Citizens and urban stakeholders engagment
- Deliverable: A NZC call to action for a participative transition to carbon neutrality...
- Engagement Strategy Tools

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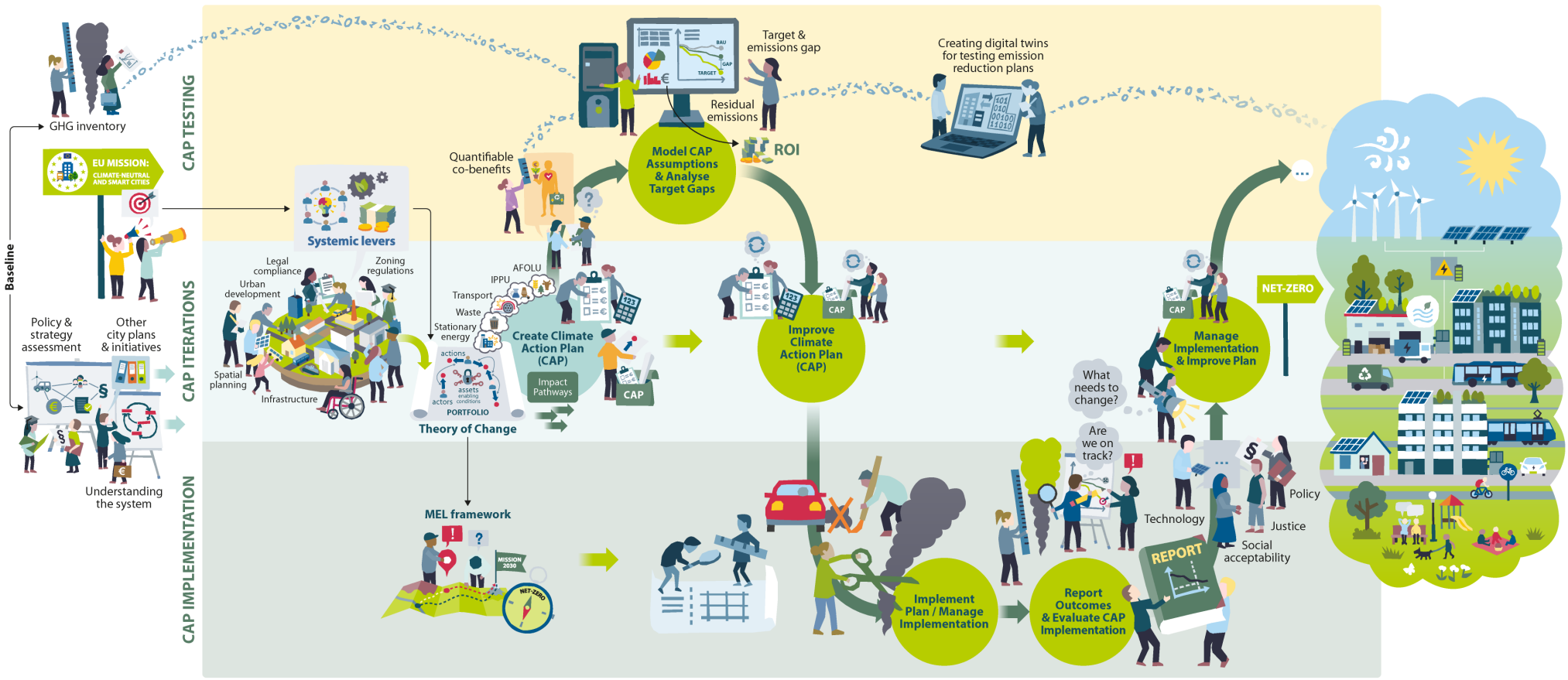

Module 3

"How might we design an effective climate action plan for and with the city?"

The third Module focused on equipping participants with the knowledge and tools to create actionable and measurable climate strategies. It guided cities in integrating their Climate Action Plans into local regulatory and statutory planning frameworks, developing shared understandings of actions and actors involved, and establishing robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes to track progress, using tools like the NetZeroPlanner to co-design and manage plans.

Core Session Page in Portal

Keys for integrating the Climate Action Plan in the urban planning

In this session participants learned how to integrate the Climate Action Plan in the local regulatory framework, specifically in the statutory planning.

Key Learnings:

1. Understand how to define a comprehensive process to integrate the climate goals into the urban regulatory instruments.
2. Learn to look at the urban planning processes with a different lens
3. Identify their urban planning innovations towards integrating climate neutrality into the urban planning dynamics through adaptive planning approaches.

Recommendations for supporting municipalities in integrating Climate Action into the urban planning system

Lecturers: [Tecnalia] Carolina García Madruga | [ICLEI] Silvia Gugu Ph.D.

