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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
Cities Mission	Mission on 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2023
EU	European Union
NZC	NetZeroCities
Mission Cities	112 cities selected for the Cities Mission
EC	European Commission
CCC	Climate City Contract
PCAET	Energy, Air and Climate Territorial Plan
CRTE	Ecological Transition and Recovery Contracts
REGEA	North-West Croatia Regional Energy Efficiency Agency
Mission Adaptation	EU Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change
CARO	Climate Action Regional Office
NSS	The Dutch National Support Structure
EDD	El Día Después
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange

Summary

This report summarises the findings of sub-task 1.4.1 under task 1.4: Multi-level governance framework and platform support, which falls under Work Package 1: Climate City Contracts & Action Plans. The report presents an overview of regional and national support structures that have been set up in the 27 EU Member States and eight Associated Countries to support cities in the implementation of the EU Mission on 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030 (Cities Mission). Furthermore, it provides an insight into the discussions and developments taking place in countries where the regional and national levels have not yet set up such support structures for cities. The deliverable also presents 'recommendations for interventions', which aim to guide NZC's future work in supporting cities in countries where regional and national support structures currently are limited or lacking.

The report includes information obtained through desk research, interviews with relevant stakeholders and NetZeroCities (NZC) project partners, as well as information presented in previous NZC deliverables, mainly D5.9.

The findings of this report show that national support networks and platforms have emerged in a number of countries (Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden), while strong collaboration structures between Mission Cities, that still lack the official involvement of the national level, have been established in additional countries. In most countries, cities are still struggling to involve the regional and national levels in their Mission work and to receive concrete support in the form of knowledge and funding as well as policy and technical support.

The findings of the report will act as a basis for future work of the NZC project, mainly sub-task 1.4.2 which will create a 'development programme' to support the set-up of regional and national support structures. The report will also support the activities of task 6.4 in NZC-SGA1, which aims to further analyse the replicability of existing multi-level governance approaches and governance instruments. Finally, the findings will be shared with the CapaCITIES project to support the activities of the project and to create closer links between the work of the two projects.

Keywords

NetZeroCities; Cities Mission; Multi-level governance; National support structures; Climate change mitigation; Climate neutrality; Climate City Contracts



Introduction

Political support from and collaboration across all government levels has been outlined as one of the key challenges that cities need to overcome to accelerate the transition towards climate neutrality in the [Implementation Plan for the Mission on 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2023](#) (Cities Mission). Regional and national support networks are important for cities to address regulatory barriers on the regional or national levels, which hinder cities from implementing necessary actions, and to unlock regional and national sources of funding that can support cities in their climate neutrality work. Additionally, such networks are important for knowledge-sharing between national, regional and local authorities, as well as for sharing learnings and involving cities beyond the ones selected for the Cities Mission. This was echoed in the recently published [assessment of the progress of the five European Union \(EU\) Missions](#), which highlighted the important role of national networks as mechanisms for learning and mediating.

This deliverable aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of play in terms of regional and national support structures that have been set up in EU Member States and Associated Countries, to support cities in developing and implementing their Climate City Contracts (CCC) and achieving their climate neutrality objectives. These support structures include governance innovations such as national networks, platforms and similar structures, as well as financial instruments directed towards supporting the implementation of the Cities Mission. In its future work, NetZeroCities (NZN) will use the learnings and best practices deriving from the identified support structures in this report to develop case studies that can be shared with cities and countries looking to set up similar structures.

Furthermore, this deliverable provides an insight into the discussions and developments taking place in countries where the regional and national levels have not yet set up support structures for cities. For these countries, the deliverable presents 'recommendations for interventions' which aim to guide the work that will be undertaken as part of the 'development programme' (NZN T1.4.2), focused on supporting cities in initiating dialogues with the regional and/or national levels. The extent and shape of the NZN support will be context-specific, meaning that it will be discussed and agreed with each Mission City to ensure that it aligns with their needs and local context. However, the recommendations presented in this deliverable aim to give some first ideas for how the NZN project could support cities in the relevant countries and the type of interventions that could be foreseen.

The findings of this deliverable will be important for the NZN project's future multi-level governance work within T1.4. Additionally, the findings will also feed into the work of WP6 in NZN-SGA1 and will be shared with the [CapaCITIES](#) project.

Disclaimer: This deliverable is a snapshot report of the current state of play in the Member States and Associated Countries up until June/July 2023. The report does not consider any developments taking place after summer 2023.



Methodology

This deliverable aims to provide a snapshot overview of the regional and national support structures that have been set up in EU Member States and Associated Countries to support the implementation of the Cities Mission and its objectives, while also providing an understanding of the ongoing discussions and developments in countries that have not yet set up such support structures. Furthermore, the deliverable presents recommendations for interventions in the countries where a lack of or limited support towards the cities for the implementation of the Cities Mission can be observed.

With support structures, the project refers to governance innovations such as national networks, platforms and similar structures as well as financial instruments directed towards supporting the implementation of the Cities Mission. The report focuses on support structures that have been set up on the regional (sub-national) and the national level in the 27 EU Member States and the eight Associated Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Israel, Montenegro, Norway, Turkey and the United Kingdom) that are part of the Cities Mission.

The research for the report has been conducted through the following means:

- Desk research and task partners' knowledge was used for the mapping of regional and national support structures.
- Interviews were conducted with the NZC Climate Neutral City Advisors (City Advisors), NZC project partners, members of the Mission Board, city representatives, actors involved in existing national support structures and partners of the CapaCITIES project.
- Information from previous NZC deliverables, mainly D5.9, was used for the development of this report.

The recommendations for interventions presented in the report stem from task partners' knowledge and previous experiences and, to some extent, from input from City Advisors and cities. The recommendations aim to provide some first ideas for how the NZC project could assist cities in countries where support from the regional and national levels for the implementation of the Cities Mission currently is limited or lacking, and the type of interventions that could be foreseen.

The deliverable presents information that was available to the NZC project up until June/July 2023. Any developments that took place after this timeframe are not covered by this report.



EU Member States

1 Austria

1.1 Mission support structures in Austria

The national '[Climate-neutral Cities Mission](#)' in Austria builds on the '[Fit4UrbanMission](#)' initiative, which supported nine Austrian cities in developing and improving strategies for achieving climate neutrality by 2040 through a targeted, one-year funding scheme. Additionally, the initiative was set up to enable an exchange between Austrian cities around climate neutrality and the issues connected to it, while also supporting them with their expressions of interest for the EU Cities Mission. In the end, three Austrian cities applied for the EU Cities Mission, with the city of Klagenfurt being one of the 112 selected ones.

The Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology has a history of working with Austrian cities on issues related to climate and smart cities, mainly through the [Smart Cities Network Austria](#), and is also the initiator of the national Climate-neutral Cities Mission. The Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology launched the national mission in 2021 with the aim to support Austrian cities and municipalities in achieving the national climate and energy goals. The mission includes comprehensive research activities and accompanying measures, which will act as enablers to develop and implement the path towards climate neutrality.

The Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology has also launched a 'Mission Cities Action Group' within the ministry, with the aim to bring together the different sections of the ministry working on different policy domains (mobility, energy and environmental protection), while also creating links and connecting with other federal ministries. Additionally, the action group aims to create links to the Cities Mission work at the EU level by following ongoing discussions and monitoring funding opportunities.

The Climate-neutral Cities Mission is one of the newly established pillars that bring together different stakeholders from the existing units/activities within the ministry. The pillars have their own agenda-setting processes and have subsequently been assigned specific budgets. For 2024, a budget will specifically be dedicated to the Climate-neutral Cities Mission.

The Austrian Climate-neutral Cities Mission

Facilitator: The Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology is facilitating the Austrian Climate-neutral Cities Mission. The ministry is well-placed for this role, as it already for several years has worked 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 together with AustriaTech, which is a non-profit organisation under the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, and with the Austrian Society for Environment and Technology (ÖGUT) responsible for organising the activities of the Austrian Climate-neutral Cities Mission. The three actors are complementing each other in terms of expertise, with AustriaTech focusing on mobility issues, ÖGUT on topics related to 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 and the Austrian partners involved in the European Partnership Driving Urban Transitions and the CapaCITIES project, are also



supporting the Austrian Climate-neutral Cities Mission. The Association of Cities and Towns is also a strong and important collaboration partner.

Participating cities: The national mission involves ten large Austrian cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants: Vienna, Graz, Salzburg, Villach, Klagenfurt, Innsbruck, Linz, St. Pölten, Dornbirn and Wiener Neustadt. Additionally, it currently involves 13 smaller cities with 10 000 - 15 000 inhabitants: Bregenz, Feldkirch, St. Johann in Tirol, Vöcklabruck, Steyr, St. Veit/Glan, Kapfenberg, Bruck/Mur, Gratwein-Straßengel, Feldbach, Tulln, Baden and Wr. Neustadt.

Support to cities: Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreements have been signed between the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology and the ten large Austrian cities that are part of the Austrian Climate-neutral Cities Mission. These agreements aim to secure additional resources for capacity building in the cities, as they will allocate up to €2 million per city to ensure necessary personnel capacity and competence development over a period of five years. The funding should be used for capacity-building activities in the following areas: governance, climate-neutral neighbourhoods and learning environment.

The Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology and the Climate and Energy Fund have also provided research and development (R&D) procurement funding of €75 000 to the 13 smaller cities that are part of the national mission, to support them in the development of climate neutrality strategies over 18 months.

Links to regional and national processes: As part of the PPP agreements, the ten large cities that are part of the Austrian Climate-neutral Cities Mission must submit yearly programmes of work to the Austrian Research Promotion Agency, which is the funding agency, for approval. The Austrian Mission City Klagenfurt could use its yearly programme, as well as the work plan that was submitted as part of the application for the PPP, to support the Climate City Contract (CCC) work as some elements of these documents are similar. Similarly, the CCC can support Klagenfurt's future yearly programmes of work.

Activities: The Austrian Climate-neutral Cities Mission organises activities with different formats for the participating cities. Peer-to-peer learning and exchanges between the cities is a fundamental part of the work that is being carried out within the national mission. As part of these exchanges, thematic meetings are organised between city practitioners and experts to exchange and discuss current topics that they have identified, for example mobility hubs. In-depth discussions are also regularly organised between the cities and the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology to exchange challenges and issues that touch on national level competencies, such as regulatory and policy barriers.

1.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

In autumn 2023, an opportunity to fund an additional twelve small cities with R&D procurement funding will be launched. The goal of the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology is to fund a total of 70 cities by 2030 to support them in the development of their climate neutrality strategies.

The Austrian Climate-neutral Cities Mission is working on involving both the private sector as well as the Austrian provinces in its activities to a greater extent. The provinces have signalled an interest to join the national mission work, which is important as the provinces have some competences that are relevant to the cities' climate neutrality work.

The current focus of the national mission work has been on research and innovation; however, the activities will slowly start shifting more towards implementation. Meanwhile, the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology 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.



2 Belgium

2.1 Mission support structures in Belgium

In the Region of Flanders, the Cabinet of the Flemish Minister for Home Affairs hosted early on meetings with Flemish cities to discuss and understand the needs of cities as well as the need for cross-city collaboration in the context of the Cities Mission. The Cities Mission currently falls within the competencies of several ministries in the Government of Flanders, making discussions on the Mission more complex. The Flemish Government has, so far, not announced any intentions to provide targeted support for the implementation of the Cities Mission to the two Flemish Mission Cities – Leuven and Antwerp. However, it has announced that it will co-sign the Climate City Contract of Leuven.

The Flemish cities are already collaborating on the topic of climate neutrality within several existing networks, such as the [Flemish Cities Knowledge Centre](#) and the [Climate Network of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities](#). One of the objectives in the work programme of the Climate Network of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities is to support the Flemish Mission Cities and promote the exchange of experiences with other participating cities. Additionally, the two Flemish Mission Cities collaborate bilaterally on issues around the Mission and the Climate City Contracts. However, differences in the cities' political priorities sometimes make the collaboration around some issues and topics challenging.

La Louvière, which is the only Mission City in the Region of Wallonia, has not expressed an interest in establishing a national or regional support platform for the Cities Mission activities. The city is currently not collaborating with any other cities – in Belgium or beyond - on the Cities Mission and is not expecting any support from the national or regional level for the development and implementation of the Climate City Contract.

The Brussels Capital Region consists of 19 municipalities, of which 17 are part of the Cities Mission. Brussels has set up a network together with the participating municipalities and the regional administrations that are participating in the Cities Mission. Innoviris, a public organisation that funds and supports research and innovation in the Brussels Capital Region, acts as the facilitator of the network and organises regular meetings for the involved partners to discuss developments and provide updates on the implementation of the Mission.

2.2 Recommendations for interventions

The regional level is very strong in Belgium due to differences in culture and history, which has resulted in the Belgian Mission Cities focusing their collaboration on the regional level rather than the national level. The role of NZC could be to facilitate collaboration between the Mission Cities and other cities on the regional level, to promote peer learning and knowledge sharing, while also ensuring the involvement and support of the regional governments. To involve the regional governments, it would be important for the cities to create a common understanding of their support needs towards the regional level.

With the national level having the competences to address most emissions sources, it will be important to also convince the national government about the importance of the Cities Mission and to establish a dialogue with the relevant national ministries on their role in the Mission. NZC could facilitate this dialogue by assisting the cities in mapping their concrete challenges and support needs towards the national level.



3 Bulgaria

3.1 Mission support structures in Bulgaria

There are currently no regional or national support structures directed towards the Bulgarian Mission Cities Sofia and Gabrovo for the implementation of the Cities Mission. In the last two years, Bulgaria has faced political uncertainty with no stable government in place, which has slowed down various national projects and reforms. With the newly formed government, more stability is anticipated and various reforms in regional policy are expected which could impact the situation of the Bulgarian Mission Cities and other Bulgarian municipalities. However, climate policy does not appear to be high on the new government's agenda.

