

LOW CARBON CLUSTER

ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2025

CLUSTER DESCRIPTION AND KEY PRIORITIES

ERRIN's **Low Carbon Cluster** brings together the activities of the **Energy & Climate Change Working Group**, **Smart Cities Working Group** and **Transport Working Group**, fostering collaboration to address key EU priorities while enhancing the R&I capacities of ERRIN members' regional innovation ecosystems. Operating as a Cluster enables the Working Groups to deliver more impactful messages with a collective voice, enhancing their influence on key EU strategies and initiatives. The cross-sectoral perspective further fosters innovative, holistic approaches to complex challenges while enhancing collaboration.

The Low Carbon Cluster actively engages with major EU initiatives and strategies, including the **Horizon Europe Programme**, its **European Partnerships** and the [Mission on 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030](#). Additionally, it gathers and shares intelligence to promote interregional knowledge exchange and support the development of partnerships. In particular, with the aim of strengthening members' engagement in the Cities Mission, the Working Groups under this Cluster regularly engages with the Mission Secretariat to discuss and influence the implementation of the Mission in 2025.

ERRIN's participation in the [NetZeroCities](#) project ensures that Low Carbon Cluster members receive first-hand information about the opportunities the project offers. The Cluster is leading the work on establishing strategic partnerships between NetZeroCities and other initiatives, projects and EU Missions. Through the CapaCITIES 2.0 project, currently under Grant Agreement preparation and set to kick off in 2025, ERRIN will build on the work carried out in NetZeroCities and further explore the role of regions in implementing the Cities Mission. More details about the Working Groups and the project can be found at the end of this file.

CLUSTER CALENDAR

Date	Topic	Responsible
20 February	Decarbonisation and resilience of transport infrastructure	Transport WG
24 March	Clean Industrial Deal and competitiveness	Cluster meeting
16 April	The future of European competitiveness and new transport-related priorities	Transport WG
13 or 20 June	Affordable and sustainable housing	Energy and Climate Change WG & Smart Cities WG
12 June	Innovation and funding – Best practices of regional participation and future calls	Transport WG
TBC	Hydrogen Valleys	Energy and Climate Change WG
24 September	The digital component of transport	Transport WG
September/ October	Update on the Mission Label	Smart Cities WG

September/ October	EU 2040 climate targets	Energy and Climate Change WG
November	Funding opportunities for cities: Inclusiveness and co-creation in the twin transition	Smart Cities WG
November/ December	Renewable energy	Energy and Climate Change WG

ACTIVITIES

Decarbonisation and resilience of transport infrastructures

20 February

Transport WG

Responsible co-leaders: Françoise Guaspere and Karim Hassan Hosny

In-person meeting

This meeting will focus on the decarbonisation and resilience of the transport sector, highlighting key strategies, investment plans and collaborative efforts necessary to achieve sustainability goals. The discussions will cover critical aspects such as the production of sustainable fuels, the development of charging infrastructures and climate adaptation plans. The session will also address the upcoming 2025 sustainable transport investment plan aimed at scaling up investments in transport decarbonisation solutions.

The meeting will bring together experts to explore funding opportunities, policy developments and innovative approaches to decarbonisation and resilience. Representatives from DG MOVE and DG CLIMA will be invited to provide insights into the latest policies and programmes supporting sustainable and resilient transport infrastructure. Additionally, key European Partnerships, including CCAM, 2Zero, Clean Aviation and Zero Emission Waterborne Transport, will be featured to discuss their contributions to these objectives.

Clean Industrial Deal and competitiveness: Focus on energy, transport and urban development

24 March

Energy and Climate Change WG, Transport WG and Smart Cities WG

Responsible co-leaders: Valentine Willemann, Pieter Faber and Françoise Guaspere

In-person meeting

In this meeting, the three WGs under the Low Carbon Cluster will explore the EU's forthcoming Clean Industrial Deal, which the European Commission will present on 26 February 2025. This plan will prioritise industrial decarbonisation, clean technologies and incentivising investment, with key measures including the Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator Act. The Commission will also spearhead the implementation of the Net Zero Industry Act and develop the future European Competitiveness Fund to ensure investments in innovation and technologies that will drive the twin transition.