Showcased Cities: Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)

Session Key Resources

- Climate City Contract into urban planning
- Planning for Climate Change: a strategic, values-based approach for urban planners

Spotlight Session 1 Page in Portal

Measuring What Matters: Strategic Monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes for Climate Action Plans

The focus of this session was to teach participants how to establish a robust monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) process, to track systemic outcomes, GHG reductions and co-benefits achieved as a result of implementing CCC actions, and eventually refine their ambition and actions in future iterations of the action plan.

Key Learnings:

1. Impact Pathways' tell a story about how systemic transformation is expected to unfold.
2. GHG accounting helps understand where your city's emissions come from, provides a baseline to measure progress, and supports target setting and action planning. It represents a first layer of prioritisation.
3. Qualitative and quantitative indicators are data points that can be selected and used to mobilise engagement, track impacts, and learn from implementation. They represent a second layer of prioritization and, at the same time, a way to co-design change with all stakeholders and create shared ownership for the transition.

Module 3 Spotlight 1 Slides

Lecturers: [ICLEI] Paul Barton | [Climate-KIC] Nikhil Chaudhary, Ing. Mira Conci Ph.D.
Showcased Cities: Leuven (BE)

Session Key Resources

- Focus On: Impact pathways, Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
- CCC Highlight: Co-Benefits and Indicators
- Barometer
- CoM Guidebook: How to prepare a greenhouse gas emission inventory

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Spotlight Session 2 Page in Portal

Co-Designing a Climate Portfolio

In this session participants learned to develop a shared understanding of a city's climate actions, actors and support needed to accelerate and align the transition towards climate neutrality.

Key Learnings:

1. Understand the core principles of portfolio thinking.
2. Gain practical skills in using portfolio mapping to create an overview of the climate Actions within your city.
3. Explore the interconnections between different climate actions and the various Actors involved.
4. Identify the enabling conditions / Assets required to successfully implement climate actions.
5. Learn how this approach can help improve communication and coordination across city departments, partners, and initiatives.

Lecturers: [DML] Maria Klint

Showcased Cities: Lund (SE)

Session Key Resources

- Portfolio Mapping Guide
- Portfolio Mapping as a Tool
- Portal Group: Formulating an integrated portfolio of actions, using NZC tools

Spotlight Session 3 Page in Portal

Using NetZeroPlanner to Support Climate Planning, MEL, and Implementation Management to Achieve Net Zero Goals

The focus of this session was to present the NetZeroPlanner as a tool to support climate planning, MEL, and implementation management in order to co-design effective climate action plans with cities and help achieve net zero goals.

Key Learnings:

1. Understand the iterative process of climate planning, measurement, and implementation to achieve your climate goals.
2. Understand how NetZeroPlanner supports that process and how it works within the Climate City Contract structure including financial analysis.
3. Learn from a city expert how Barcelona is using NetZeroPlanner for planning, implementation, learning, and continuous improvement.

NetZeroPlanner Tool (Requires login as city)

Lecturers: [UPM] Sean Murray, Idoia Pérez

Showcased Cities: Barcelona (ES)

Session Key Resources

- Introductory Summary on Creating, implementing, and iterating your Climate Action Plan
- Economic Model for Climate Neutrality: full collection of resources, cases & methods
- Portal Group: NetZeroPlanner: Building a Strong Economic Case

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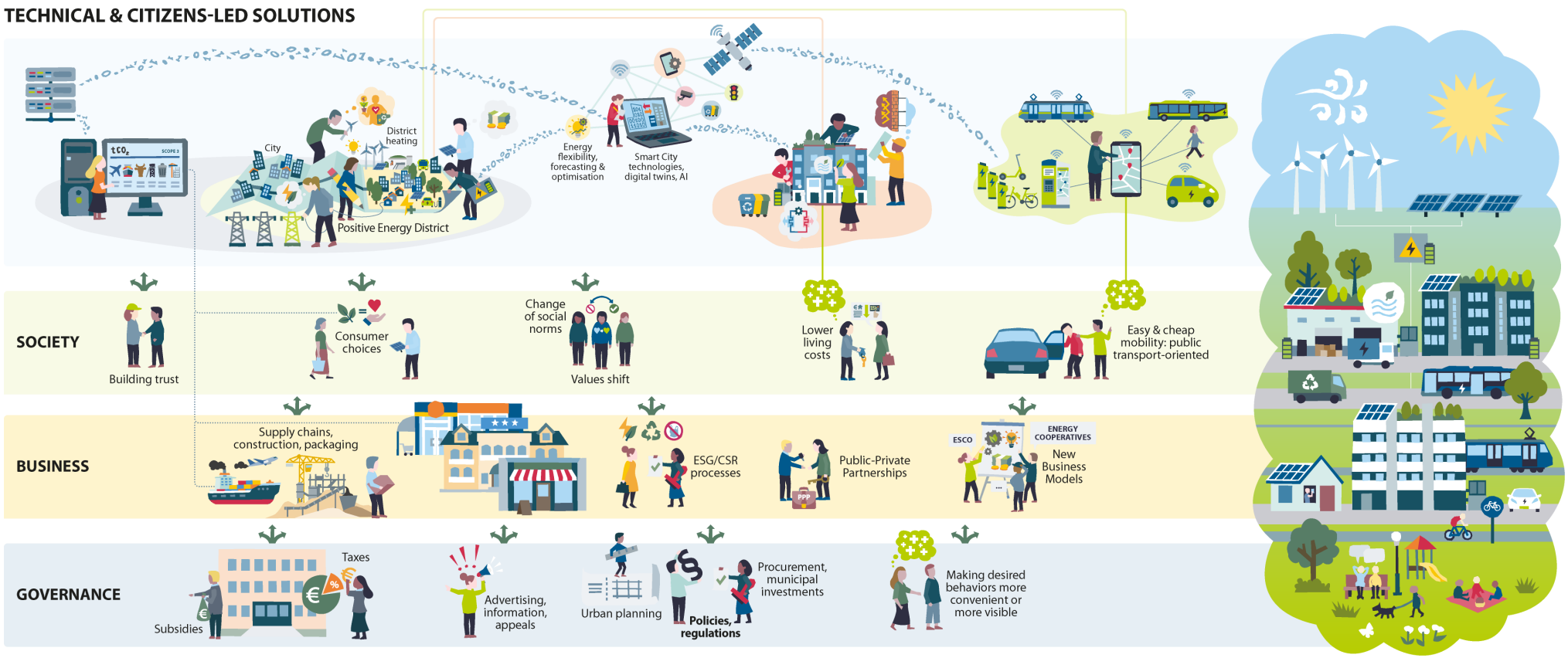