Although no funding instruments have been directed towards the Cities Mission and its implementation in the Bulgarian Mission Cities, there are various funding sources dedicated to municipalities, mainly from Cohesion Policy and from the Recovery and Resilience Fund, which could support the Mission's goals and objectives.

The two Mission Cities collaborate with other Bulgarian cities within different forums on climate action. The Mayor of Gabrovo is chair of the Municipal Energy Efficiency Network, [EcoEnergy](#), which is an organisation bringing together 23 municipalities across Bulgaria to support the implementation of different activities related to sustainable energy. Moreover, Gabrovo is heavily involved in the 'Regional Innovation Centre, Ambitious Gabrovo' initiative, which brings together the whole regional innovation ecosystem composed of various companies, research institutions as well as local and regional governments in one space, to test out new energy efficient and circular economy technologies. The two Mission Cities have not established a formal collaboration around the Cities Mission activities but have previously collaborated on various EU-funded projects with a climate focus.

The Bulgarian cities would need technical support from the national government as well as access to quality data. Current databases are not updated and accurate across municipalities, meaning that national support in compiling and maintaining data would be required. Moreover, when it comes to financing, Bulgarian municipalities tend to be heavily reliant on grants and face difficulties in opting for alternative means of financing, such as loans. This is made even more difficult by national legislation which limits the amounts of loans municipalities can take. One exception to this is the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Sources Fund where the capping legislation does not apply, therefore enabling municipalities to tap into loans for energy efficiency investment projects. Even though the success rate of this fund is rather high (more than 95%), this fund is often treated as a last resort, especially if national grants are not available, and the available amount is limited. Therefore, this is an area where legislative reform as well as further support to municipalities to consider loans could be highly valuable.

3.2 Recommendations for interventions

NZC could support and strengthen the collaboration between Sofia and Gabrovo as Mission Cities as well as collaboration with other highly active Bulgarian cities in the energy and climate field, such as Burgas, Dobrich, Vratsa, and Stara Zagora. Areas where collaboration and support could be explored include: support in the set-up of one stop-shops for building renovations; collaboration and exchange of best practises on the Integrated Territorial Plan for Integrated Development which municipalities must develop; support on building capacity to attract robust financing for energy efficiency projects and building renovation, which include loans and private investments; and support on bridging the skills gap in building renovation.

With the new government in place, NZC could support in strengthening existing links between the Mission Cities and the national Ministry for Regional Development and Public Works as well as in establishing 'new' links with the Ministry for Environment, the Ministry for Energy. Together, the Mission Cities can act as a stronger voice advocating to the national government for better and more long-term technical assistance for regional development, renovation and renewable energy programmes.



4 Croatia

4.1 Mission support structures in Croatia

The city of Zagreb is the only Croatian municipality selected for the Cities Mission. One of the main support structures of Zagreb's climate neutrality efforts is the [North-West Croatia Regional Energy Efficiency Agency](#) (REGEA). REGEA retains close ties to Zagreb through its various projects and activities within the city, which are fully aligned with Zagreb's Mission objectives. Zagreb is also cooperating with other large cities in Croatia, including Split, Rijeka and Osijek, through an initiative operationally supported by REGEA. This cooperation takes the form of regular meetings between the cities to discuss topics of interest and plan joint undertakings within the field of energy transition. Apart from REGEA, the [Croatian Union of Municipalities](#) has also been actively involved in the promotion of the Cities Mission through dedicated dissemination activities. Although the association is no longer directly supporting the work of the Mission due to lack of capacity, it remains a forum for collaboration between Croatian cities.

Political dialogue across different governance levels is an effort where REGEA is taking great strides. Through the EU-funded [NECPlatform](#) project, REGEA has been facilitating multi-level discussions involving Zagreb and other Croatian cities, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, academia, industry and NGOs on Croatia's National Energy and Climate Plan. Through the project, REGEA has established a solid cooperation on energy and climate policies at both local and national level, which will be of benefit to Zagreb's Mission efforts.

At the national level, the Croatian Government has faced several ministerial reshuffles in recent months, particularly involving two important ministries for the Cities Mission: The Ministry in charge of EU funding and regional development and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. This has impacted any support that could have been obtained by Zagreb from the national level, and it is yet to be seen whether any Mission-focused support will emerge from the Croatian national government in the coming months. Although a degree of cooperation already exists between the city of Zagreb and the national government, there is also an acknowledgement from the city on the need for closer ties and collaboration. This is especially required for the city to be able to obtain additional EU funding, as well as to be able to process EU regulations and policies directly applicable to them.

No national funding instruments have been directed towards supporting the implementation of the Cities Mission in Zagreb. However, existing funding instruments, such as the Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund, could contribute to the Mission objectives. As a result of the devastating earthquakes in 2020 and 2021, Zagreb and other Croatian cities have had to allocate funds towards reconstruction and renovation. As part of these efforts, Zagreb has embarked on a holistic reconstruction journey which also integrates climate adaptation measures with a long-term vision and resilient city in mind.

4.2 Recommendations for interventions

There is a lot of work and effort on climate ambition in Croatia being undertaken through various EU-funded projects, which could be better linked and further exploited to create lasting cooperation amongst Croatian cities themselves and better connection with the national government. NZC can enhance existing cooperation by facilitating further collaboration between some of the key players, such as REGEA and the Croatian Union of Municipalities, but also bring on board other stakeholders, such as ODRAZ - a Croatian NGO working with local communities on sustainable development concepts, the Green Energy Cooperative, as well as other cities with activities and interest in energy transition such as Križevci, Zadar and Koprivnica.



5 Cyprus

5.1 Mission support structures in Cyprus

Limassol – the only Mission City in Cyprus - is actively spearheading the formation of a national network with three other cities, namely Strovolos, Paphos and Aradippou, to foster collaboration in achieving climate neutrality. Together, these cities have established the **'Mission Cities Network Cyprus'** as a collective platform to address the urgent climate challenges within their respective sectors. While Strovolos, Paphos and Aradippou expressed their interest to join the Cities Mission, but were not selected, they remain resolute in their determination to forge ahead and accelerate their efforts towards achieving climate neutrality.

In July 2023, these cities signed an agreement to work together, laying the foundation for joint efforts in tackling climate challenges. Although the national government was unaware of the Cities Mission and the network being formed, in August 2023, Cypriot cities met with the central government to engage in discussions regarding their initiatives and plans. All the Cypriot cities are actively working towards the development of their own City Climate Contracts, ensuring their preparedness and adaptability to align with the European Union's climate goals.

Cyprus currently lacks comprehensive climate regulation, making the establishment of this network even more crucial in driving progress at a local level. By replicating this network model, the Cypriot cities network hopes to inspire and encourage other regions and cities in Cyprus to join the mission towards climate neutrality.

Limassol's efforts extend beyond national boundaries, as they seek to share their experiences and collaborations with Greek cities. Limassol aspires to form networks with other Mediterranean cities that have a port, enabling a collective approach to climate action. Having a strategic advantage with its port and marina, Limassol aims to integrate these assets into their climate strategy.

Mission Cities Network Cyprus

Facilitator: The General Coordinator of the Cities Mission in Limassol is also coordinating the Mission Cities Network Cyprus and its activities.

Participating cities: The cities Limassol, Strovolos, Paphos and Aradippou are currently participating in the network.

Support to cities: The 'Mission Cities Network Cyprus' aims to facilitate shared resources and learning between Limassol, Strovolos, Paphos and Aradippou. It is also aimed at advocating and presenting common needs on behalf of the cities to the national government.

Links to regional and national processes: Limassol's City Climate Contract will be integrated into Cyprus' Energy and Climate Plan which is currently under development. These efforts illustrate the national government's commitment to contribute to the national climate agenda and align its strategy with Limassol's overall climate objectives, paving the way for coordinated efforts towards climate neutrality at a broader scale.



6 Czech Republic

6.1 Mission support structures in Czech Republic

The City of Liberec is the only Mission City in the Czech Republic. In the absence of formal Mission support structures, the city is engaging the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Industry and Trade and others directly in their local Cities Mission work and has invited ministry representatives to their stakeholder roundtables. The city is also in contact with representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and the Healthy Cities Network, which are part of the European project [CapaCITIES](#) that aims at strengthening Mission support structures for climate-neutral cities in the participating countries. For example, the Healthy Cities Network supported Liberec with facilitators for their stakeholder engagement in the Climate City Contract process.

Although there are no formal national support structures for the Mission City in Czech Republic, small working groups have been formed between relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Technological Agency, and Academy of Sciences. The representatives of these ministries are also members of the Working Group on Smart Cities, which is an official platform operating under the Council of the Government for Sustainability that consists of about 50 relevant stakeholders from the national, regional and local level, as well as academia and private sector.

The Ministry of Regional Development has established an informal Internal Working Group for the Horizon Europe Missions, which includes several stakeholders that work together on the implementation of the Missions. The activities of the group are communicated to the Working Group on Smart Cities that meets periodically (about three times per year) and discusses relevant issues regarding the implementation of smart solutions in municipalities.

In terms of recent activities, a need for national support structures for climate-neutral cities has been discussed among stakeholders at the 25th meeting of the Working Group on Smart Cities. More informal meetings followed since. An informal collaboration has also been established with the Technological Agency of the Czech Republic around their participation in the [TRAMI](#) project, which focuses on the implementation of all Missions.

6.2 Recommendations for interventions

The NZC project should collaborate with the national CapaCITIES partners to strengthen the collaboration between Liberec and other Czech cities, to enable the sharing of best practices from Liberec's work within the Mission and to jointly push for the implementation of national support structures to accelerate cities' climate neutrality work. NZC could work with Liberec and other Czech cities in identifying such support structures, while also sharing best practices of national support structures from other countries. By utilising the Internal Working Group for the Horizon Europe Missions set up by the Ministry of Regional Development as well as the Technological Agency's participation in the TRAMI project, closer links could also be explored with other EU Missions which Czech cities and regions are part of.



7 Denmark

7.1 Mission support structures in Denmark

The Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, which is acting as the National Contact Point for the Horizon Europe Missions, organised information seminars before the Expression of Interest for the Cities Mission had opened, to inform cities about the Mission and the possibility to apply for it. After the announcement of the cities selected for the Cities Mission, two meetings were organised in autumn 2022 between the Danish Mission Cities - Copenhagen, Sønderborg and Aarhus, the Climate Neutral City Advisor for the Danish Mission Cities, and the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, in which the agency informed the cities that it cannot coordinate any national support structure for the cities due to the lack of resources for such work.

In March 2023, a meeting was organised by the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science with the aim to explore the possibility to set up an informal network for the Cities Mission and the Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change. A wide range of stakeholders, who could support national research and innovation actors, regions and cities in achieving the objectives of the two EU Missions, were invited to the meeting. The meeting did not lead to any concrete outcomes and no follow-up actions have been undertaken.

[DK2020](#), which is a project supporting Danish municipalities in the development of local climate action plans, has expanded its scope and become a 'climate council' that could represent the voice of the Danish cities within the frame of the Cities Mission. The collaboration within DK2020 encompasses in total 97 Danish cities and the project is managed by the think tank CONCITO, with support from Local Government Denmark, Realdania, C40 and the five Danish regions. The project, therefore, offers a natural forum for the Danish Mission Cities to collaborate on issues related to their work within the Cities Mission.

7.2 Recommendations for interventions

The Danish Mission Cities are not interested in establishing a national network or similar support platform for the Cities Mission activities, as they already collaborate on climate issues within the frame of existing initiatives. The cities do not expect any support from the national level as climate action is not a priority to the current Danish government.

The focus of the NetZeroCities project's support to the Danish Mission Cities should be on facilitating a dialogue between the cities and the relevant ministries to communicate the cities' support needs and exploring ways for the national level to respond to these needs. A first step could be to outline the cities' concrete support needs as well as the bottlenecks that exist on the national level in terms of legislation and policy, if the cities are interested in initiating a dialogue with the national level.



8 Estonia

8.1 Mission support structures in Estonia

National level engagement in the Cities Mission is in a transitional phase in Estonia. As Horizon Europe initiatives, the various EU Missions fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education given their link to research and education. Previously, there was an active contact for EU Mission-related work in the national government. However, this person has now moved to different tasks. With Tartu as the only Mission City in Estonia, but several Estonian cities participating in Mission Adaptation, there could be an opportunity for the group of cities to jointly engage with the national level on both Missions. This could contribute to the enhancement of synergies between climate mitigation and adaptation.

There are ongoing discussions and exploration of potential opportunities to facilitate a strong collaboration between the national government and the municipalities involved in the Cities Mission and Mission Adaptation. Potential initiatives under exploration include the establishment of a dedicated person focused on the two Missions in the Ministry of Environment as well as engagement with various stakeholders.

There are a few core support needs of Tartu as a Mission City and the cities involved in Mission Adaptation towards the national level. These support needs include funding opportunities, capability building, and a central platform for coordination and ongoing engagement, with a focus on problem-solving, stakeholder engagement, collaborative initiatives, etc. There are various institutions and initiatives relevant to urban climate action and a need for a central platform to assist in making connections with local climate actions.

Tartu is also collaborating with other Estonian cities on climate action within different forums. At the regional level, Tartu is a member of the [Union of Tartu County Municipalities](#). The city is also participating in [a cooperation platform](#) that has been launched by Tallinn in relation to their initiatives as the European Green Capital 2023. The [FinEst Centre for Smart Cities](#) is running the [Smart City Piloting Program](#) where cities and researchers develop new smart solutions that aim to improve climate neutrality and citizen well-being.

