



## Speeding up cities' journey to climate neutrality

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Can you imagine the cities in which we will live in 2030? The European Commission is on a mission to make them climate-neutral and smart.

On X September 2021 (date tbc), the European Commission launched five Missions that will deliver solutions to some of our greatest global challenges. With some inspiration from the Apollo programme that succeeded in putting a man on the moon within 10 years, EU Missions are a commitment to find solutions to some of the major societal challenges by 2030. The challenges addressed are cancer, adaptation to climate change, healthy oceans and waters, soil health and last but not least, climate-neutral and smart cities.

Cities play a pivotal role in **achieving climate neutrality** by 2050, the goal of the European Green Deal. They take up only 4% of the EU's land area, but they are home to 75% of EU citizens. Furthermore, cities consume over 65% of the world's energy and account for more than 70% of global CO2 emissions.

Many European cities are already doing fantastic work towards climate neutrality. A number of cities have made commitments to reduce climate emissions, which gives us a strong base to start from. Yet only a handful of cities have adopted a target of climate neutrality by 2030. We will work with 100 cities to help them get there.

The objectives that we have set ourselves for the Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities are ambitious and necessary. The Mission will involve local authorities, citizens, businesses, investors as well as regional and national authorities in:

1. **Delivering 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030;**
2. Ensuring that these cities act as experimentation and innovation hubs to **enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050.**

This challenge is also an opportunity for European cities to substantially contribute to the Green Deal target of reducing emissions by 55% by 2030 and, in more practical terms, to offer cleaner air, safer transport and less congestion and noise to their citizens.

This is also the chance for cities to lead in climate and digital innovation, to showcase their attractiveness for investments from innovative companies and highly skilled workers, and to inspire other cities in Europe and beyond.

Cities already have access to a wide range of programmes at regional, national, European and global level. The added value of the EU Missions' approach is that the Cities Mission takes a cross-sectoral and demand-led approach, **creating synergies** between existing

initiatives. It bases all of its activities on the actual needs of cities in reaching the Mission objectives.

The Cities Mission is part of the EU Missions initiative - one of the main novelties of the Horizon Europe programme. Rooted in research and innovation, the Missions aim to address societal challenges and to closely engage and involve citizens in this work. Horizon Europe will invest around EUR 350 million in research and innovation actions linked to the Mission (e.g. in mobility, energy, urban planning) in the period 2021-23. Some calls for proposals are already open in the Commission's [Funding & Tender Portal](#) and a first full work programme will be published there by the end of the year.

The Cities Mission will have as its central feature the **Climate City Contracts**. Each participating city will draw up, sign and implement such a contract to participate in the Cities Mission. While not legally binding, these contracts will constitute a clear and highly visible political commitment not just to the Commission and the national and regional authorities, but also to their citizens. They will set out plans for the city to achieve climate neutrality by 2030 and they will include an investment plan. Climate City Contracts will be co-created with local stakeholders and citizens, with the help of a **Mission Platform**. The Mission Platform will provide the necessary technical, regulatory and financial assistance to cities.

EU Missions combine ambitions with concrete goals and they will mobilise the enormous potential of the EU, rallying funding, talent and policies to address the challenges that affect all of us. To achieve the climate neutrality objective of the Cities Mission we will need a **wide array of funding and financing instruments** both from private and public sources. The Cities Mission will help cities develop their access to the broader finance community, notably through the [InvestEU Programme](#), the European Investment Bank Group, national promotional banks and capital markets. Availability of **private financing for green investment** will play a key role. The EU sustainable finance agenda offers new opportunities for people to directly contribute to the financing of sustainable projects with a positive impact on their local environment.

Missions **make Europeans part of the solution**. They engage people at the European, regional and local level in designing our future together. In line with this, the Cities Mission is built around the involvement of citizens in their different roles as political agents, users, producers, investors, consumers or visitors. Already during the **preparatory phase** in 2020, 12 cities were involved in citizen engagement events. During the **inception and deployment phase**, cities will involve citizens in drawing up and implementing the Climate City Contracts. This will build inclusiveness, and trust in the Cities Mission.

There are obvious **synergies with other EU Missions** such as the Adaptation to Climate Change Mission and the Oceans, Seas and Waters Mission. For instance, port cities will have to take into account the impact of sea level rise for their infrastructures when developing

their transition towards climate neutrality. The Climate City Contracts will also enable participating cities to integrate the principles of the [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative in their climate-neutral plans. We are keen to develop these links and join forces.

We are aware that many cities are eager to find out about the concrete requirements and benefits of participation. On our [website](#), we have published a detailed **implementation plan** that builds on the [report of the Cities Mission Board](#). An **info kit** for cities will be released shortly and we plan to launch, before the end of the year, a **Call for Expression of Interest** to participate in the Mission. We encourage all cities to respond to this call. The Mission will not only speed up the journey of the most advanced cities, but will also be **inclusive** and involve cities that are just beginning their transition towards climate neutrality. We will need all the cities on board, for a climate-neutral Europe by 2050.

It's an exciting journey that we are just beginning – we look forward to working closely with you and your city!