Module 4

"How might we leverage technical solutions, citizens-led solutions and partnerships to reduce emissions?"

This fourth module focused on helping cities combine technology, citizen-led solutions, and cross-sector partnerships to drive emission reductions. Participants explored strategies to lower building energy demand through climate-responsive design, transform urban energy systems using systemic approaches, and use data-driven tools, such as Digital Twins, to enhance energy efficiency and inform smarter decision-making.

Core Session Page in Portal

Levers of change: Technical solutions, social innovation and multi-actor collaborations

This core session allowed participants to understand how they might leverage technical solutions, citizens-led solutions and partnerships with the private, civic and academic sectors to reduce emissions.

Key Learnings:

1. Be inspired by how Mission cities planned systematically their portfolios for climate neutrality, sector by sector
2. Learn which solutions by sectors and sub-sectors are implemented by European cities in reducing GHG emissions of EU cities
3. Have an overview of the resources available by emission domain and related solution themes in terms of technical and non- technical solutions through the NetZeroCities tools, including visual exploration of technical solutions, citizen-led solutions social innovation and multi-actor collaborations

Lecturers: [Polimi] Prof. Sabrina Bresciani Ph.D., Angelica Gomez | [Climate-CIK] Ing. Mira Conci Ph.D. | [CRS] Piotr Magnuszewski

Showcased Cities: Kalamata (GR)

Session Key Resources

- Social Innovation Actionable Pathways Tool
- Focus On: Impact pathways, Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
- Focus On: Technical solutions to achieve climate neutrality
- Focus On: Social Innovation and stakeholder-led solutions for Climate Neutrality

Spotlight Session 1 Page in Portal

Passive solutions to reduce energy demand in buildings

This session provided a practical guideline on how to reduce the energy demand of buildings through passive design solutions, focusing on key local climatic factors such as temperature (°C), humidity (g/kg), ventilation (m^3/h) and wind direction (°), and on how the most appropriate actions can be implemented across European climates, using simulated values from three representative cities and climate zones (cold, temperate and hot).

Key Learnings:

1. Passive solutions are design strategies that use natural resources from the environment, like the sun, wind or thermal mass among others, to provide comfort and improve energy efficiency.
2. They aim to reduce the need for mechanical heating, cooling, and lighting systems, improving energy efficiency and indoor comfort in a natural way.
3. Local climate conditions define the types of strategies that can be used

Lecturers: [CARTIF] Ana Quijano, Ana Belén Gómez, Cecilia Sanz, Jonatan Viejo

Showcased Projects: Prefabricated Façade Refurbishment, Munich (DE, ASCEND); Standard 2226, Lyon (FR, ASCEND); Positive Clean Energy District, Zaragoza (ES, NEUTRALPATH)

Session Key Resources

- Solution Bundles
- Stationary Energy (Buildings)
- State-of-the art on technical solutions to achieve climate neutrality

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Spotlight Session 2 Page in Portal

Systemic energy transition at buildings, districts and city level

This session focused on the transformation of urban energy systems—complex, interconnected structures that shape how cities produce, distribute, and consume energy. We explored this domain through a systemic lens, recognising the interdependencies between (smart) electricity grids and heating and cooling networks, using levers of change such as governance, finance, and social equity.