The [KIK Environmental Investment Centre](#) is a national level initiative highly relevant to the Cities Mission. The centre acts as a 'provider of modern, intelligent, and effective solutions in the Estonian environmental landscape'. In this role, it redistributes environmental taxes and some EU funding, and is keen on supporting municipalities with their administrative workload. The Funding Manager at the centre also supports municipalities working on environmental projects.

8.2 Recommendations for interventions

NZC could support Tartu in the collaboration with the Estonian cities involved in Mission Adaptation and in the further identification of support needs towards the national level, specifically focusing on barriers relevant to the development and implementation of the city's Climate City Contract. A closer collaboration at the national level on the two Missions could help creating closer links between Tartu's mitigation and adaptation work and could present a useful case study for other Mission Cities. This would also enable Tartu to share experiences from its Mission work with other Estonian cities. Further, NZC could support Tartu in the dialogues on the support needs and challenges with the national level.



9 Finland

9.1 Mission support structures in Finland

The **Finnish Cities Mission network** was set up through a bottom-up approach where the six Finnish cities selected for the Cities Mission, together with the three applicant cities, requested support from the national level in implementing the Mission and its objectives. As a response to the request of the cities, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment took on the role to coordinate the establishment of a national network in Finland. The ministry saw the need for an organised approach towards the implementation of the Cities Mission in Finland, involving both the national level and the cities. A national Mission expert group was created to support this work, consisting of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Transport and Communications, as well as an external expert.

The three ministries worked together on defining their role in supporting the implementation of the Cities Mission. One of the central outcomes was the launch of a tender by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in early 2023 for a co-development project to support the Finnish cities in their work to develop the Climate City Contracts (CCCs). The tender was won by the company SITOWISE, which has a contract until the end of 2023 to support to the cities in the development and implementation of their CCCs.

SITOWISE has supported the Finnish cities in identifying their challenges and support needs towards the national network as well as the bottlenecks that exist at the national level. The identified support needs include support in the development and implementation of the CCCs – mainly to address existing regulatory barriers and to discuss funding options, support with marketing and communication around the Mission towards Finnish stakeholders, and regular meetings between the cities to discuss practical issues such as citizen engagement, procurement guidance and cooperation with companies.

The Finnish Cities Mission network

Facilitator: The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is the actor convening and chairing the meetings of the Finnish Cities Mission network. The ministry is well-placed for this task as it is responsible for, among other things, energy policy, the coordination of the preparation and implementation of climate policy at national level, as well as innovation and technology policy.

Participating actors: The Finnish Cities Mission network is chaired by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, while also including the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The NetZeroCities project partners, including the Finnish Climate Neutral City Advisor, the CapaCITIES project partners¹ and Business Finland are also part of the network.

Participating cities: The six Mission Cities: Helsinki, Espoo, Turku, Tampere, Lappeenranta and Lahti, the three applicant cities: Vaasa, Joensuu and Vantaa, as well as Jyväskylä and Oulu are participating in the national network. The Mission Cities meet more often to collaborate on the development of their Climate City Contracts, whereas the other cities only participate in the official network meetings.

Support to cities: SITOWISE is supporting the Mission Cities in addressing different thematic issues as well as providing general input and feedback on their work. The national level has, so far, not committed to any specific support to the cities. However, the ministries have jointly outlined a model in which the Mission Cities are supported through established co-development and networking activities as well as the long-term national climate- and innovation policies and their support mechanisms.

¹ The NetZeroCities project partners are: VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and Demos Helsinki. The following institutions are Associated Partners to the CapaCITIES project: Ministry of Economic Affairs, Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, Aalto University Foundation, University of Vaasa and the Finnish Innovation Fund.



Links to regional and national processes: The involvement of the three ministries in the national network is strategic as they are responsible for areas that fall under the Cities Mission. The Ministry of Environment is responsible for the national climate and environmental policy, including the different climate plans, and circular economy. The Ministry for Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for the innovation ecosystem agreements that have been concluded between the government and 16 urban areas in Finland and the national R&I roadmap, while the Ministry of Transport and Communications is responsible for sustainable mobility and mobility innovation. However, there are no direct links between the Climate City Contracts and any national legislative requirements or processes.

Activities: The Finnish Cities Mission network organises approximately four meetings every year. The agenda for these meetings typically consists of updates from the NetZeroCities project and on the Climate City Contract process. The Finnish Mission Cities meet once per month to collaborate on issues related to the development of their CCCs. The focus of these meetings depends on the needs and wishes of the cities and previous meetings have, for example, addressed the investment plan as well as transport-related challenges.

Other support structures

Business Finland, which is the government organisation for innovation funding and trade, travel and investment promotion, is managing a new national programme called '[Decarbonized Cities](#)' which was launched in early 2023. The programme aims to function as a national support instrument to the Cities Mission, as it encourages companies to develop internationally successful solutions to the carbon-neutrality challenges of selected partner cities. It will run between 2023-2028 and Business Finland is planning to invest approximately €150 million of innovation funding through the Decarbonized Cities programme to create new business opportunities, innovation and long-term cooperation between selected cities, companies, R&D organisations and other stakeholders.

9.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

The Finnish Mission Cities are currently working on the development of their Climate City Contracts and are using the Finnish Cities Mission network as a forum to exchange information, learn from each other, and collectively tackle the challenges that arise in the process. The new government, which took office in June 2023, aims to co-sign the Climate City Contracts of the Finnish Mission Cities. However, the commitment of the government is not expected to be very explicit.

10 France

10.1 Mission support structures in France

A French [Mirror Group](#) for the Cities Mission, the New European Bauhaus, and the Driving Urban Transitions Partnership was established in 2021 by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion in France. This group was set up to support national stakeholders in achieving climate neutrality by 2030.

The Mirror Group organised a series of webinars to French cities interested in the Cities Mission already before the announcement of the 112 Mission Cities. After the announcement of the Mission Cities, several meetings have been held – both exclusively for the nine Mission Cities as well as with a wider group of cities.



The French Mirror Group

Facilitator: The Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion were chosen for the facilitator role due to their expertise in higher education, research, and ecological transition. The Ministry of Higher Education and Research is responsible for coordinating research and innovation policies in France, while the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion is responsible for promoting sustainable development and territorial cohesion. Together, they can bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table in supporting national stakeholders in achieving climate neutrality by 2030. Additionally, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research plays a crucial role in the implementation of Horizon Europe in France, as it is responsible for coordinating and funding research activities in France and ensuring that French researchers and innovators have access to the funding opportunities and networks provided by Horizon Europe.

The benefits of having these two ministries as coordinators and facilitators of the French Mirror Group are numerous. Firstly, their expertise of EU funding opportunities and initiatives, as well as their hands-on experience in promoting sustainable development can help the cities identify and promote innovative solutions for achieving climate neutrality. Secondly, their experience in promoting sustainable development can help the group ensure that the solutions proposed are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

Participating actors: In addition to the two ministries, several other actors are involved in the French Mirror Group: France Urbaine, France Ville Durable, the French Network of Urban Planning Agencies, regions, the National Energy Agency, the Centre for Studies and Expertise on Risks, the Centre for Environment, Mobility and Urban Planning, the University Gustave Eiffel, as well as other public agencies for urban and territorial transformations: the National Agency for the Cohesion of Territories, Plan, Urbanism, Construction, Architecture, and the National Association for Research and Technology.

Regions' role in the French Mirror Group is crucial, as they play a vital part in implementing policies and initiatives. The regional representatives are mainly involved in the Mirror Group's Axis 3, which focuses on supporting the territories. The regions are responsible for providing financial and regulatory support that goes beyond research and innovation. They are also involved in cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation, which is essential in ensuring that the policies and initiatives are integrated into local contexts. The regions could also participate as co-signatories of Climate City Contracts. Furthermore, the regions provide support to non-selected cities of the Cities Mission, ensuring that all the interested cities are included in the process of achieving climate neutrality.

Participating cities: The French Mirror Group includes both selected Mission Cities: Angers, Bordeaux, Dijon, Dunkerque, Grenoble Alpes-Métropole, Lyon, Marseille, Nantes and Paris, as well as other French cities committed to climate neutrality. The aim is to promote the successful implementation of the Mission and create synergies between national programmes and the Cities Mission, as well as between Mission Cities and other cities.

The Mirror Group organises various activities, some of which are open to all cities, while others are only open to the nine Mission Cities. The group has, for example, organised several meetings exclusively for the nine Mission Cities where they can share experiences and discuss common issues.

Support to cities: The Mirror Group is raising awareness of the Cities Mission and the work of the Mission Cities among key stakeholders in France that could provide technical and financial support to the cities. Further, it provides a forum for the cities to meet and exchange, while also setting a common agenda for the cities and assisting them in identifying their challenges and support needs. The national and regional levels have, so far, not committed to providing any specific support to the cities for achieving the Mission objectives.

Links to regional and national processes: The French Mirror Group is addressing the regional and national legislative requirements that link to the Climate City Contract process, such as the Energy, Air and Climate Territorial Plan (PCAET) and the Ecological Transition and Recovery Contracts (CRTE).

The PCAET is a territorial project for sustainable development that focuses on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to climate change, energy sobriety, air quality, and development



of renewable energies. This plan is established by cities and communities with over 20 000 inhabitants. The CRTE supports the territories with the ecological transition, territorial cohesion and economic recovery as cross-cutting themes by supporting the development of projects (engineering) and facilitating access to different sources of funding. These contracts cover almost the entire country and are consistent with the PCAET.

The French Mirror Group is working to ensure that the Climate City Contract process is aligned with the existing legislative requirements and contribute to the overall goals of sustainable cities. To address these issues, the French Mirror Group has organised discussions among the nine French Mission Cities and other stakeholders to find common indicators. Representatives from NetZeroCities, who have expertise in indicators, as well as experts of the PCAET and CRTE have been invited to these discussions. The main goal is to simplify the indicators and obtain around ten key indicators, which could be used as a basis for the indicators of the nine Mission Cities. These could also be supplemented by indicators linked to the Covenant of Mayors' scoreboard, as well as the CRTE monitoring indicators. This approach aims to create a common methodological framework for French cities to work together towards Climate City Contract implementation and create synergies with other regional and national legislative processes.

Activities: The French Mirror Group meets every two months to discuss the Climate City Contract progress and any issues related to this work, present updates from the NetZeroCities project, and discuss other identified challenges or topics. The agenda for these meetings is set by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. In addition to these regular meetings, workshops on different issues have been organised, for example around the establishment of common indicators.

10.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

The French Mission Cities are working on developing their Climate City Contracts and are using the French Mirror Group as a forum to exchange knowledge and ideas and to address common challenges. Simultaneously, the French Mirror Group is continuing the coordination of the work to identify a common set of indicators for the nine French Mission Cities to support public policies and create synergies between different existing processes. The goal is to establish a fundamental set of shared indicators to simplify and harmonise the climate reporting of cities. The stakeholders involved in this work are the French Environment and Energy Management Agency, the Center for Studies and Expertise on Risks, Environment, Mobility and Urban Planning, the Network of Rural and Peri-urban Local Authorities for Energy and Environment, as well as the Federation of Air Quality Associations.

The French Mission Cities have also raised the issue of regulatory barriers and would like to organise policy-focused discussions and exchanges around policy and legislative barriers within the Mirror Group. This is a topic that may be picked up by the Mirror Group in the near future.

11 Germany

11.1 Mission support structures in Germany

The Mission support structures in Germany were established through a bottom-up approach, on the request of the German Mission Cities that first set up an informal collaboration between themselves and then reached out to the national level to initiate a dialogue on the support required for the implementation of the Cities Mission. As a response to this request, the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building took on the leading role in the establishment and coordination of the German national platform. Since then, the Mission support structures became more institutionalised. In its current



form, it includes representatives from across different levels of government as well as different types of institutions and organisations, who meet at both formal meetings taking place on a regular basis as well as stay in touch through regular informal communication.

National Cities Mission platform in Germany

Facilitator: The Mission support structures in Germany are facilitated by the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building.

Participating actors: The national platform in Germany is currently operating around two formalised structures:

A **Group of German Mission Cities** that meets on a regular basis. The group has elected two spokespersons to represent the Mission Cities in the Steering Board.

A **Steering Board** that was created as a formal exchange forum between different stakeholders, including representatives from two federal ministries – the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, representatives from other relevant federal ministries such as the Ministry for Digital and Transport, the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate and the Ministry of Finance, German Cities Association, the Federal Institute for Research on Urban Development, two Mission City representatives, and representatives of the regional ministries.

Participating cities: The national platform currently includes the German Mission Cities: Dortmund, Leipzig, Dresden, Munich, Heidelberg, Mannheim, Frankfurt am Main, Aachen and Münster. However, there is an ambition to also engage with the non-Mission Cities that are advanced in their work towards climate neutrality. The German Cities Association might be of help in bringing in more cities, considering their wide platform of members.

Support to cities: The Steering Board is still in the process of identifying the best possible ways of providing support to the German Mission Cities. So far, it mostly focuses on mobilising sector-specific expertise to support cities with concrete challenges they want to address. The national ministries made it clear that they cannot favour the Mission Cities over other municipalities through providing any dedicated support.

Activities: The Group of the German Mission Cities meets every two weeks to discuss key challenges related to the Cities Mission as well as to formulate a common vision and standpoint vis-a-vis the regional and national governments. On request of the Steering Board, the cities have prepared a working paper to present the key challenges and opportunities that need national and regional governance level support. The group has two spokespersons representing cities in the Steering Board.

The Steering Board meets twice a year. Its current focus is on mobilising expertise from different sectors, like mobility, buildings, energy, and facilitating sector-specific work and exchange to help cities address specific challenges that they face.