Following a meeting organised by ERRIN's Strategic Cluster on the Commission's forthcoming competitiveness initiatives, the Low Carbon Cluster will focus on the energy, transport and urban dimensions of these initiatives. This targeted approach will help members navigate opportunities and address challenges related to clean industrial development, ensuring their readiness to contribute to and benefit from these ambitious initiatives. The WGs will explore how the Clean Industrial Deal connects with other initiatives, such as the Cities Mission, by addressing obstacles for industry to achieve climate neutrality by 2030.

The future of European competitiveness and new transport-related priorities

16 April (TBC)

Transport WG

Responsible co-leaders: Françoise Guaspere, Karim Hassan Hosny, Marcus Göpfert and Francisco Vigalondo

In-person meeting

This session will explore the future of European competitiveness with a particular focus on the automotive sector and new transport-related priorities, including the Clean Industrial Deal and its implications for research and innovation in sustainable mobility. A central theme will be the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of the European Automotive Industry, launched by the European Commission to address critical challenges and opportunities in this vital sector. The discussion will also delve into the key findings of Mario Draghi's report on European competitiveness, highlighting its relevance for regions and the automotive industry. Representatives from DG GROW, DG RTD and DG MOVE will provide insights into upcoming initiatives and their potential impact on regional development, industrial transformation and the automotive sector's transition towards greener and more innovative solutions.

Affordable and sustainable housing

13 or 20 June

Energy & Climate Change WG and Smart Cities WG (also relevant to NEB Task Force)

Responsible co-leaders: Ingvild Jacobsen, Valentine Willemann and Runa Monstad

Hybrid meeting

In 2025, the Commission will present the first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan, aiming to address structural drivers of housing challenges and unlock public and private investments. This plan will provide technical assistance to cities and Member States while focusing on the investment and skills needed to ensure affordable and sustainable housing solutions.

To explore the added value of having an Affordable Housing Plan at the European level and its implications for local and regional authorities, the Energy and Climate Change and Smart Cities WGs will host a dedicated meeting. The European Commission will be invited to present the plan and discuss its connections with key initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus and the Cities Mission. Additionally, the meeting will explore project opportunities under Horizon Europe, particularly through the Built4People Partnership, to drive innovation and sustainability in the built environment.

Innovation and funding: Best practices of regional participation and future calls

12 June (TBC)

Transport WG

Responsible co-leaders: Marcus Göpfert, Françoise Guaspere, Francisco Vigalondo and Karim Hassan Hosny

In-person meeting

This event will showcase best practices of regional participation in European innovation projects and highlight future funding opportunities through the European Innovation Council (EIC) and other programmes with a specific place-based approach (IR, RIV, Euroclusters). Participants will gain insights into successful projects, lessons learned and upcoming calls that can support innovation at the regional level. Experts from DG RTD and DG GROW will present funding opportunities and share examples of successful projects to inspire and guide members in future applications.

Hydrogen Valleys

TBC

Energy and Climate Change WG

Responsible co-leaders: Valentine Willemann and Pieter Faber

In-person/online meeting

Building on the work done in 2023 and 2024, the Energy and Climate Change WG will continue its activities on Hydrogen Valleys in 2025, aligning with the strategic priorities set in the Hydrogen Valleys Roadmap published in June 2024. In 2025, the WG will support members in leveraging the Hydrogen Valleys Facility, which will open its first expression of interest. This Facility will offer two levels of Project Development Assistance (PDA): PDA 'Light', helping projects move from concept to detailed proposals, and PDA 'Plus', enabling the completion of feasibility studies and all preparatory steps leading to final investment decisions. A dedicated meeting will explore the operational aspects of this Facility and its potential to drive project implementation at the regional level.

The Working Group will continue hosting discussions on the practical implementation of the roadmap, examining its synergies with the Net Zero Industry Act, the Net Zero Industry Valleys initiative and the emerging European Competitiveness Fund.

Throughout the year, ERRIN will maintain its bilateral dialogues and collaboration with the S3 Partnership on Hydrogen Valleys, the European Commission, the Clean Hydrogen Partnership and the regional pillar of Hydrogen Europe, advocating for regional interests and addressing members' specific needs.