Key Learnings:

1. Gain understanding of the role of cities in energy transition.
2. Gain knowledge about how cities can lead and speed up energy transition in a systemic manner.
3. Learn from examples about district level energy planning, following positive energy district development process and principles: 1) increasing energy efficiency, 2) increasing renewable energy production and 3) energy flexibility.

Lecturers: [VTT] Mari Hukkalainen D. Sc.

Showcased Cities: Espoo (FI)

Session Key Resources

- Solution Bundles
- Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) about Positive Energy Districts (PED)
- CCC Highlights - Sustainable Energy Systems
- Portal group: Energy systems

Spotlight Session 3 Page in Portal

Data-driven approaches to energy transition in buildings and districts

This session covered how can cities leverage data for energy transition using examples of how data-driven approaches can assist energy transition, learning about Digital Twin and key data relevant to city operations for supporting energy efficiency practices, as well as practical tools and use cases where data can significantly impact areas such as demand-response, renovation decision making, energy flexibility and predictive maintenance.

Key Learnings:

1. Data-based solutions can help to achieve low carbon and quality living
2. Investing in digital infrastructure improves city reputation and attracts investment, tech-driven businesses and talent
3. Impact forecasting algorithms support evidence-based planning and help decision-makers choose the most effective paths.

Lecturers: [VTT] Julia Kantorovitch D. Sc.

Showcased Cities: Leipzig (DE), Bergamo (IT), Helsinki (FI), Krakow (PL), Rivne (UA)

Session Key Resources

- Tools for climate action
- Digital solutions

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Spotlight Session 4 Page in Portal

From cars to collective mobility: behaviour change and digital solutions to boost public transport use

This session provided an overview of how behavioural digital tools can help shape people's attitudes towards sustainable mobility and promote the modal shift towards public transport without requiring bands, mandates or big investments. Participants gained an understanding of how to use digital tools to make the uptake of public transport use easier, more appealing and automatic.

Key Learnings:

1. Understand how behavioural change strategies contribute to shifting mobility habits toward more sustainable transport options.
2. Identify key digital tools (such as nudging, gamification, MaaS platforms) that support behaviour change and increase the appeal of public transport.
3. Learn how European cities have successfully implemented behavioural and digital interventions to reduce private car use.
4. Analyse transport behaviours and barriers to modal shift within the city's local context.

Lecturers: [EIT-UM] Mayra García-Blásquez

Showcased Cities: Valladolid (ES), Kranj (SI)

Showcased Projects: SPINE (Valladolid) and UPPER (IBV)

Session Key Resources

- Solution Bundles
- Solution Outliner
- Mobility as a Service (MaaS)
- Multimodality

Spotlight Session 5 Page in Portal

What can cities do about Scope 3 emissions?

This session allowed participants to understand the definition and significance of Scope 3 emissions within their city's context, identify key sources of Scope 3 emissions relevant to city operations and influence and explore practical tools and methods for measuring and estimating Scope 3 emissions.

Key Learnings:

1. Consumption-based emissions represent a broad range of categories, with many different goods and services that contain varied source emissions and require different interventions.

Lecturers: [Metabolic] Apurva Singh, Anna Barnouw | [ICLEI] Nupur Prothi, Paul Barton, Francesco Palmia

Session Key Resources

- Deliverable: Scope 3 Emissions for cities
- Portal Group: Scope 3 and Consumptions Based Emissions (CBE) for cities