In addition to the above, the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building convenes the cities during the annual Federal Urban Development Policy conference, connects to other initiatives and plans thematic exchanges with city practitioners and experts.

11.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

One of the recent developments came from the [Association of German Cities](#) (Deutscher Städtetag) that proposed to hold bi-weekly meetings of *Umweltdezernenten*, who are the political representatives in cities, such as elected deputy majors or city councillors. The association plays a relevant role as an intermediary between the local and the regional and national level. The possible goal might be to use the German Smart Cities Programme as a blueprint to organise activities around the Cities Mission at the national level or to merge these two initiatives.



12 Greece

12.1 Mission support structures in Greece

In June 2023, the Greek national platform **Climanet**, also known as the Network of Municipalities for Climate Neutrality, was established as a formalised and legal entity. Its primary purpose is to provide support to the Mission Cities in Greece - Athens, Ioannina, Kalamata, Kozani, Trikala and Thessaloniki, as well as Limassol in Cyprus.

The inception of Climanet began with a collaborative effort between the six Greek Mission Cities, the Greek Ministry of Environment, the Association of Mayors of Greece, and members of the Mission Board of the Cities Mission. The former Mayor of Trikala and President of the Greek Association of Mayors played a key role in initiating this process. With continuous support from the national government, Climanet has been established as a non-profit entity capable of receiving and distributing funds to the Mission Cities.

One of the key recommendations of the workshop, organised as part of the Support Needs Assessment Process together with the NZC City Advisors, other NZC specialists and the six Greek Mission Cities in March 2023, was the establishment of a Mission Cities support network/body. The establishment of the national platform drew inspiration from similar initiatives in Spain, Sweden and the UK, aiming to replicate elements of shared learning and advocacy. Prior to the formation of Climanet, the six Greek Mission Cities had already formed an informal group, which was utilised to access a 'Green Fund' provided by the Ministry of Environment as direct financial support for the development of their Climate City Contracts.

As Climanet operates as a separate legal entity, staffing and logistics are currently being defined and formalised. The plan is to include representatives from both the cities and the national government in its organisational structure, although the exact details are still under development. Given the recent national elections in June 2023, the finalisation of this process is expected to take place during the third quarter of 2023.

Climanet

Facilitator: A facilitator has not formally been appointed. Climanet's governance structure is still to be defined.

Participating actors: The Ministry of Environment of Greece, the Association of Mayors of Greece and the members of the Mission Board of the Cities Mission are participating in the activities of Climanet.

Participating cities: The Greek Mission Cities: Athens, Ioannina, Kalamata, Kozani, Thessaloniki, Trikala, as well as the Cypriot Mission City Limassol are participating in Climanet.

Activities: Climanet's main objective is to create a network of cities that can share resources and collaboratively address issues related to climate neutrality. Its scope extends to facilitate learning and knowledge exchange between cities, advocating for the Mission Cities at the national level, motivate the national government and ministries to take the lead in achieving climate goals, and attract investment to provide direct funding to the cities. The platform also intends to focus on activities that assist cities in building capacity, such as organising joint discussions on policy challenges faced by the cities. Initial areas of focus include regional-level energy upgrades, procurements and mobility transformation.

12.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

As Climanet continues to solidify its role as a crucial support system for the Mission Cities in Greece, the platform is ready to embark on its next steps. Climanet wants to establish itself as a one-stop shop



for cities to access grants and tailored solutions. By providing a transparent and comprehensive source of information, Climanet can streamline the grant application process and assist cities in accessing available funding opportunities. Climanet seeks to replicate the best practices of 3CI, a UK-based partnership of local authorities, cities, and financing stakeholders working towards achieving net zero emissions. The platform has already facilitated exchanges between the Greek platform and their British counterparts. Additionally, Climanet is planning to actively work towards unlocking structural funds for the Mission Cities. This involves collaborating with relevant stakeholders and guiding cities through the application process. By leveraging the potential of structural funds, Climanet can secure substantial financial resources for the cities' climate projects.

The goal of Climanet is to create a robust network of cities that can support, collaborate and push each other towards achieving climate neutrality. Climanet will foster an environment of learning and exchange, facilitating the sharing of best practices, innovative ideas, and successful strategies among the Mission Cities and other Greek cities. While the platform initially focuses on the Mission Cities, there is potential for future expansion to include other Greek cities. As Climanet establishes itself and demonstrates its value, it can explore partnerships and collaborations with additional cities across Greece, broadening its network and impact.

Simultaneously, the platform aims to serve as a strong advocate for the Mission Cities at the national level. This involves engaging with the national government and ministries, urging them to take on leadership roles and prioritise climate action. Climanet can effectively represent the needs and demands of the cities, ensuring their voices are heard in policymaking and decision-making processes. To support this work, each Mission City will provide Climanet with a 'portfolio of demands' outlining their specific requirements and priorities. Climanet can collate these demands and use them as a basis for further advocacy efforts, strategic planning and resource allocation. Ongoing discussions with the national government include:

- Prioritise the acceleration of energy renovation for buildings to better support the mission.
- Update the energy grid, as it currently lacks the capacity to accommodate the energy generated from photovoltaic sources and explore solutions such as integrating battery storage systems.

By implementing these next steps and engaging in ongoing discussions, Climanet can effectively support the Mission Cities, advocate for their needs, and drive meaningful progress towards climate neutrality in Greece.

13 Hungary

13.1 Mission support structures in Hungary

There are currently no national support structures dedicated to climate-neutral cities and the Cities Mission in Hungary. Collaboration between the Hungarian cities on climate-related issues has slowly started developing but is not formalised or coordinated. The three Mission Cities - Budapest, Pecs and Miskolc, have an ongoing dialogue around the Mission, and the other Hungarian cities that applied to the Mission have also been invited to some initial dialogues.

Some national associations such as the [National Association of Local Governments](#), the [Association of Hungarian Local Governments](#) and the [Association of County-Centre Rights Municipalities](#) support municipal interests towards the national government and facilitate information flow between the different governance levels, albeit without a climate focus. The only thematic municipal association focused on climate is the [Association of Climate Friendly Municipalities](#), which is coordinated by Budapest-XII District Municipality. The association coordinates projects aiming at awareness raising, networking and assisting the preparations of Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans, as well as organises



workshops, webinars and conferences. They actively promoted the Cities Mission and helped mobilise municipalities to apply for the Mission.

The City of Budapest is arranging the Budapest Forum - a series of conferences dedicated to local democracy and wants to establish itself as a pro-democratic Central Eastern European platform. The 2022 edition was dedicated to the energy crisis and climate cooperation between the 25 Mission Cities from Central and Eastern European Countries. The aim is to formalise a cooperation platform that highlights the regional specificities of these cities and promote their collaboration to better coordinate the implementation of the Mission.

The national government currently supports cities' climate-related investments mainly through calls from Operational Programmes, especially the Environment and Energy Efficiency Plus Operative Programme. Furthermore, almost half of the efforts planned under the Recovery and Resilience Plan of Hungary aims at accelerating climate transition. The Hungarian Government also provides financial support for the country's contributions in climate-related projects supported by direct EU funding programmes.

13.2 Recommendations for interventions

NZC should support the Hungarian cities in creating a formalised collaboration, with the aim to build on and strengthen the existing links between the Mission Cities and non-Mission Cities. A recommendation for this would be to collaborate with existing initiatives, such as the Association of Climate Friendly Municipalities and the [CapaCITIES](#) project, to create a stronger ground when approaching and creating a dialogue with the national and regional authorities. In collaboration with the Hungarian partners in CapaCITIES, the cities' challenges and support needs towards the national level should be identified and possible ways forward should be discussed and mapped out.

14 Ireland

14.1 Mission support structures in Ireland

Ireland does not have an official national platform formed to support the two Irish Mission Cities, Dublin and Cork. However, the two cities have informally been collaborating and meeting regularly to support mutual progress on the Climate City Contract process. There is no facilitating team as the two Mission Cities collaborate in a self-organised format.

Climate action at regional and local level is coordinated by the national network of four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs)². Initially, the CAROs were established to support climate adaptation actions, including the preparation and delivery of Local Authority Adaptation Strategies. However, their climate-related areas have been expanding, now covering climate adaptation, mitigation, citizen engagement, education and training, knowledge development and office management, to remain closely aligned with national climate policies and the Local Authority Climate Action Charter. In Ireland, the Local Authority Climate Action Plans are a statutory requirement from national level, supporting the national commitment to have a Climate Action Plan published by February 2024. However, the CAROs do not have a wider remit and are not directly supporting the Mission work in Cork and Dublin.

² Dublin Metropolitan CARO: 4 - Dublin City Council and the Local Authorities of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin ; Atlantic Seaboard South CARO: 5 - Local Authorities of Clare, Limerick, Kerry, Cork City and Cork County ; Atlantic Seaboard North CARO: 5 - Local Authorities of Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Galway County and Galway City ; Eastern & Midlands CARO: 17 - Local Authorities of Carlow, Cavan, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow.



The national level supports indirectly the two Mission Cities through policy objectives on smart and digital cities, health, regional planning, etc. The level and type of support is dependent on the city-specific arrangements around these policy agendas.

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications has just begun to be involved with the Mission work, which will bring the work of Cork and Dublin together with the national climate objectives. As part of this work, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications has engaged with several members of the NZC consortium to better understand how similar structures are operating in a range of EU Member States. However, it is unsure whether the Climate Action Regional Offices will convene the two Mission Cities at this stage.

14.2 Recommendations for interventions

With the emerging interest from the Irish national level to align the national climate requirements with the work of the Cities Mission, NZC could support this process by providing expertise on the CCC process. Further, NZC could support the Irish Mission Cities in identifying their support needs towards the national level as well as any existing barriers to the development of their CCCs, while also sharing best practices on national support structures in other Member States with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

15 Italy

15.1 Mission support structures in Italy

Italy does not currently have an official national platform formed to support the implementation of the Cities Mission. However, the nine Italian Mission cities: Bergamo, Bologna, Firenze, Milano, Padova, Parma, Prato, Roma, Torino, have informally been coordinating their Mission work. They applied together and were selected for the NZC Call for Pilots, to experiment with new forms of governance within the nine cities. They are also meeting regularly to share progress and discuss common issues.

There is no actor officially facilitating the activities of the Italian Mission Cities. The work is promoted among the cities themselves and led by the Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Bologna, who previously acted as a member of the Mission Board of the Cities Mission. The cities take advantage of existing conferences to meet in-person. In March 2023, the Cities Forum conference organised in Torino by the municipality in collaboration with the EU Commission provided a good occasion for the Italian cities to meet. The cities have also jointly undertaken the Support Needs Assessment Process through a workshop with the NZC City Advisors and specialists from the NZC consortium. Other representatives of the public sector and European projects are also invited to the Italian cities' meetings, especially if their work is relevant to the Cities Mission and if they are able to provide support to the cities for their Mission work. For example, in their last meeting, a representative from the CapaCITIES project presented the project's progress and how it can support the cities.

The cities have on several occasions reached out to the national government. In June 2022, they managed to reach a protocolary agreement of support with the Ministry of Infrastructure. However, because of the change of government after the elections in September 2022, the cities started to look for alternative ways to get the national government's commitment. In April 2023, the cities met with the Minister of the Environment and Energy Security. The discussion was fruitful and supportive, although not directly oriented to the Cities Mission. The cities have also attempted to collaborate with the Ministry of Research and Education, as the Cities Mission and Horizon Europe programmes fall under the responsibility of this Ministry.



15.2 Recommendations for interventions

NZC could support the establishment of a closer collaboration between the nine Mission Cities and the Italian cities that were not selected for the Cities Mission cities, which include more than 30 cities. Such a multi-city collaboration structure, which spans a larger part of the country, would enable the cities to approach the national level with a unified voice and bring more weight to their requests. The collaboration would also enable a closer involvement of the non-Mission Cities in the climate neutrality work.

The cities would also need to jointly identify their support needs and challenges towards the national level. The Italian Mission Cities would, for example, need resources to manage and facilitate their collaborative work, which currently is done on a voluntary basis. In addition to these, more structural challenges and needs should also be mapped out, such as legislative, financial and knowledge-related barriers. The role of the regional level and the potential support that the regions could provide should also be explored.

16 Latvia

16.1 Mission support structures in Latvia

The two Latvian Mission Cities - Riga and Liepaja, have since the announcement of the selected Mission Cities organised meetings to discuss collaboration opportunities within the frame of the Cities Mission. The two cities have contacted five ministries: the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Climate and Energy, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Regional Development and Environmental Protection, to request support for the implementation of the Mission, its objectives and expected outcomes. The discussion with the national level is still ongoing, however, there are indications that the establishment of a national mission expert group formulated by the ministries could take place in the last quarter of 2023.

In 2023, representatives of the Ministry of Climate and Energy visited the two Mission Cities to discuss the Climate City Contracts and specific initiatives that each city has planned. However, the visits did not result in any concrete outcomes and no follow-up actions have been undertaken. The Ministry of Climate and Energy has also set up a capacity-building programme for 192 public sector employees that need education in the topics of climate change and energy efficiency.

Finally, four smaller Latvian cities that are actively following the activities of the Cities Mission have announced their interest in joining the activities of the Mission.

16.2 Recommendations for interventions

The Latvian Mission Cities have already initiated discussions with the relevant ministries and the national level seems to be, to some extent, acting on the requests of the cities. The role of NetZeroCities could therefore be to support the Mission Cities in their discussions with the national level, with a focus on presenting the concrete challenges and support needs of the cities to the relevant ministries. Simultaneously, it would be important to also include other Latvian cities interested in the Mission in the collaboration activities to promote knowledge sharing and learning opportunities.



