



European Mission “100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030”

Selection process - methodology

SUMMARY

A Call for Expression of Interest to participate in the Mission “100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030” (the “Cities Mission”) was open from 25 November 2021 until 31 January 2022. Interested cities were asked to complete a **questionnaire** to enable an assessment of their eligibility, their ambition, their current situation and plans. It resulted in **377 expressions of interest (EOIs)** from cities in all 27 EU Member States (representing 18% of the EU’s total population) and in 9 countries associated to Horizon Europe or in the process of negotiating association.

It was decided to select exactly 100 cities from EU Member States and an additional 12 cities from countries associated to Horizon Europe or in the process of negotiating association (to ensure a comparable success rate with EU cities that submitted EOIs of similar quality). Eligibility checks (relating to the population threshold set for participation¹ and to the required letter or declaration of commitment from the city’s mayor or authorised representative) resulted in 362 eligible EOIs.

The selection was then carried out in two phases to reflect the goals of the Cities Mission – have 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030, but also to prepare the ground for all cities to be climate-neutral by 2050. This means that excellence was not the only criterion, but also diversity and different levels of preparedness were needed in the list of selected cities.

- In **Phase 1**, the process endeavoured to identify the cities that are best prepared to deliver on the ambitious goals of the Mission. EOIs were assessed by independent experts. This evaluation focused exclusively on the **merits of the EOIs**, as expressed in the questionnaire, and led to an ordered list of cities.
- In **Phase 2**, the European Commission services, including representatives of various departments across the institution, applied further criteria on the outcome of Phase 1 to ensure **geographical balance, inclusiveness** in view of preparedness and city typologies, as well as the potential **impact** (in terms of both emission reduction potential and size of population).

¹ As described in the Info Kit for cities and in the questionnaire, the population threshold was set at 50.000 inhabitants. A lower threshold of 10.000 inhabitants applied for countries with 5 or fewer cities with more than 100.000 inhabitants.

IN DETAIL

The questionnaire required cities to provide data and information in a largely standardised way to facilitate a fair evaluation and quantification process. It also included questions (such as those on the level of current emissions or existing barriers and assistance needs) to collect information relevant to criteria applied in Phase 2 that were not assessed as part of Phase 1.

PHASE 1:

In Phase 1, the EOIs were evaluated in two different ways:

1. Closed questions (single or multiple-choice questions) were automatically evaluated according to a pre-defined evaluation grid (see below).
2. Open questions (free text questions) were assessed by the expert evaluators.

# of evaluated questions per section of the questionnaire	Closed Qs	Open Qs	Grand Total
Current emissions	6	5	11
Current policies	75	36	111
Ambition for climate neutrality	16	20	36
Partnerships	8	6	14
Capital needs and investment strategies	6	2	8
Governance	20	6	26
Barriers, risks and assistance needs		1	1
Grand Total	131	76	207

All evaluated questions in the questionnaire were divided into 6 evaluation categories to facilitate Phase 1 as well as to enable a systematic approach to Phase 2. These were:

- **Ambition**
- **Capacity**
- **Collaboration**
- **Integrated/holistic approach**
- **Preparedness**
- **Smartness/Digitalisation**

Share in the overall evaluation by metric and question type			
METRICS/CATEGORIES	Closed questions (pre-evaluated)	Open questions (assessed by evaluators)	Grand Total
Ambition	12%	12%	23 %
Capacity	12%	7%	19%
Collaboration	7%	3%	11%
Integrated/holistic approach	17%	0%	18%
Preparedness	5%	15%	22%
Smartness/Digitalisation	5%	2%	7%
Grand Total	60%	40%	100%

PHASE 2:

The starting point of Phase 2 was the ordered list of cities based on the evaluation of the questionnaires by independent experts (Phase 1).

The purpose of this phase was to add to the list of cities considerations of balance and inclusiveness, which had been explained in the [Info Kit for Cities](#) (published in October 2021) as follows (p.5-6):

“Inclusiveness is a central principle followed by the Cities Mission. The Mission wants to bring cities of different sizes and from all corners of Europe within its scope. Specifically, it is the intention of the Mission to have at least one city from each Member State. Hence the selection approach will also include criteria based on inclusiveness (cities of different sizes and typologies) and geographical balance (cities from all Member States and climatic zones).

Large cities are especially encouraged to join the Mission because of their potential big impact on emission reduction. (...)

Diversity is another central principle followed by the Cities Mission. The Mission seeks to ensure that we have a fully diverse group of cities and wants to bring on board cities with very different starting points in terms of climate neutrality. Hence the selection approach will also include criteria based on diversity (cities starting their transition from different levels of preparedness and with different decarbonisation efforts and pathways), impact and value added of the Mission.”

This phase started with a check concerning **groupings of cities**, which were treated together as one application.

The further process was then carried out as follows in relation to EU cities (for cities from associated countries, please see below):

Cities from EU countries

At the beginning of this phase, the **best prepared city for each EU Member State** was selected on the basis of the ordered list from Phase 1. These were selected by default, as it was the Mission's stated aim to include at least one city from each EU Member State.

Additionally, **all capital cities** that applied to take part in the Mission were selected. This was done (1) because of the traction that capital cities generally have in their countries, (2) because of the importance of capitals in the forming of national-level support structures – which is of particular importance in view of the high number of cities that expressed their interest to participate and that cannot participate directly in the EU Mission, but that should receive national support for their ambition – as well as (3) because of the fact that capitals are generally large cities that can have a big impact in terms of emission reduction.

Subsequently, further highly prepared cities from the ordered list from Phase 1 were added ("**frontrunner cities**"), as well as cities that corresponded to the following criteria:

- "**maximum impact**": cities from the ordered list of cities from Phase 1 that have the potential to have the biggest impact in terms of population and emission reduction
- "**geographical balance**": cities from the ordered list of cities from Phase 1 to adjust the geographical balance of the list
- "**specific profile cities**": top cities from the ordered list for each of the following profiles if missing from the list established so far
 - cities with special strength/interest in **innovation and digital matters** (in view of the Mission's focus on climate-neutral **and smart** cities)
 - **smaller cities** close to the minimum population thresholds with particularly ambitious and innovative strategies
 - cities particularly strong on **co-benefits** (economic, social, health, environmental)
 - cities that are **less well prepared**, but particularly ambitious

Finally, it was verified that the list contained cities from all **climatic zones** present in continental Europe.

Finalisation: The resulting list of 100 cities was ordered by country with the selected cities in alphabetical order.

Cities from associated countries

For cities from countries associated to Horizon Europe or in the process of negotiating association, 12 places were made available, ensuring with this number a comparable success rate with cities from the EU Member States that submitted EOIs of similar quality.

The selection followed the same approach as was used for the Member States:

- **national dimension:** the most prepared city by country
- **quality (“frontrunner cities”):** top proposals regardless of their location
- **impact:** cities selected for their potential impact in terms of emissions and population

The number of cities selected for each criterion was in the same proportion as for the Member States. Due to the relatively small number of applications to retain compared to the number of targeted countries, it was not possible however to apply the criteria concerning geographical balance and specific profile cities.