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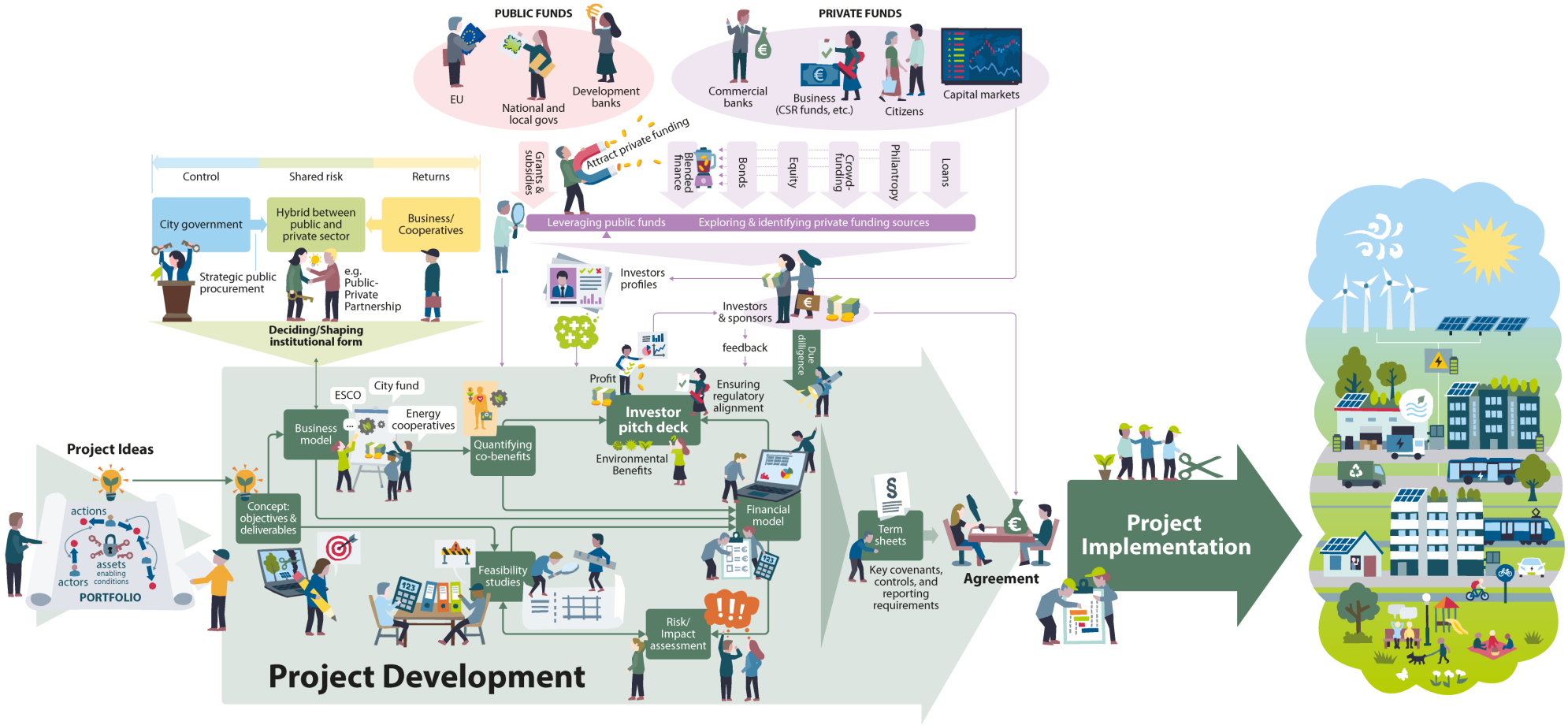

Module 5

"How might we leverage technical solutions, citizens-led solutions and partnerships to reduce emissions?"

"How might we access diverse funding options and unlock investments in the city for climate neutrality?"

The fifth module of the Online Planning Lab focused on building the financial capacity of cities to turn climate projects into bankable investments. Participants learned about different financing mechanisms, along with investor types and their profiles. The module emphasised innovative approaches to mobilise external capital, create new financing structures, and draw inspiration from Mission Cities with innovative funding solutions for climate action.

Core Session Page in Portal

Introduction to finance: increase finance knowledge of the public administration and learn about options to finance projects

This core session focused on teaching participants how to identify and understand the full spectrum of funding sources available to cities, understand the key criteria and characteristics that create bankability for a project, and identify suitable financing mechanisms that best align with their local context, capacity, and strategic priorities.

Key Learnings:

1. Understand the pathway for creating bankable projects from concept through to financing.
2. Be able to outline the pros and cons of various financing mechanisms including green bonds, city funds, PPPs and innovative approaches
3. Comprehend the different investor types and their investment profiles

Lecturers: [BwB] Delphine Queniart, Tommaso Buso, Alvar Gener

Session Key Resources

- Focus On: Financing the ambition of NetZeroCities
- The NZC Finance Glossary
- CCC - 2030 Climate Neutrality Investment Plan (template)
- Portal Group: Funding, opportunities and partnerships for cities

Spotlight Session 1 Page in Portal

Preparing a pipeline of projects for external financing

External financing is crucial for scaling net-zero projects: Municipal budgets are limited, and private capital is essential for the significant investment required to achieve climate goals. External funders also bring valuable due diligence and credibility.

Key Learnings:

1. Understand how to identify/select projects for external financing (What are the key considerations).
2. Understand how to prepare projects/ data for external financing (key documents and data, timing)

Lecturers: [South Pole] Vaneshree Naidoo

Showcased Cities: Bristol (UK)

Session Key Resources

- Focus On: Financing the ambition of NetZeroCities
- Preparing a pipeline of projects for external financing
- The NZC Finance Glossary

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Spotlight Session 2 Page in Portal

Different investor groups and the key priorities and returns profiles for each instrument

This session allowed participants to understand different investor groups and how each has specific investment preferences based on sector, type of financing, timeline and return profile, as well as linking investor types to the specific instruments depending on project types and financing requirements.

Key Learnings:

1. Investors have differing priorities when it comes to financing projects.
2. Investors make decisions based on appropriate risk for the expected reward.
3. External financing requires increased monitoring and transparency.