17 Lithuania

17.1 Mission support structures in Lithuania

The two Lithuanian Mission Cities - Taurage and Vilnius, collaborate on the Cities Mission through semi-formal, self-organised networks that have been set up through a bottom-up approach. The national level has so far not provided any support for the creation of a national support platform for the Mission Cities. The two Mission Cities have expressed three overarching areas in which support from the national government would be needed: finance, policy and knowledge exchange.

An informal Cities Mission group has been set up, which is composed of the two Mission Cities, the Research Council of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Mission Board member and the Coordinator of the Green Municipalities Network. The group is responsible for finding ways to implement the Mission objectives, while it also organises conferences and events related to the broader topics of climate-neutrality, including the Cities Mission.

Another form of collaboration takes place within the semi-formal [Green Municipalities Network](#), coordinated voluntarily by a representative from the Lithuanian Energy Institute. While not an official organisation, the network comprises around 20 Lithuanian municipalities, including the two Mission Cities, that collaborate on topics related to climate neutrality. The network could become a more prominent platform for climate collaboration between the Lithuanian cities and the national level. However, this would require financial support to hire network coordinators and the involvement of the national level in the activities of the network, to enable information exchanges and the addressing of policy gaps.

A collaboration between Taurage and the Ministry of Environment has recently been established, as it is envisaged that Taurage will receive financial support from the ministry to draft its Climate City Contract (CCC)³. This support links to a goal in the national government's programme, which states that one municipality in Lithuania should become climate-neutral by 2030. The financial support to Taurage is considered as a pilot for collaboration between a Lithuanian Mission City and the national level.

The wish is for the Ministry of Environment to further support the CCC process by providing support to address policy barriers and funding needs, while also co-signing the CCCs of the two Lithuanian Mission Cities. The Mission Cities would also need national level support to address gaps in local knowledge and expertise, necessary for the successful development of their CCCs and for achieving climate neutrality.

17.2 Recommendations for interventions

The two Lithuanian Mission Cities collaborate within the frame of self-organised initiatives, but the country lacks an official national platform to support the Mission work. However, the two Mission Cities would prefer a national platform that coordinates the broader climate-neutrality work of the Green Municipalities Network, rather than a platform focusing solely on the Cities Mission. Additionally, the cities have expressed needs for further political, financial and technical support from the national level to develop their CCCs, including support in addressing existing knowledge gaps within their municipalities and national policy gaps.

The role of NZC should be to assist the Mission Cities in their dialogue with the national level to gather support for the formal establishment of a support platform for cities focusing on climate neutrality, as well as support to the Mission Cities for the development of their CCCs. The Mission Cities have already

³ By the time this information was collected, Taurage had not yet signed the contract for financial support for their CCC process with the Ministry of Environment.



largely identified their support needs, meaning that the focus of NZC should be to assist the cities in creating an understanding of the importance of the Mission on the national level.

18 Luxembourg

18.1 Mission support structures in Luxembourg

The City of Differdange is the only Mission City from Luxembourg. One of the most significant challenges to the implementation of the Cities Mission in Differdange is the lack of political support from the national level, as the city would need financial and technical support in areas relevant to achieving climate neutrality. As a small country, the collaboration with the relevant national ministries would be important taking in consideration that many procedures are led by the national level.

Differdange contacted informally the Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning and two meetings were organised in April and May 2023. Further meetings are planned to discuss Differdange's climate neutrality work within the context of the Cities Mission and to motivate additional cities in Luxembourg to accelerate their climate neutrality work. So far, no concrete actions have been implemented as a result of these meetings.

Differdange is not actively collaborating on climate action with other cities in Luxembourg. It was the only city from Luxembourg to submit an expression of interest to be part of the Cities Mission. However, additional cities have since then informally expressed an interest to participate in the Mission work. Differdange is participating in several national clusters such as the [Climate Pact](#), the [Nature Pact](#), [Pacte Logement](#) and [ProSUD](#). Furthermore, the city has organised meetings with the Region of Minett to discuss climate neutrality.

18.2 Recommendations for interventions

NZC should support Differdange in identifying the city's support needs towards the national level, as well as in liaising and creating a collaboration with other Luxembourgish cities around climate action. Such a multi-city collaboration would enable the cities to exchange knowledge and lessons learned, and any requests towards the national level would have a greater impact. Facilitation support in the discussions between Differdange and the relevant national ministries would also benefit the development of the city's Climate City Contract. More prominent support by the EU level would also help in highlighting the importance of the Cities Mission towards the national level.

19 Malta

19.1 Mission support structures in Malta

The city of Rabat on the island of Gozo is the only Mission City from Malta, with the Gozo Regional Development Authority as the implementing actor of the Mission in Gozo. The greatest barrier to the implementation of the Cities Mission in Rabat and Gozo so far has been the lack of political leadership, as the Gozo Regional Development Authority lacks political powers and competencies in areas relevant to achieving climate neutrality. As a small country, many processes in Malta are steered by the national



level, making it important for Rabat to collaborate with and receive support from the relevant national ministries.

The Ministry of Gozo, which is one of the ministries of the national government, has a vital role in representing the interests and needs of Gozo on the national level and influencing national policies in this direction. The Ministry of Gozo has organised some meetings with the Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Enterprise to discuss Rabat and Gozo's climate neutrality work within the frame of the Cities Mission, but no concrete actions have been undertaken as a result of these meetings.

Rabat is not actively collaborating with other Maltese cities on climate action and was the only city from Malta submitting an expression of interest to be part of the Cities Mission.

19.2 Recommendations for interventions

As a first step, NZC should support Rabat in defining the support needs towards the national level and facilitate discussions between Rabat/Goza and the relevant national ministries to bring these support needs to their attention. Simultaneously, it would be useful for Rabat to initiate a climate collaboration with other Maltese cities to exchange knowledge and experiences while also inspiring more cities to accelerate their climate neutrality work. Bringing several cities' voices together may also have a greater impact when approaching the national level. NZC should also look to facilitate climate collaboration between the Maltese cities.

20 Netherlands

20.1 Mission support structures in the Netherlands

The Dutch Mission Cities: Amsterdam, Eindhoven & Helmond, Groningen, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, and the Dutch cities applying for the Cities Mission: Amstelveen, Haarlem, Leeuwarden, Leiden and Zwolle, were during 2022 actively promoting the set-up of a national support structure for the Cities Mission in the Netherlands by engaging in discussions with the relevant ministries at the national level. In addition to the cities, as of 2023, these discussions have now included commitment of participation from the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy as well as representatives of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, the Association of Provinces, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and the Dutch Urban Envoy, which is based in the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations. The meetings focused on discussions around cities' challenges and needs as well as the need for collaboration. Changes in policy and regulatory frameworks has been identified as the key need that cities have vis-a-vis the government, alongside support in navigating investment options.

Between July and November 2022, the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research and Dark Matter Laboratories were contracted by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of Netherlands to conduct a scoping study, which included discussions with a broad range of Dutch stakeholders around the set-up of a National Support Structure (NSS). The study focused on four key topics: governance, agenda, activities and coordination, and presented three scenarios for the set-up of the NSS.

In March 2023, a first meeting of the Dutch National Support Structure for the Cities Mission was organised. The establishment of the NSS was feasible due to greater alignment between the relevant ministries, in which the Dutch Urban Envoy has played a crucial role as she has mobilised support for the NSS within the various ministries. To advocate on behalf of the cities, the Urban Envoy met with the Mission Cities and key stakeholders to discuss the support needs that should be raised with the national



level. The findings will be compiled into a comprehensive set of needs and will form the base for future discussions within the NSS.

The Dutch Mission Cities have a long-standing history of collaboration. The 'G4 cities': Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague have for several years collaborated on several issues. With the Cities Mission, the G4 cities have expanded to now also include Eindhoven-Helmond and Groningen, enabling the establishment of the G6 cities. The G6 cities have biweekly meetings to discuss the progress of the Mission, which are fully bottom-up driven by the cities. This ongoing collaboration of the G6 cities will be amplified within the frame of the NSS.

The Dutch National Support Structure

Facilitator: The Netherlands Enterprise Agency is acting as the coordinator of the Dutch National Support Structure.

Participating actors: In addition to the Dutch Mission Cities and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency, the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management have committed to be part of the NSS. The Association of Netherlands Municipalities is also part of the NSS to enhance the sharing of knowledge and experiences to additional Dutch municipalities.

Participating cities: The NSS will primarily focus on the seven Dutch Mission Cities as the core group, due to the commitment these cities have under the Cities Mission. However, the objective of the NSS is to also make the knowledge available to other Dutch cities through regular information exchanges, and to formally involve them in the NSS at a later stage.

Activities: The activities and agenda of the NSS are still being developed and, currently, only sporadic meetings are being organised based on the cities' needs. The plan is that different activities will be organised for the different groups of cities: the seven Mission Cities, the five cities that applied to be part of the Cities Mission, and other interested Dutch cities.

20.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

The Dutch National Support Structure is not yet fully formalised, and work is ongoing to set up the structures, activities and agenda of the collaboration. Planned activities are expected to cover peer-to-peer learning activities, communities of practice and deep dive on thematic areas. An important question to address is how the NSS can enhance cities' efforts and advocacy of the Mission on the national level, as collaboration and discussions between cities as well as between cities and the national level are taking place via other channels. The Dutch Climate City Contracts will most likely shed some light on the cities' concrete needs towards the national level, which in turn will make the work within the NSS more concrete.

21 Poland

21.1 Mission support structures in Poland

Cities Mission support structures are slowly emerging in Poland. At their heart, there is an informal alliance of five Polish Mission Cities that push for more exchange and cooperation around the Mission with the regional and national authorities. The development of the support structure is also supported by the Horizon Europe [CapaCITIES](#) project that collaborates directly with the facilitators of the emerging national platform.



Facilitator: The Institute of Environmental Protection - National Research Institute and the Warsaw University of Technology are the national partners in the CapaCITIES project and are currently facilitating the development of the national platform for climate-neutral cities in Poland. They manage the meetings of the **Ad hoc Working Group of Polish Mission Cities** and strive to create a 'mirror group' at the ministerial level - Ad hoc Working Group of National Ministries. They are also the organisers of the national event scheduled for December 2023, which aims to present the outcomes of the work done by cities in the Ad hoc Working Group of Polish Mission Cities as well as bring representatives from cities, regions and national ministries together. The national event will also be an excellent opportunity to promote the Cities Mission among various stakeholders in Poland.

Participating actors: Three Polish ministries have so far informally participated in the activities, which is a good start for building dedicated support for climate-neutral cities. The Ministry of Climate and Environment is responsible for the development of the national climate policy and regulations, as well as preservation and restoration of natural resources. The Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy is responsible for managing and implementing European Funds and coordinating sustainable and even development of regions. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education structures policies around science and higher education, as well as is responsible for the implementation of EU programmes and funds. Additionally, the representatives of the National Centre for Research and Development are engaged in the dialogue with cities. The national and regional levels have, so far, not committed to providing any specific support to the cities for achieving the Mission objectives.

Participating cities: At the heart of the Mission support structures in Poland, there is an informal alliance of five Polish Mission Cities that includes Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, Łódź and Rzeszów. After being accepted for the Cities Mission, the Transition Teams from the five cities decided to communicate with each other on a regular basis regarding Mission-related issues. The goal was not only to learn from one another and exchange knowledge, but also to form a united front and develop a common agenda when interacting with the national government.

Support to cities: The facilitators of the emerging platform help cities stay in touch and exchange on a regular basis to define common challenges, needs and requests towards the regional and national governments. They also support cities in organising direct meetings with the national government. The facilitators strive to create more formalised communication channels around the Cities Mission at the local, regional and national levels, and facilitate a dialogue between them. They also plan to secure support of local experts for cities working on their Climate City Contracts (CCCs).

Activities: A space for regular exchange between cities has been set up in the form of an Ad hoc Working Group of Polish Mission Cities and is managed by the facilitators of the emerging national platform. Two meetings between the cities and national ministries, including representatives from the Ministry of Climate and Environment, the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the National Centre for Research and Development, have taken place in February and April 2023. At the meetings, cities requested the ministries to provide them with concrete support measures and create enabling conditions for cities to implement the Mission and achieve climate neutrality by 2030, for example, by building stronger relations with regional governments, especially Marshal Offices. Additionally, the platform facilitators initiated a dialogue with ministries to help them set up an **Ad hoc Working Group of National Ministries**. This process is still ongoing. The facilitators also plan to set up a group of experts that would support cities in creating and implementing their CCCs. The experts in the group are researchers from different faculties of the Warsaw University of Technology, working in sectors such as energy, energy efficiency in building construction, air quality, circular economy, spatial planning, green infrastructure and smart city. Transportation, public communication, and engagement, as well as financial experts, are to be invited in the near future. The expert consultation meetings on cities' solutions designed for the CCC purposes will be organised in September 2023. Finally, the facilitators are preparing for the national event scheduled for December 2023. The aim of this event is to bring together stakeholders from across different levels of government and different sectors and discuss concrete ways of providing dedicated support for cities to help them achieve their climate neutrality mission. All these activities aim at building a roadmap for the development of the Polish national platform.



21.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

The emerging Cities Mission support structures in Poland are so far very much based on informal alliances and dialogues. It would be desirable to turn these into proper structures with clear roles and mandates, as well as to make the regular dialogue between cities, regions and national ministries a new normal. To this end, the capacities of the national platform facilitators should be strengthened to ensure the efficient coordination of the entire process. NZC could support this process by collaborating closely with the Polish CapaCITIES partners to formalise the emerging structures.

22 Portugal

22.1 Mission support structures in Portugal

The three Portuguese Mission Cities: Lisbon, Porto and Guimarães have been collaborating closely and are now creating a cities' network to share experience, know-how and learnings in their work to achieve the goals of the Cities Mission. Other interested cities are also being invited to participate in the network.