The digital component of transport

24 September (TBC)

Transport WG

Responsible co-leaders: Françoise Guaspere, Karim Hassan Hosny, Marcus Göpfert and Francisco Vigalondo

In-person meeting

The meeting will delve into the digital transformation of transport, covering key topics such as artificial intelligence (AI), data-driven decision-making, safety and security measures and the role of Multimodal Digital Mobility Services (MDMS). Participants will explore how digital tools and innovations are reshaping the transport sector and improving its efficiency and sustainability. Representatives from DG MOVE and DG CONNECT will discuss ongoing initiatives and opportunities in the digitalisation of transport.

Update on the Mission Label

September/October

Smart Cities WG

Responsible co-leaders: Miia Paananen-Docx, Pieter Faber and Alis Socea

In-person meeting

By autumn 2025, most Mission Cities will have received their Mission Labels, acknowledging their ambitious plans to achieve climate neutrality by 2030 and aiming to facilitate their access to public and private funding. This Smart Cities WG meeting will therefore delve into the latest developments related to the Mission Label. Building on the meeting organised by the WG in spring 2024, participants will have the opportunity to exchange insights, share best practices and discuss ways to maximise the benefits of the initiative for cities.

The Mission Secretariat from the European Commission will be invited to provide updates on the Mission Label and its role in facilitating cities' access to funding. Additionally, cities that have been awarded the Mission Label will be invited to share their experiences and best practices in leveraging the label.

EU 2040 climate targets

September/October

Energy and Climate Change WG

Responsible co-leaders: Juan Fernández

In-person/online meeting

Within the first 100 days of its new mandate, the European Commission will introduce a legislative proposal to integrate the 2040 climate target into the European Climate Law. Establishing this target will offer clarity to shape policies and provide long-term certainty for investment decisions, thereby supporting the achievement of the 2040 climate objectives.

The Energy and Climate Change WG will support members in understanding and implementing the EU's 2040 Climate targets, which aim for a 90–95% reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels. A dedicated session will explore the local and regional dimensions of these

targets, focusing on key questions: How can regions effectively implement these goals? What barriers and needs have been identified by regional authorities? What legislation will most impact their efforts, and what funding opportunities are available to support implementation?

This session will provide insights into the tools and mechanisms available under the European Green Deal, the Fit for 55 Package and Horizon Europe. It will also foster dialogue on how ERRIN members can address challenges, leverage funding and contribute to achieving the EU's climate ambitions at the local level.

Funding opportunities for cities: Inclusiveness and co-creation in the twin transition

November

Smart Cities WG

Responsible co-leaders: Runa Monstad, Helle Bech Sørensen-Hylle and Alis Socea

In-person meeting

This Smart Cities WG meeting will explore various funding opportunities available to cities striving to integrate inclusiveness, transparency and co-creation into their innovation and development processes. The meeting aims to provide a comprehensive overview of key EU funding programmes and initiatives that support smart cities, helping both large and medium-sized cities navigate and leverage these instruments effectively. Participants will gain insights into a broad range of funding opportunities, including – but not limited to – the European Urban Initiative, URBACT, cascade funding opportunities and Horizon Europe.

Renewable energy

November/December

Energy and Climate Change WG

Responsible co-leaders: Andrei Moscal

In-person/online meeting

The Energy and Climate Change WG will continue focusing on the deployment and integration of renewable energy sources, including wind, solar and tidal energy, which are essential to achieving the EU's energy independence and climate neutrality goals. In 2025, particular attention will be given to the implementation of the updated Renewable Energy Directive, which raises the EU's renewable energy target to 42.5% by 2030 and includes new rules on accelerating permitting and fostering cross-border projects. Monitoring these developments is critical for members, as they directly impact regional planning, funding access and grid integration.

OTHER ISSUES/TOPICS TO BE MONITORED:

- **Cities Mission:**
 - The future of the Cities Mission
 - Funding opportunities in the Missions Work Programme under Horizon Europe
 - Mobility aspects in the Cities Mission and innovative strategies to fund them

- TEN-T and SUMP: resilience of transport infrastructure of the TEN-T
- Transport-related EU partnerships: CCAM, 2Zero, Clean Aviation, Zero Emission Waterborne Transport

OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTPUTS IN ERRIN PROJECTS

NetZeroCities

Mutual Learning Events

In 2025, the NetZeroCities project will host a series of Mutual Learning Events, fostering exchanges and dialogues among key stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Cities Mission. These events aim to generate insights and develop recommendations to shape the future of the Mission. The outcomes will be shared with the European Commission and integrated into future work within the NetZeroCities and CapaCITIES 2.0 projects.