Finance Guidance Tool

Lecturers: [BwB] Tommaso Buso, Emre Eren, Kanishk Gupta

Session Key Resources

- Focus On: Financing the ambition of NetZeroCities
- The NZC Finance Glossary
- Financial instruments for mitigation, adaptation and energy poverty actions

Spotlight Session 3 Page in Portal

Financing the ambition: Learning from Mission Cities

This session goal was to inspire participants to create new, first-of-a-kind structures and vehicles for financing climate actions and learn about innovative solutions to address gaps in funding for climate actions. This takes the form of unique public-private partnerships, the issuance of green bonds and the launch of local climate city funds.

Key Learnings:

1. **There is a playbook, it must be tailored to each city's situation.** Cities need a customised mix of financing instruments and strategies that reflect their governance structures, project pipelines, and risk appetites. The importance of convening the right parties, which is where the hub specialises.
2. **Start somewhere small, then scale up.** The importance of starting with what is doable and achievable, as an organizational strategy but also to bring partners along the way. No one city is lacking some more achievable opportunities
3. **Collaboration is the bridge.** Strong partnerships between municipal governments, financial institutions, and private sector actors is an absolute need in order to transform ambitious climate visions into funded reality.

Lecturers: [BwB] Tommaso Buso, Alvar Gener

Showcased Cities: Glasgow (UK)

Session Key Resources

- Focus On: Financing the ambition of NetZeroCities
- Finance Guidance Tool
- NZC Tool Training Series: Introduction to Finance & Funding tools for EU Cities

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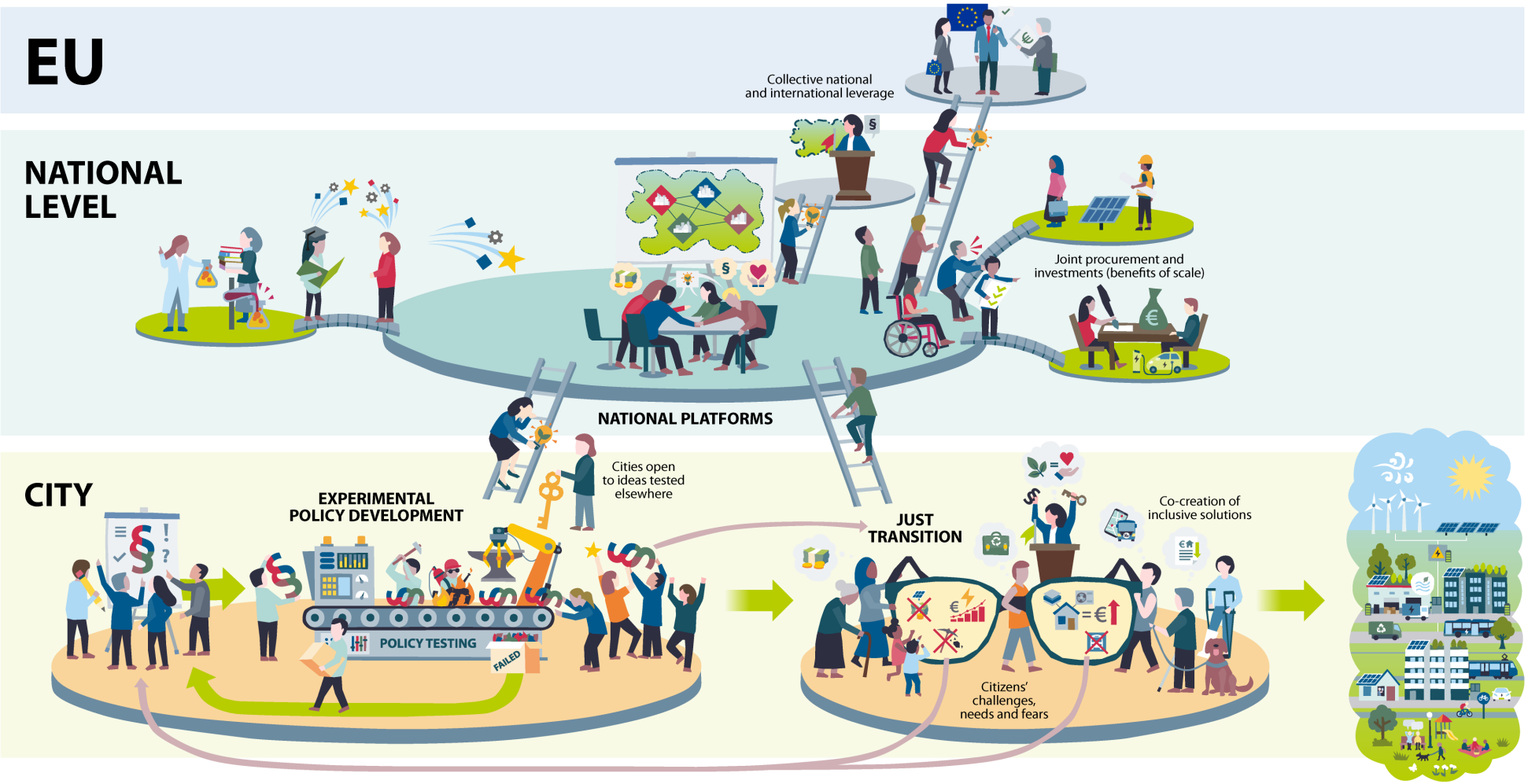

Module 6

"How might we align local, regional, and national governance to develop effective policies that support the climate transition?"