Meanwhile, the National Agency for Innovation is creating a 'Mission Hub Policy Group', involving all the relevant public organisations within the ministries that deal with policy instruments that support the country and the cities to become climate-neutral. Policy areas to be included are environment and climate action, energy, mobility, territory, innovation, and research and development. These two structures – the cities' network and the Mission Hub Policy Group - will collaborate to help implement the Cities Mission's objectives in Portugal.

The Portuguese Mission Cities have also looked at how other countries, especially their neighbouring country Spain, have put national support platforms in place. Inspired by this, they have approached the national level to initiate a dialogue on how Portugal could set up a similar support structure for the implementation of the Mission. However, there are currently no known plans for the set-up of such a platform.

Portugal has national financing instruments in place that support the Mission objectives. The Ministry for Environment and Climate Action is the national level body mandated to assure financial instruments, via the [Environmental Fund](#). The fund also manages the National Recovery and Resilience Plan concerning energy efficiency in buildings, hydrogen and renewables and sustainable mobility. From 2020, there is a national financing programme in place - the 'National Investment Program 2030'. The programme may co-finance large structuring projects, including mobility, environment and energy.

22.2 Recommendations for interventions

In Portugal there is already a strong, however not yet formalised, network between the three mission cities. It is created and coordinated by the cities themselves. The purpose of the network is to share experience and learnings on how to achieve the goals of the Cities Mission. Other interested Portuguese cities are also invited to participate in the network.

NZC should support the cities to keep building on and strengthening their own network. A recommendation is also to encourage cities to participate in other European networks and activities together with other EU-cities such as [CapaCITIES](#), the support action dedicated for national and regional authorities to advance their governance structures and strengthen dedicated support for cities.



23 Romania

23.1 Mission support structures in Romania

Romania is a core country in the [CapaCITIES](#) project. The three Mission Cities, Bucharest – District 2, Cluj-Napoca and Suceava work together in different Romanian city networks and associations.

Six Romanian ministries are currently working on a Memorandum of Understanding for setting up a Coordination Committee to operationalise the M100 - **Mirror Mission National Hub**, to support the Romanian cities that are part of the Cities Mission as well as other Romania cities to accelerate their climate neutrality work. The six ministries are: the Ministry of Investments and European Projects, the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalisation, the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration, the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Energy.

The objective of the Mirror Mission National Hub is to support the cities in accelerating climate neutrality and finding ways to finance the projects described in the cities' Investment Plans. It is expected that the hub will be established towards the end of 2023. Details on how the hub will assist Romanian Mission Cities will be forthcoming once the hub is established and has held an initial round of meetings.

23.2 Recommendations for interventions

The development of national support structures for the Cities Mission in Romania is progressing with the establishment of the Mirror Mission National Hub. It will be important to clarify the nature of the support that will be provided to Mission Cities in addition to the wider group of cities that will be supported through the hub. NZC could collaborate with the Romanian CapaCITIES partners to identify the support needs of the Mission Cities towards the hub and the national level.

24 Slovakia

24.1 Mission support structures in Slovakia

The process of setting up support structures for the Cities Mission in Slovakia is still ongoing. The two Slovak Mission Cities, Bratislava and Košice, have flagged the need for more collaboration across different levels of government. A key challenge in building a national support platform, is the lack of clarity on the entity in charge of coordinating climate neutrality efforts and the Cities Mission at the national level.

Slovakia participates in the [CapaCITIES](#) project that supports the development of Mission support structures in participating countries. The Slovak national partners in the project are the University of Žilina and the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, who both try to facilitate conversations and create links between stakeholders at different governance levels. The partners have so far identified institutions and organisations that are relevant for better coordination of the Cities Mission in the country. These include:

- The Ministry of Environment, which is responsible for climate laws (national adaptation and mitigation strategies) and the Fit for 55 legislations.
- The Ministry of Economy, which updates the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021-2030.



- The Union of Towns and Cities, which is an umbrella organisation for member cities, focusing on practical approaches for the climate agenda and supports activities and areas that cities can realistically address and influence under the current conditions.
- The Climate Coalition, which is a platform of environmental organisations supporting the whole spectrum of the climate crisis agenda.
- The Interest Association of Cities and Municipalities for Sustainable Energy Efficiency.

As part of the CapaCITIES project, the Slovak partners want to organise dedicated support for both the Mission and non-Mission cities in such areas as energy and the establishment of energy communities, renovation of buildings, transportation, and collaboration with residents. They plan to do so through concrete pilot projects in cities.

24.2 Recommendations for interventions

Support by the NZC project in communicating and promoting the Cities Mission in Slovakia could be a good starting point for a closer collaboration between the Slovak Mission Cities and the national level. NZC should collaborate closely with the Slovak CapaCITIES partners to bring political attention to the Cities Mission on the national level, and to support collaboration and dialogues between the different governance levels. Additionally, NZC could support the Slovak Mission Cities in identifying their support needs towards the national level.

25 Slovenia

25.1 Mission support structures in Slovenia

Although there are no official support structures set up in Slovenia for the Mission Cities of Ljubljana, Velenje and Kranj, two different informal initiatives have provided support to Slovenian cities in connection to the Cities Mission.

Initially, a task group was created amongst the Slovenian cities that expressed an interest to participate in the Cities Mission. The aim of the task group was to facilitate information exchange between the cities and discuss the requirements of the call. The Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia and the Municipality of Kranj facilitated various meetings of the task group and have also coordinated meetings with the national government and the Mission Manager as well as with various other experts. This led to the submission of expressions of interest by eight Slovenian cities, with three cities - Ljubljana, Velenje and Kranj, eventually being selected as Mission Cities.

After the selection of the Mission Cities, the Strategic Research and Innovation Partnership for the Smart Cities and Communities – Jožef Stefan Institute has been facilitating various workshops to kick-start the implementation of the Cities Mission in Slovenia. A total of four workshops were planned, two of which happened in May and October 2022 respectively. The first workshop was targeted towards ministries, local authorities and the public, and provided an overview of what the Cities Mission is about and what it intends to achieve. The second workshop addressed the challenges of the Mission Cities and the required cooperation with national Ministries. With regards to the other two workshops that were initially planned, it is yet to be seen whether these will be organised.

Despite the absence of a formal structure, the Mission Cities have a strong collaboration ongoing, aided by the presence 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. There has been an active effort to break



silos amongst and within the city administrations and so far, it appears to be yielding positive results. The collaborative spirit is also showcased in the joint NZC pilot project that the Mission Cities are working on together: *Up-Scale Urban Pioneers- Systemic Change Amid Liveable Environments*. Although the cities are targeting different emission domains and have different priorities, the cities are using this project to gain collective insight on finding new solutions that can be shared to other communities with similar challenges. They will do so by creating innovation hubs or 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.

The Mission Cities also enjoy strong support from the national government and work closely with various national ministries and agencies on the transposition and applicability of EU legislation at the city level. However, they also acknowledge the need to strengthen existing ties, as support is not necessarily provided for the Mission itself, but more to actions which are linked to climate ambition and therefore can contribute to the Mission's objectives. In fact, there is no coordinator or focal point for the Mission at national government level.

Funding assistance is still lacking and there are no targeted funds from the Slovenian national government for the implementation of the Mission. The main source of funding for Slovenian cities to implement climate-related projects are EU funds. However, some additional funding sources which indirectly could support the Mission's objectives are the Eco Fund - Slovenian Environmental Public Fund and Cohesion Funds. Slovenia's Partnership Agreement explicitly mentions that complementary funding will be sought from Horizon Europe to support the implementation of projects in the three Mission Cities.

As the Mission Cities are currently preparing their CCCs, they are facing various needs, especially regarding the financing of their CCC and how to anticipate investments within their city budgets. Therefore, technical expertise on financial matters is very much sought for and required by the Mission Cities. Moreover, as Kranj and Velenje are quite small, it is often harder for them to attract investment, obtain funding from different streams and often face internal resource constraints.

25.2 Recommendations for interventions

NZC could facilitate the sharing of experiences and knowledge on difficult topics related to the climate transition between the Slovenian Mission Cities and other Slovenian cities. This could also help the cities in identifying the key challenges and support needs for which they would need support from the national level. NZC should also engage in the discussions with the national ministries, the Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia and the Strategic Research and Innovation Partnership for the Smart Cities and Communities – Jožef Stefan Institute, to explore the possibility to create a national platform for the Mission Cities and the other Slovenian cities willing to accelerate their climate neutrality work.

26 Spain

26.1 Mission support structures in Spain

In Spain, [citiES 2030](#) is the national multi-stakeholder collaboration platform aimed at providing services for cities committed to achieve climate neutrality. Its overarching goal is to facilitate and accelerate urban transformation within the framework of the implementation of Cities Mission in Spain. In practice, the platform helps the Spanish public officials and civil servants share their work with each other, learn from each other's experiences, and build a community of practice. The platform helps empower the people working in municipalities in their day-to-day work and improve the efficacy and efficiency of this work, but also to generate momentum at a national level towards systemic change.



The emergence of citiES 2030 has followed a bottom-up approach and was the culmination of a series of dialogues and partnerships between several organisations over the last years. In March 2020, a new multi-stakeholder dialogue platform called El Día Después (EDD) emerged in Spain, with the objective to turn the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic into an opportunity for sustainable development. The EDD initiative was launched by a group of organisations, including the Center for Innovation in Technology for Human Development of the Technical University of Madrid. Through a series of online events, EDD became a space for a multiplicity of people, including public officials and politicians from Spain, to connect with each other.

The launch of the Cities Mission provided an ideal framework for the public officials from Spanish cities involved in EDD to keep working together towards a common goal, which gave birth to the citiES 2030 initiative. citiES 2030 was created as a dedicated space for collaboration between Spanish city officials, united by the common objective of implementing the Cities Mission and reaching climate neutrality by 2030. It was promoted and led by members of Center for Innovation in Technology for Human Development of the Technical University of Madrid. At this moment, four Spanish cities were actively involved in the citiES 2030 initiative: Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, and Valencia. Within citiES 2030, these four cities started taking the first steps to apply to be part of the Cities Mission.

Over the course of 2021, the city officials started meeting weekly and making progress towards better understanding the Mission's requirements and preparing to apply for it. As one of the requirements included in the Mission was the development of a Climate City Contract (CCC), the cities worked together to create a preliminary version of this contract with the help of local legal experts. They also formalised their commitment towards the Mission by signing an institutional declaration of intentions in September 2021 together with the Vice-President of the Spanish Government. Progressively, as the value of this collaboration platform started to become clearer, four other cities joined the citiES 2030 initiative, signing the declaration of intentions to be part of the Cities Mission in December 2021: Soria, Valladolid, Vitoria, and Zaragoza.

Seven of the eight Spanish cities that, at the time, were part of the citiES 2030 initiative were officially selected as Mission Cities in April 2022. It therefore became important to give citiES 2030 a more formal structure, by having the national government recognise citiES 2030 as the initiative that would serve as the official contact point between the Spanish cities, the national government and all stakeholders for the implementation of the Mission in Spain. In October 2022, after a set of political and organisational arrangements, citiES 2030 officially became the national Cities Mission platform led by EIT Climate KIC in collaboration with the Technical University of Madrid. The platform is funded by Fundación Biodiversidad, a public entity that springs from the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge.

citiES 2030

Facilitator: After the recognition of citiES 2030 as the official national Cities Mission platform, the leadership and facilitation were assumed by EIT Climate KIC with the co-leadership of the Technical University of Madrid. The initiative is funded by Fundación Biodiversidad and the Spanish Climate Change Office.

The organisational structure of citiES 2030 includes:

- The **Technical Office**, which currently comprises three facilitators and one project manager. The team is headed by two executive directors, ensuring effective and adequate progress of the platform.
- The **Executive Committee**, which takes decisions regarding the operational functioning of the platform.
- The **Supervisory Board**, closely linked to the Executive Committee, which takes strategic decisions, proposes medium- to long-term guidelines and validates the operations of the other organisational structures.



- The **Advisory Committee**, which provides the platform with sufficient knowledge to perform its functions and allows the participation and involvement of multiple stakeholders, ensuring that the platform's services and activities meet the expectations and needs of its potential users.

Participating actors: The main actors involved in the platform are the Transition Teams of the Mission Cities and multiple stakeholders, incorporating representatives of the public sector, the private sector, civil society and academia. Currently, over 240 people actively participate in the platform's activities. In addition to these stakeholders, some other actors are involved in specific lines of work and multi-city projects, such as the Green Building Council Spain that is subcontracted by citiES 2030 to provide support in activities related to building retrofit.

Participating cities: 15 Spanish cities are currently part of the citiES 2030 platform: Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla, Valencia, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Valladolid, Zaragoza, Soria, Santander, Pamplona, Viladecans, Cartagena, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Málaga and Gijón.

The platform supports cities in the process of transformation towards climate neutrality whether or not they are part of the EU Cities Mission. For the cities that are not among the selected 112 Mission Cities, citiES provides them with a process of onboarding to the Cities Mission and a dedicated training about the CCC, so that they reach a similar basis as the Mission Cities.

In the long run, the platform aims to offer its services to all Spanish cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants and provincial capitals (151 municipalities) to accelerate their transformation towards climate neutrality, whether they are part of the Cities Mission or not. It will also offer specific services to cities with between 20 000 and 50 000 inhabitants.