The following Mutual Learning Events are planned:

- The role of regions in the implementation of the Cities Mission – 13 February
- The role of research in the EU Mission on climate-neutral and smart cities: Unleashing a research agenda – 18 February
- National level engagement in the Cities Mission – March
- The role of standards for climate-neutral cities – 27 March (TBC)
- The role of the private sector for climate-neutral cities – May (TBC)

Peer-learning with Mission Cities

In 2025, the NetZeroCities project will facilitate peer-learning activities between Mission Cities and other cities eager to accelerate their climate neutrality efforts. Cities beyond the 112 Mission Cities will have the opportunity to learn from their experiences through online discussion groups, group study visits and a dedicated twinning programme.

CapaCITIES 2.0

Through its involvement in the CapaCITIES 2.0 project, currently under Grant Agreement preparation and set to kick off in 2025, ERRIN will build on the work carried out in NetZeroCities and further explore the role of regions in implementing the Cities Mission. ERRIN will examine key responsibilities and competencies relevant to cities' climate neutrality efforts while facilitating dialogue between different governance levels to enhance collaboration and impact.

MORE INFORMATION: LEADERS AND PROJECTS

Energy & Climate Change Working Group



The **Energy & Climate Change Working Group** acts as a platform for ERRIN members to discuss and share information on energy and climate-related policies and funding programmes and initiatives. In alignment with the European Green Deal and REPowerEU, as well as the European Commission's

2024–2029 political priorities, the Working Group focuses on advancing regional efforts in areas such as Hydrogen Valleys, renewable energy integration, sustainable and affordable housing and industrial decarbonisation. The group will support members in navigating legislative developments and accessing funding opportunities to drive the green and digital transitions.

LEADERS

- Pieter Faber, Cities Northern Netherlands, p.faber@citiesnorthernnetherlands.eu
- Ingvild Jacobsen, Oslo Region European Office, ingvild@osloregion.org
- Valentine Willmann, Scotland Europa, valentine.willmann@scotent.co.uk
- Juan José Fernández-Blanco Centeno, Junta De Extremadura Fundecyt Pctex, juan.fernandez@fundecyt-pctex.es
- Andrei Moscal, North-East Regional Development Agency, andrei.moscal@adrnordest.ro

Smart Cities Working Group



The **Smart Cities Working Group** serves as a platform to provide early insights into priorities and funding opportunities related to Smart Cities, with a particular focus on the EU Mission on 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030. The WG aims to foster the exchange of experiences and facilitate matchmaking to support the creation of new partnerships and projects. Taking an integrated and holistic approach, the Working Group addresses key topics such as citizen engagement, data-driven policy-making and innovative governance models for smart cities.

LEADERS

- Miia Paananen-Docx, Turku-Southwest Finland European Office, miia.paananen-docx@turku.fi
- Pieter Faber, Cities Northern Netherlands, p.faber@citiesnorthernnetherlands.eu
- Runa Monstad, Stavanger Region European Office, Runa.Monstad@stavangerregion.no
- Helle Bech Sørensen-Hylle, South Denmark EU Office, hbh@southdenmark.eu
- Alis Socea, North-East Regional Development Agency, alis.socea@adrnordest.ro

Transport Working Group



The **Transport Working Group** promotes cooperation and facilitates dialogue among ERRIN members in the field of innovative mobility and transport solutions. It also serves as a crucial intermediary between members and EU institutions to raise awareness on the regional and local dimensions of the thematic areas. The group fosters discussion on new developments in EU policy related to transport and mobility, with a particular emphasis on research and innovation. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in facilitating project development and encouraging regional participation in European projects.