The sixth module focused on helping cities strengthen policy and collaboration across governance levels. Participants explored how coordinated action can make climate policies more ambitious and impactful, how to use tools like policy labs and regulatory sandboxes to enable innovation, and how strategic procurement can drive climate goals. The module also emphasised applying a Just Transition perspective to ensure climate policies are inclusive and equitable for all communities.

Core Session Page in Portal

Multilevel governance, national platforms and policy strategies

This core session led participants to understand how can climate action be more ambitious, efficient and robust, taking advantage of collaboration between cities in the same region or country and have a stronger voice together.

Key Learnings:

1. Gain insights on the importance of aligning local, regional, national, and international policies and strategies to accelerate cities' climate ambitions.
2. Become aware of the national supporting structures, as well as European city networks, that the Cities Mission is fostering to support a more effective climate transition, contributing to the creation of a joint vision among cities in the same country or region, sharing resources and aligning a wide range of agents.
3. Hear testimonies of cities sharing projects, progress and mutual support.

Lecturers: [UPM] Prof. Jaime Moreno Ph.D., Cristina Robledano | [EuC] Meline González Piloyan | [ICLEI] Francesco Palmia

Showcased Cities: Alba Iulia (RO), National Platforms: PT (Cities for Climate) & RO (M100)

Session Key Resources

- National Platforms for climate action
- National Platforms to Transform Cities Using Collective Experimentation and Scale
- Mapping of governance actors and core elements in core countries

Spotlight Session 1 Page in Portal

Policy and regulatory innovation

The session focused on Strategic Settings for City Transitions: Leveraging Policy Labs, Regulatory Sandboxes & Studios for Climate Success.

Key Learnings:

1. Explore the concept of mission-driven policy innovation (MDPI) and the role of policy labs, regulatory sandboxes, and studios as strategic tools for accelerating city climate action.
2. Identify common policy and regulatory barriers impeding urban climate transitions and understand how experimental policy settings help address complex, systemic challenges.
3. Analyse practical city examples demonstrating successful application of these policy settings, including stakeholder engagement, governance arrangements, and outcomes.

Lecturers: [Polimi] Marzia Mortati | [DML] Georgia Cameron

Session Key Resources

- Focus On: Policy and Partnerships
- Policy Labs - NetZeroCities
- Portal Group: Policy Labs

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Spotlight Session 2 Page in Portal

Every Spend Matters: Using Public Procurement Strategically to Achieve Climate Neutrality

This session's goal was to help participants understand procurement's strategic role in Climate Action Plans, explore the "Foundations & Tools" framework for strategic procurement, learn from city case studies on innovation and collaboration and diagnose their city's context to apply these models.

Key Learnings:

1. Procurement is a diverse toolkit of innovative and collaborative models.
2. Success requires strong foundations: a clear political mandate, governance, and capacity.
3. A strategic diagnosis is key to matching the right tools to your city's context.

Lecturers: [ICLEI] Alexandru Buftic

Session Key Resources

- Sustainable Procurement Platform - RESOURCE CENTRE
- Meeting on Strategic Public Procurement and Pre Commercial Procurement Day 1
- Portal Group: Strategic Public Procurement (SPP)

Spotlight Session 3 Page in Portal

Just Transition

This session focused on teaching cities to recognise the risks faced by vulnerable groups due to climate change impacts, as well as policies and actions that may exacerbate inequalities, apply a Just Transition perspective to their climate strategy and climate actions (processes, policy), and understand how this influences decisions related to climate governance, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making in climate action.

Key Learnings:

1. Climate action reshapes social, economic, and spatial systems, creating uneven risks if fairness is not built in from the start.
2. Recognising this across city, national, and EU levels helps anticipate risks, prevent backlash, and strengthen legitimacy for climate action.
3. A Just Transition is integrative: It links decarbonisation with equity, accessibility, and resilience, using the transition as a chance to redesign urban systems around justice and equity.
4. Justice requires collective intention. Equitable outcomes depend on embedding fairness into governance, policy, and planning, and empowering affected groups through engagement.