Support to cities: Depending on the degree of maturity of the cities' transition and their commitment to the transformation towards climate neutrality, citiES 2030 provides three levels of support services:

- **Basic orientation services for the first steps**, to awaken interest in the Mission in as many cities as possible. The services will focus on learning and communication. These services will be oriented to all cities that express an interest in the Mission, whether or not they have been selected by the EU for the Cities Mission.
- **Specialised services for commitment and roadmap development**, to establish processes for the adoption of commitments and the design of portfolios. The services will include activities to generate a shared purpose, define objectives, priorities and transformational projects. They also include advice on the CCC drafting.
- **Advanced services for the implementation of the portfolios**, to accelerate the implementation of the portfolios and generate replicable and scalable success stories for the rest of the cities. The services include, for example, facilitating technical assistance to structure public-private financing for transformation projects. These services will be targeted to cities that have already signed a CCC, designed their climate neutrality roadmaps, identified transformative projects and defined a preliminary financing strategy.

Activities: citiES 2030 organises a weekly meeting for cities which are used for various purposes, for example, to debrief on Mission work, to make announcements of general interest, to solve ongoing issues, and to jointly plan future activities. The platform regularly publishes a newsletter with information related to the Mission, the platform's services and activities, and other relevant news and publications. Approximately every month, the platform organises an online thematic encounter called 'Climate Breakfast', inspired by the initiative of Viable Cities in Sweden, which allows participants to have a conversation about topics relevant to the Mission. Once a year, citiES 2030 organises a summer school, which is a three-day event for all the actors of the platform to meet in-person and work on relevant topics. Finally, other ad hoc activities are organised and attended by the members of citiES 2030, as cities also host their own occasional events.



26.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

The next steps for the work of citiES 2030 includes the consolidation of the services that the platform provides and to improve them according to the feedback received from cities and organisations. The platform will also be looking at securing future funding, as the financial support of the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge is expected to end by January 2024.

In light of the local elections held in Spain earlier this year, the platform will look to facilitate the continuity of the commitments of all the cities after changes in local governments have taken place. Finally, citiES 2030 will also systematise the experiences of the platform to offer learnings to other countries that are building their national platforms.

27 Sweden

27.1 Mission support structures in Sweden

Sweden has a well-established support structure for the Cities Mission. Viable Cities is a strategic innovation programme focusing on the transition to climate-neutral and sustainable cities and acts as a catalyst for new forms of cooperation between cities, industry, academia, research institutes and civil society. The aim is to change the way cities operate in line with the national environmental and climate goals as well as the international commitments linked to the Global Sustainability Goals and the Paris Agreement. The programme runs between 2017-2030 and is implemented with the support of Vinnova, the Swedish Energy Agency and Formas, where the Swedish Energy Agency is the responsible authority. The Royal Institute of Technology is the host organisation for Viable Cities.

Within the initiative [Climate-neutral Cities 2030](#), 23 Swedish cities and their local partners collaborate with five government agencies and the Viable Cities programme to test and experiment with new working methods and solutions, while sharing knowledge and experiences to accelerate the transition towards inclusive and climate-neutral cities by 2030. Viable Cities' work is closely linked to the EU's Cities Mission.

Climate-neutral Cities 2030

Facilitator: Viable Cities, which is the Swedish innovation programme for climate transition in cities, acts as the facilitator of the initiative. The Royal Institute of Technology is the host organisation for the Viable Cities programme.

Participating actors: The programme is implemented with support from Vinnova, the Swedish Energy Agency and Formas, where the Swedish Energy Agency is the responsible authority.

Participating cities: 23 cities are part of the Climate-neutral Cities 2030 initiative: Enköping, Järfälla, Göteborg, Lund, Malmö, Stockholm, Umeå, Uppsala, Växjö, Borlänge, Borås, Eskilstuna, Gävle, Helsingborg, Kalmar, Karlstad, Kristianstad, Linköping, Mariestad, Nacka, Skellefteå, Örebro and Östersund.

Support to cities: As a strategic innovation programme, Viable Cities has a budget to work with and launches calls that cities can apply for based on it. The 23 cities receive a base funding of around €1 million each over three years (2021-2024), of which 50% is co-financed by local stakeholders and 50% by national funding to coordinate and implement the Cities Mission – through Viable Cities and the Climate-neutral Cities 2030 initiative.

Links to regional and national processes: The Viable Cities Climate Contract 2030 was developed within the frame of the Viable Cities programme as the tool to achieve the goal of the Climate-neutral



Cities 2030 initiative. The contract is a mutual agreement between the 23 cities, six government agencies (the Swedish Energy Agency, Vinnova, Formas, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the Swedish Transport Administration and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency) and Viable Cities, in which all parties commit to make a concrete contribution to accelerating the climate transition. The contracts should be seen as a co-creative process rather than a document that is signed and put in a binder. The contracts are reviewed and sharpened every year. Through the contracts, cities commit to, among other things, working to drastically reduce climate emissions, to increase innovation capacity and to involve citizens in climate change efforts. The contract is a long-term tool that ensures cooperation between the cities and the government level and will evolve over time. The signatory authorities undertake, among other things, to review laws and regulations to make it easier for municipalities to take the lead on climate change.

Activities: Viable Cities contributes to the work by providing knowledge, experience and support as well as links to other similar efforts – in Sweden, in the EU, and globally. The collaboration offers a meeting place for cities to learn from each other and work together, for example through the biweekly online climate breakfasts, various network events, workshops such as Transition Labs, seminars etc. Viable Cities supports the cities in the development of their Climate City Contracts - the key tool in the climate transition. Each December, on European Viable Cities Day, the 23 cities will sign a revised Climate City Contract.

27.2 Next steps and ongoing discussions

Some Swedish cities have expressed a perceived contradiction between what the national level wants to achieve and what realistically can be achieved with the current support. There is funding available for specific pilot projects on the national level, which usually are connected to policy initiatives. However, most of these projects focus on new innovations whereas funding for actual implementation and upscaling is lacking.

Viable Cities focuses financially on cities as systems demonstrators to enable transformative innovation and large-scale systems change. As financing urban climate investments is outside the remit of Viable Cities, the programme is trying to create synergies between national authorities and financial institutions, which are responsible for providing grants, loans or capital. All in all, the programme is agile and focusing on learning to drive the transition towards climate-neutral cities. The third phase of the programme is currently under development.



Associated Countries

28 Albania

28.1 Mission support structures in Albania

Climate and environmental action are generally at a very early stage in Albania, which hinders Elbasan – the only Albanian city in the Cities Mission – to work towards the 2030 climate neutrality goal. Apart from the fact that climate neutrality is not high on the political agenda, there is also a lack of national legal frameworks, funds dedicated specifically to climate action in cities, and technical support for cities, including GHG emissions data collection and management. The City of Elbasan is aware of these shortcomings and hopes to establish closer collaboration across different levels of government to address them.

At the national level, the Ministry of Education and Innovation seems to be the one involved in the Cities Mission. It is, however, not clear who at the national level that is responsible for managing the Mission and in what capacity. Also, a potential role of the [Albanian Association of Municipalities](#) in building the national support structures requires further exploration. The association brings together over 60 Albanian municipalities, but its focus is not primarily on climate and environmental action.

There are some interesting developments in the context of regional cooperation in Western Balkans. The Mission Cities from this geographical area – Elbasan, Sarajevo and Podgorica – have held an informal exchange on the Mission activities in the region and are in the process of preparing cities' applications to the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) programme, which offers support to public administrations in the aspects of approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation as well as facilitates the sharing of EU best practices. The TAIEX also plans to organise a Western Balkan workshop on the Cities Mission in October 2023.

28.2 Recommendations for interventions

Considering the complicated political situation in Albania, lack of integrated climate and environmental action, and weak collaboration across different levels of governments, NZC should support the City of Elbasan in promoting the Cities Mission and its goals across the country and emphasise its importance to the national authorities. Further, the project could help clarify what national level entity is best suited to manage the Cities Mission in the country and support a closer collaboration on climate action between Elbasan and other Albanian cities interested in accelerating their climate work. The NZC can also support the regional collaboration among the Mission Cities in Western Balkans.

29 Bosnia and Herzegovina

29.1 Mission support structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely complicated, making it difficult for the different levels of government to collaborate. The country has a top-down governance system with four levels in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: State, Entity, Canton and Municipality, and three



levels in the Republic of Srpska: State, Entity and Municipality. The geographical territory of Sarajevo, which is the only Mission City from Bosnia and Herzegovina, is also divided into the City of Sarajevo and the Sarajevo Canton - with the smaller municipal part being led by a mayor and city authorities, and the larger cantonal part being led by the Cantonal Government. Both the City of Sarajevo and the Sarajevo Canton are participating in the Cities Mission as the Sarajevo Functional Urban Area.

Collaboration across the different governance levels, especially between the municipal and cantonal levels, is therefore essential. However, this collaboration is still limited which causes numerous problems in the organisation of regular city functions, especially when different political parties are in the majority at the municipal and cantonal levels. As a result of several attempts to connect the City of Sarajevo and the Sarajevo Canton around the Cities Mission, a collaboration around climate issues has now been initiated.

A collaboration between Sarajevo and other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina around climate issues has, so far, not emerged. Sarajevo was also the only city from Bosnia and Herzegovina that applied to be part of the Cities Mission. However, cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are collaborating more generally within the frame of two associations at entity level: the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Republic of Srpska. Sarajevo is also collaborating with the other two Western Balkan Mission Cities – Elbasan and Podgorica, on common challenges related to the Mission.

As the competencies of cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are very limited, several challenges have been identified for which the support of other levels of government is needed. These challenges include the lack of legislative frameworks, lack of fast and affordable financial mechanisms, lack of funds dedicated to climate action for cities, lack of reliable systemic data collection for energy and emissions, as well as lack of general knowledge and capacity to direct cities towards climate-neutrality, resulting in the use of foreign consultants for these purposes.

29.2 Recommendations for interventions

Due to the complicated political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the role of the NZC project should be to support the ongoing discussions and the initiated climate collaboration between the City of Sarajevo and the Sarajevo Canton. NZC can also facilitate collaboration on climate issues between cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example by engaging with the existing city associations: the Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Republic of Srpska. Enhanced collaboration between the cities at entity level and a common approach towards the higher levels of government could improve the support provided to cities to accelerate the journey towards climate neutrality at the local level.

30 Iceland

30.1 Mission support structures in Iceland

The Icelandic Mission City Reykjavik is working with other municipalities in Iceland on climate action. Recently, a [new climate strategy](#) was adopted by the seven municipalities in the capital area, within the frame of the Association of Municipalities in the Capital Region, with the vision on being climate-neutral by 2035. Climate work with other Icelandic cities is also ongoing within the [Association of Icelandic Municipalities](#) and its [cooperation forum](#) on climate issues and the United Nations' Global Goals. Discussions around climate issues are also conducted between practitioners and political representatives at the municipal and national levels, and multiple national ministries have ongoing work



relevant to climate action. There is a Council of Ministers for Climate Change whose role is to strengthen dialogue and coordination among the ministries working on climate change within the cabinet. The Prime Minister, the Minister for the Environment, Energy and Climate, the Minister of Universities, Industry and Innovation, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister for Food and the Minister for Foreign Affairs are permanent members of the Council.

Climate action is an important political priority at the national level as Iceland aims to be climate-neutral by 2040. The country is, therefore, now focusing on creating a national climate adaptation strategy and is planning to revise the national climate mitigation plan by the end of 2023. In addition to the national government, the [Icelandic Climate Council](#) plays an important role in the national climate work. The City of Reykjavik has formally introduced the Cities Mission to the Climate Council.

30.2 Recommendations for interventions

NZC could assist the Transition Team of Reykjavik in initiating a discussion around the CCC process with the national level. A first step could be to map the concrete support needs of the city towards the national government as well as the challenges that the city is facing in drafting and implementing its CCC. The next step would be to discuss the identified support needs and challenges with the relevant ministries, as well as explore how Reykjavik's Cities Mission process and learnings can be shared with other Icelandic municipalities interested in accelerating their net zero transition.

31 Israel

31.1 Mission support structures in Israel

Eilat, the only Mission City in Israel, is in the process of preparing its Climate City Contract and searching for allies to help accelerate its climate action not only amongst local stakeholders, but also other cities in Israel and across different levels of government. The city seeks for dedicated support both from the European Commission (EC) and from the national government.

At the European level, the city has advocated to include the topic of the Cities Mission in the agenda of the annual meeting of the EU-Israel Horizon Europe Joint Research and Innovation Committee. They wanted to present success stories of cities and request more dedicated support from the EU for Israeli cities, especially Eilat. The event took place in Brussels on 12 June 2023 and included representatives from the Horizon Europe Association Unit, the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, the Israel-Europe Research & Development Directorate, and the Israel Innovation Authority. The Cities Mission was discussed, more specifically the formulation of Eilat's Climate City Contract and the city's application to the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) programme, which offers support to public administrations in the aspects of approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation as well as facilitates the sharing of EU best practices.

Additionally, several meetings between the city team and representatives of the EC took place. Eilat shared a 'wish list' of desired support actions and funds that could be arranged by the Commission. One of these was Eilat's participation in an international exchange programme, during which the city team could benefit from a direct peer to peer exchange with the EU cities, mutual expert visits as well as sector specific work and expertise.

At the national level, Eilat has good relationships with many local governments and national ministries in Israel. This collaboration, however, does not address specifically climate policies or the 2030 climate neutrality goal. Eilat wishes to be acknowledged by the national government as a 'lighthouse city' that paves the way for other Israeli cities to work towards climate neutrality. The city would like to receive



dedicated national funding to accelerate their work, beyond the typical grants, for example for studies on electrification of transport.

The city also needs support on aligning policies, as many policy and regulation aspects are beyond the city's direct influence, for example, the tourism industry, rapid urban growth, port-related activities, transport and heavy-duty transport and as well as connection to the rail network for both passenger and freight transport.

