

TOWARDS A MISSION ON CLIMATE NEUTRAL AND SMART CITIES

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About ERRIN - European Regions Research and Innovation Network

Established in 2001, ERRIN promotes the regional and local dimension in European research and innovation policies and programmes. ERRIN supports project development and knowledge exchange between members to enhance regional and local research and innovation capacities and to foster sustainable and inclusive growth in all regions.

Why Missions - and why a mission on climate neutral and smart cities?

Before going into the contents of the mission on Carbon Neutral Cities by and for citizens, we would like to recall why the European Commission decided to introduce the mission-oriented approach in research and innovation policy. The mid-term review of the Horizon 2020 programme concluded, amongst other issues, that the next framework programme should:

- *make it easier for citizens to understand the value of investments in research and innovation*
- *maximise the impact of investments by setting clearer targets and expected impact when addressing global challenges*

Thus, the better connection and involvement of **citizens** is a key reason for launching the Mission orientation. Therefore, it is important that the Mission on 100 Climate Neutral Cities by and for Citizens makes clear how the above-mentioned key issues are addressed:

- The mission on climate neutral cities is ideally placed to engage Europeans, citizens and stakeholders, in a pressing global challenge, that of impending climate change, because it focuses on the places where most Europeans live, work and move. In other words, it touches them in their daily lives!
- The proposed process of City Climate Contracts or Pacts should be an open and transparent process geared towards the largest possible participation with 100 cities merely as a minimum number. The focus of the approach should be on *cooperation rather than competition*.
- While the overarching ambition of the Mission relates to the issue of mitigating climate change, achieving success within this mission requires, not only significant technological innovation but also a paradigm shift within the public sector (local, regional, national and European), reassessing and adapting its role vis-à-vis the general public. Look only at the dilemma public authorities face thousands taking to the streets demanding measures to be taken addressing climate change, while at the same time, the public has difficulty accepting that addressing this challenge is going to require financial and behavioural sacrifices. It will cost money, but it will also impact on our daily lives affecting the way we do things. That in itself makes the selection of this mission of vital importance in today's turbulent political climate.
- Finally, working with local and regional level is a key to reach demand-driven, sustainable and impactful innovations with a wide public acceptance and replication potential.

Defining the Mission

While we agree with the message from the Mission Board that the Mission should be 'simple and easy to grasp' for all, and we should avoid a complex mission description that each of us can interpret in a different manner. Hence, we support the title of 100 Climate neutral cities by and for citizens, while stressing, at the same time, that 100 cities should be the starting point and the overall objective should be a carbon neutral European Union.

However, we stress that the implementation of the Mission must engage a wide range of relevant actors at different levels. We stress that climate neutrality must engage the regions in which the selected cities are situated and must also engage knowledge and private partners, as well as citizens

in a meaningful manner. Regional innovation and decarbonisation strategies should be used as multiplier and catalysator of in such an ecosystem approach.

The citizens must take centre stage in both the definition of the local/regional ambition and the process of implementation. We stress the importance of engaging citizens and ensuring their ownership of the ambition. Hence, the mission should seek a paradigm shift, going beyond technological innovation. We need this mission to bring about a change in society, where all actors work together on making their city a better place to live and in which people will then the questions: What will I do? How will I contribute? Only in this way the mission will prove to be the best possible vehicle for the EU to show Europeans that Europe matters, that it impacts on their lives and, most importantly, that they have a say (the mission would thus tackle the democratic deficit of Europe!).

Participating in the mission

For the Mission to be a meaningful contribution to the European Union Paris commitments, it is important that many cities and regions are committed to become climate neutral. The cities should:

- be of different sizes, using different models for decarbonisation so that they can further inspire different type of cities, towns, regions...
- cover the whole of Europe geographically. There must be role models in all Member States (including EU 13)
- be engaged in a proven multi-actor collaboration / ecosystem building. This means that all key actors at the city / region level must be on board in the efforts towards decarbonisation. Existing dynamics, such citizen driven innovation, should be used to further accelerate this process. This ecosystem approach is essential to ensure local ownership and that all actors are working towards the same goal.
- ensuring that the decarbonisation objective will be accompanied with clear roadmap and a solid financial plan. For this we need to bring on board, in the city climate pacts, financial expertise from the start. The role of the cities is first and foremost to stimulate and aggregate the demand, to create the trust in bankability with the potential investors.

With regard to the selection of front runner cities, we think that the following criteria are essential:

- Level of ambition / robustness of local/regional partnership
- Level of performance – how far has the city come already
- Impact/scale – how much difference will this city make on a global scale
- Replication and dissemination – can this city inspire other similar cities
- Differentiation – including cities with a diverse set of natural, economic and social conditions
- Geographical balance (but NOT a fixed number per MS!)
- Convincing methodology in place

The contract

We understand that the European Commission would very much like to see a contract type of approach to ensure the serious commitment of 100 cities to achieving the ambitions of the mission.

While we support the importance of obtaining a commitment from the local / regional actors, we would like to stress that:

1. To facilitate a long-term process of both technological and social innovation within front runners, a traditional contract such as the project contracts the European Commission

- normally engages in, may not be the best approach to allow cities to walk the path with the most potential.
2. We therefore propose that a climate pact or climate deal is a more open instrument in which the partners set out their joint ambition and their respective expertise and contributions.
 3. The climate pact should ensure that the decarbonisation objective will be accompanied with clear roadmap and a solid financial plan. This will require that the climate pact will include financial expertise from the start. The role of administrations is to create the trust in bankability with the potential investors.
 4. We also think that the role of the European Commission should not be limited to financing. The European Commission, like all other participating partners, has a specific set of skills and expertise, and these should be part of the pact. The Commission also has an instrumental role in mapping and bringing together the variety of initiatives that are supporting the decarbonisation efforts at local and regional level targeting different actor groups.
 5. We suggest that the number of 100 is a starting point and the objective should be to create an open and growing group of partners.