LEADERS

- Marcus Göpfert, Stuttgart Region European Office, marcus.goepfert@region-stuttgart.de
- Françoise Guaspere, Ile-de-France Europe, francoise.guaspere@iledefrance-europe.eu
- Francisco Vigalondo, Aragón Exterior, francisco.vigalondo@aragonexterior.es
- Karim Hassan Hosny, ACCIÓ – Catalonia Trade & Investment Agency, khassan@catalonia.com

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Energy & Climate Change WG

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Smart Cities WG

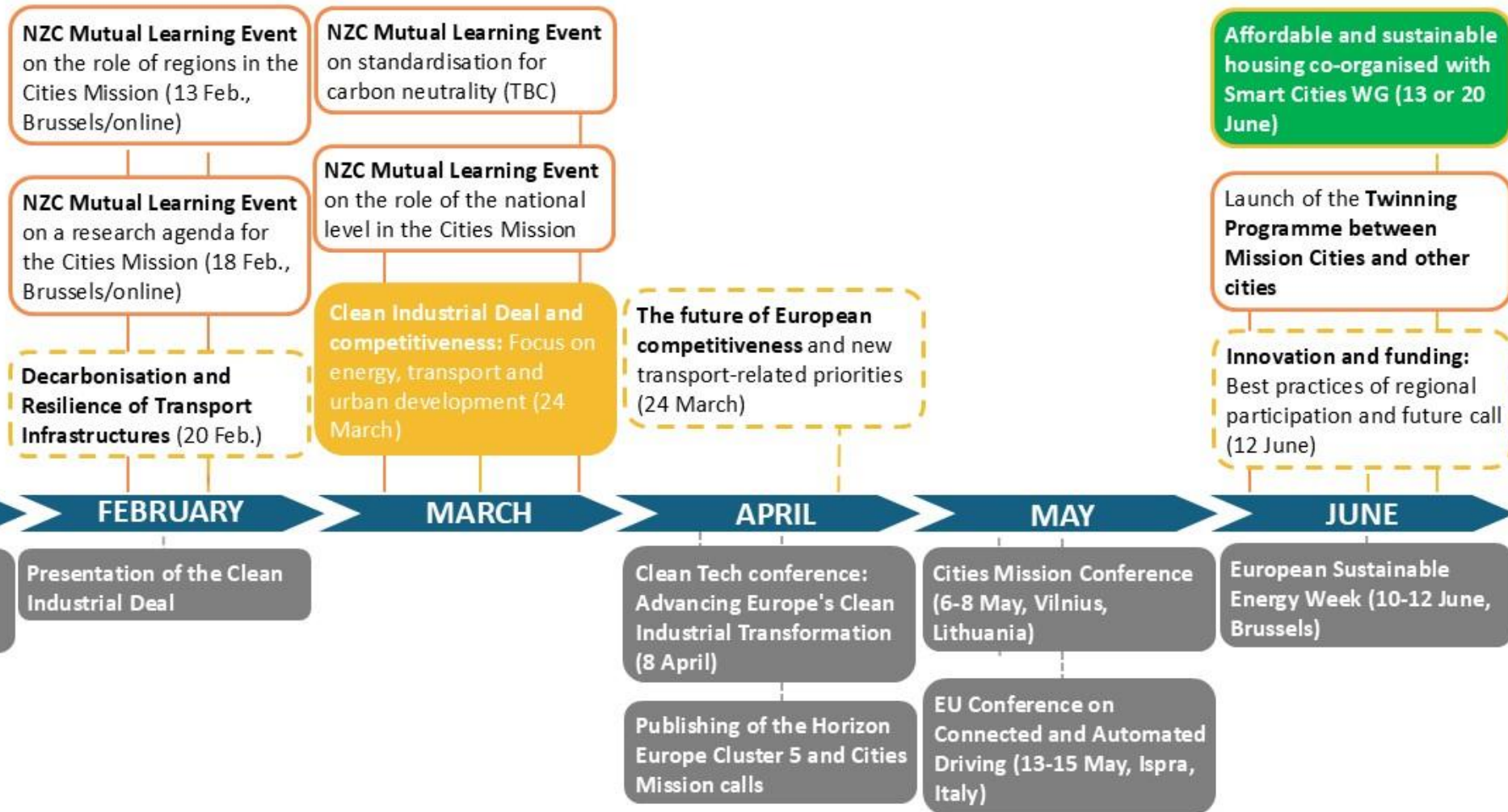
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Transport WG

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LOW CARBON CLUSTER 2025 TIMELINE



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