Lecturers: [DML] Marcial Silva | [DemSoc] Ignatius But | [Demos Helsinki] Janne Rinne

Showcased Cities: Stockholm (SE), Valencia (ES)

Session Key Resources

- Accelerating Just Transitions: Insights for Cities and National Platforms
- Just Transitions: A Concept Note
- CoM Guidebook: How to develop an energy poverty assessment

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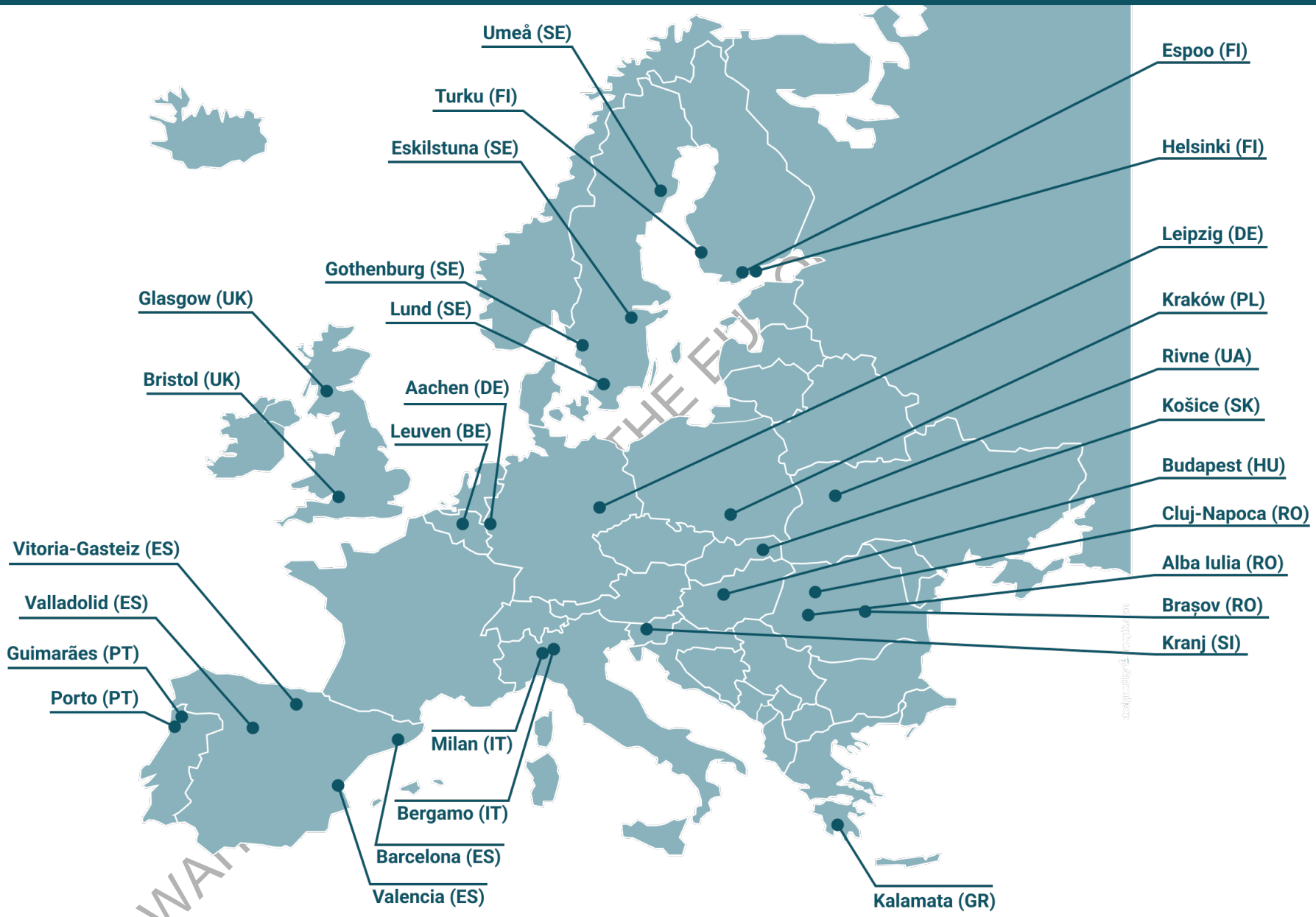
Showcased Cities



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Further Resources

The first edition of the Online Planning Lab launched on September 16th, 2025. In total the sessions of the Online Planning Lab were attended by more than 230 participants, mostly from Europe.

The programme is planned to run across three editions (2025, 2026 and 2027), with each iteration building upon the insights, learnings and feedback gathered from participants to continuously improve its contents and structure. This iterative approach ensures that the programme remains relevant and impactful in response to the evolving needs of cities in their journey towards climate neutrality.

Learn about other opportunities to accelerate your city's climate action journey:

Peer Learning and capability building

- **Opportunities for Mission-minded cities**
- **Onboarding for Mission-minded cities**
- **Subscribe to the Mission-minded cities newsletter**
- **Resources and mailing list for researchers**

Online Tools & Resources

Mission Portal

- Access planning and funding tools, climate data, and case studies
- Join online communities to collaborate with peers
- Discover Climate City Contracts, best practices, and research publications

Helpdesk and technical support

infocities@netzerocities.eu

- One-to-one onboarding calls
- Orientation sessions to guide your first steps
- Tailored support to align tools and pathways to your local needs
- Custom technical assistance sessions for your city

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