While no formal support structures have been created so far to effectively address Israeli cities' needs and challenges related to climate neutrality and the Mission, Eilat is strongly advocating for government support for the implementation of their CCC. At the end of 2023, during the Eilat-Eilat Renewable Energy Conference, the city plans to hold meetings between the city, representatives of the national level and the EU. Eilat thus hopes to leverage the presence of the EU representatives to build mutual understanding and stronger partnership with the national government.

31.2 Recommendations for interventions

Eilat is not only a city from an Associated Country, but also the only Mission City from Israel. This makes the city quite isolated from the others. This is why NZC should put more effort in bringing all Mission Cities together and facilitating more exchange between them. The NZC can also facilitate more collaboration between Eilat and other cities in Israel, for example through existing city networks, like Forum 15 or the Healthy Cities Network. This could help cities build a common agenda vis-à-vis the national government. Finally, NZC should assist Eilat in its dialogues with the national level, especially in the formulation of concrete support needs towards the national government.

32 Montenegro

32.1 Mission support structures in Montenegro

Montenegro has a very strict top-down governance system where cities and municipalities have limited competencies and abilities to impact decision-making processes at the national level. Collaboration across the different levels of government is therefore key to achieve climate neutrality in Podgorica, which is the only Mission City from Montenegro, as well as in other Montenegrin cities. However, political will to address climate issues is in general lacking both at local and national level. The current complicated political situation in Montenegro, which is due to recent presidential and parliamentary elections, is also impacting the climate work in Podgorica.

Cities in Montenegro collaborate within the frame of the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, but any collaboration dedicated to climate action between cities is currently lacking. Podgorica is also collaborating with the other two Western Balkan Mission Cities – Elbasan and Sarajevo, on common challenges related to the Cities Mission.

Cities in Montenegro are facing several challenges on their pathway to climate neutrality, for which enhanced collaboration with the national level is needed. These challenges include incomplete climate and energy legislative frameworks, limited funding opportunities available for climate action in cities and a lack of fast and affordable financial mechanisms, lack of reliable systemic data collection for energy and emissions, as well as lack of general knowledge and capacity to direct cities towards climate-neutrality.



The former Mayor of Podgorica is now Prime Minister in the national government. The City of Podgorica is planning to use this connection to reach out to the national level to initiate discussions around the current challenges perceived by cities in their climate work.

32.2 Recommendations for interventions

As Podgorica is indicating a will to reach out to the national level, using to the connection between the city and the current Prime Minister, the NZC project could facilitate this process based on the needs of the city. The key challenges for accelerating climate action in cities in Montenegro have already been identified, meaning that presenting these alongside concrete support needs would be important in a potential meeting with the national level. Simultaneously, NZC should facilitate the set-up of a collaboration between Montenegrin cities on climate issues – either by using existing frameworks such as the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro or by exploring new structures.

33 Norway

33.1 Mission support structures in Norway

After the announcement of the selected Norwegian Mission Cities – Trondheim, Oslo and Stavanger, the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development launched a public tender for a study to explore the need and feasibility to establish a national network or platform to support the implementation of the Cities Mission. One element of this study was to carry out a mapping of the needs of cities and other relevant actors in terms of climate cooperation and collaboration around the Cities Mission at national level. The second element was to carry out a mapping of existing national and international networks and other platforms in the area of climate and smart cities. The tender was won by the consultancy Agenda Kaupang, and the report was published in December 2022. The study recommends the establishment of a cooperation forum between the three Norwegian Mission Cities and the relevant state actors, which with time would be scaled-up to also include other Norwegian cities as well as an assessment of the establishment of a Norwegian version of the Swedish Viable Cities model.

The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, supported by the Ministry of Climate and Environment, is responsible for following the Cities Mission from the national government's side. The two ministries are meeting with the Mission Cities two times per year to discuss topics and issues related to the Mission and the development of the Climate City Contracts. While the Norwegian Mission Cities wish for the national level to increase its support for the cities' climate neutrality work, mainly in terms of financing support and support to address national regulatory barriers, the current government is unlikely to do so due to the political priorities of the parties in the government.

The Norwegian Mission Cities are already collaborating – both within the frame of existing networks together with other Norwegian cities as well as between the three of them around the issues and challenges related to the development of the Climate City Contracts. The three Mission Cities are generally not interested in setting up a new platform for the collaboration with relevant state actors around the Mission but would rather use existing networks for this purpose.

The Mission Cities have performed a mapping of policy barriers and regulatory bottlenecks towards climate neutrality that exist on the national level. A workshop is planned for autumn 2023 between the Mission Cities, representatives from NZC and the two ministries to discuss the identified bottlenecks.



33.2 Recommendations for interventions

As the Norwegian Mission Cities already have mapped the legislative barriers and understand their support needs towards the national level, the role of the NZC project should be to facilitate and support the discussions between the cities and the ministries. The project will not be able to impact the political priorities of the national level but can support discussions around the removal of regulatory barriers and enhanced support to the cities by presenting best practices and examples from other countries or by bringing experts on different topics into the discussions.

34 Turkey

34.1 Mission support structures in Turkey

While there are some initiatives and steps taken to support climate neutrality locally and nationally in Turkey, there is a lack of support and engagement despite its commitments in achieving carbon neutrality nationally. Relevant stakeholders working towards the target of climate-neutral cities include the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the General Directorate of ILBANK. The objective of the bank is to meet the financing needs of provincial administrations and municipalities, including development of projects for local joint services and provides financial and investment banking services on various environmental issues for municipalities. Priority is given to projects in the field of renewable energy and climate change. A 'National Climate Change Strategy' was developed to contribute to global efforts and includes control strategies for energy, transportation, industry, waste and land use, agriculture and forestry sectors that indirectly affect cities.

Cities in Turkey, including the two Mission Cities – Istanbul and Izmir - collaborate on climate action within different city forums. The United Nations Development Programme in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation organises the [City Network meetings](#) to develop collaboration between cities on climate action and build societal resilience at urban level. The United Nations Development Programme also manages, with financing from the Ministry of Environment, [the Strengthening Climate Adaptation Action](#) - a project aiming to prevent future problems related to climate change and to increase social resilience. Several district municipalities from different regions of Anatolia are also informally organised in a network and meet regularly to exchange experiences and to evaluate the development of the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan in Local Governments.

The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye – TÜBİTAK and Union of Municipalities of Türkiye has organised network events between cities to inform the cities about the Cities Mission and open calls related to the Mission. TÜBİTAK also organised, together with the Sabancı University and the Union of Municipalities of Marmara, an international networking event with the objective to allow the development of partnerships for the Mission. The event was co-financed by the European Union and the Republic of Turkey.

The Turkish cities also collaborate with cities in international forums. The [EU4 Energy Transition: Covenant of Mayors in the Western Balkans and Turkey](#) is an EU-funded project with an aim to prevent climate change in the Western Balkans and Turkey by supporting cities in the region to fulfill their commitments under the energy and climate targets. In Turkey, the project supports the cities to prepare Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans in line with the Covenant of Mayors initiative. Istanbul is also a member of the C40 Network. The climate action plan of Istanbul was formed in line with the C40 action plans, and it was designed to be leading the way of other cities in the country to engage with climate action much more.



34.2 Recommendations for interventions

Turkish cities recognise the importance of national and international cooperation to combat climate change and should continue to engage in European cooperation projects and city networks. Turkey is also one of the core countries of [CapaCITIES](#), the support action dedicated for national and regional authorities to advance their governance structures and strengthen dedicated support for cities. NZC should support the Turkish cities in further strengthening and formalising their collaboration around the Cities Mission, while also assisting them in raising awareness among national ministries and other national key actors on the importance of the Cities Mission. In collaboration with the CapaCITIES partners, NZC could support the cities in identifying key support needs towards the national level and share best practices on national support structures from other countries in the Mission.

35 United Kingdom

35.1 Mission support structures in the United Kingdom

The two Mission Cities from the United Kingdom (UK), Glasgow and Bristol, are members of [Core Cities UK](#) - an alliance of eleven cities aiming at creating competitive, inclusive and greener cities. This is achieved through innovation and the development of practical solutions, turning ideas into action and building partnerships to deliver change based on evidence. Core Cities UK regularly meet with representatives from the government to bring forward the positions of cities and to help ensure that national policy solutions work at the local level. In 2022, the group agreed on a new set of priorities, which include climate change, infrastructure, and urban health and wellbeing. Among the activities that Core Cities UK organises, the group holds events in the parliament and at annual party conferences to engage with Members of Parliament, ministers, senior policy makers and practitioners, to influence national legislation.

Beyond the Core Cities UK network, the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero recently brought together a government group which includes Bristol as the Core Cities UK representative. Bristol is also involved in the Innovate UK Net Zero Living Programme through their Pathfinder Places competition, and recently met the newly established cohort of 30 Pathfinders and 21 Fast Followers which are looking to learn from the city. The support is in the form of funding through a competitive process. Additionally, UK cities collaborate on climate within a range of different forums, such as the [Local Government Association](#), [Climate Emergency UK](#) and [UK 100](#).

The Scottish Government has a Minister for Net Zero and a Directorate for Energy and Climate Change. We cannot confirm at this stage whether the City of Glasgow has received additional support in some way from the Scottish Government.

35.2 Recommendations for interventions

Both Mission Cities are geographically far from each other, and given the budget constraints, it reduces the feasibility for holding in-person meetings which challenges the collaboration between them. NZC should support the strengthening of the collaboration between the two Mission Cities, as well as between the Mission Cities and other cities in the UK. Core Cities UK could act as a potential platform to share the Cities Mission learnings with other cities. NZC could also support the cities in raising the awareness on the importance of the Cities Mission towards the national level. As both Mission Cities are understaffed, the main support from national level and national networks should focus on providing additional human resources to the cities to advance their climate work. In addition to this, NZC could support the cities in identifying additional support needs.



Conclusions

The NZC mapping of regional and national support structures show that a growing number of national networks and platforms are emerging in countries across Europe. These structures have emerged through both bottom-up and top-down approaches, with the aim of bringing cities, national ministries and other relevant stakeholders together to support cities in the implementation of the Cities Mission. The current focus of the existing platforms and networks is largely to promote knowledge exchange and peer learning between the participating cities, provide thematic support to cities, and address common challenges that cities face in the development of their Climate City Contracts.

The national level is often, at least to some extent, part of the governance structure and involved in the activities of the national networks and platforms. In some countries, one or more ministries act as the facilitators of the national support networks, while in other countries, ministries or government agencies are part of the governance structure of the networks and participate in selected activities. However, direct support from the national level in the form of funding, technical support or policy support is still lacking in most countries. A few countries - Austria, Finland, Greece and Sweden - are directly supporting cities in achieving the Mission objectives through different funding mechanisms.

The regional level has, so far, had a limited role in the implementation of the Cities Mission in most countries. As a result of this, NZC was not able to identify any concrete regional support structures for the implementation of the Mission in the EU Member States and Associated Countries. However, several countries are starting to explore the role of regions in the Mission, for example France and Austria. Regional involvement is especially important in countries where the regional level has strong competences in relevant fields, such as transport, energy, climate, etc.

NZC could identify existing national support networks and platforms in the following countries: **Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden**. The national level is, to some extent, involved in the work and governance structure of the support frameworks in these countries. Meanwhile, cities in **Cyprus, Italy and Poland** have established strong collaboration frameworks around the Cities Mission, however, the national level has not yet formally joined these initiatives. In **Romania**, the process of establishing a national hub for the Mission is progressing with the intention of having an established platform by the end of 2023.

While the work on setting up support structures for the Cities Mission is progressing in several countries, cities in other countries are continuously struggling to involve the regional and national levels in their Mission work. The difficulties in involving the other levels of government in the Mission work is, in most cases, a result of unawareness of the political importance of the Cities Mission and lack of political interest at the regional and national level. The key recommendations for interventions presented in this deliverable to support cities in countries where regional and national support structures are lacking, are presented below.

- Facilitate collaboration between cities – both Mission Cities and other cities interested in advancing their climate neutrality work, at the regional and national level. This is important to enhance peer-learning opportunities and to exchange knowledge, but also to create a stronger voice of advocacy towards the regional and national levels.
- Raise the political awareness of the Cities Mission at the national level. The European Commission plays an important role in communicating the importance of the Mission towards relevant national ministries, and in encouraging the national level to support cities in their transition towards climate neutrality.
- Support cities in identifying existing bottlenecks in regional and national policy and legislation, as well as in identifying support needs towards the other levels of government in terms of funding, knowledge and technical support.
- Support cities in establishing fruitful dialogues with relevant ministries and departments at the regional and national level.



- Share best practices and case studies from different countries to provide inspiration and information on the range of support structures that can be set up to support cities in the development and implementation of their Climate City Contracts.

Next steps

NZC will use the findings of this report to continue its multi-level governance work, with a focus on supporting cities in countries that have not yet set up structures to support cities in the implementation of the Cities Mission objectives. This work will mainly be undertaken as part of the 'development programme' that will be set up in NZC T1.4.2. The activities of the development programme will build on the recommendations for interventions presented in this report, and synergies will be sought with other NZC and NZC-SGA1 tasks when relevant.

Based on the existing support structures identified in this report, NZC will develop case studies to inspire and inform other countries looking to establish similar structures. This work will be further developed in NZC-SGA1 task 6.4: Support and develop connections with national mission frameworks.

Overall, NZC will work closely with the CapaCITIES project to ensure effective collaboration to support cities in the countries that the CapaCITIES is covering⁴. Further, NZC will continue its dialogue with the NECPlatform project to ensure synergies between the two projects' work.

An updated version of this report will be developed in summer 2024.

⁴ The following countries are core countries in the CapaCITIES project: Sweden, Poland, the Netherlands, France, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Romania and Turkey. The following countries are supporting countries: Finland, Spain, Czech Republic and Slovakia.



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