

Klimaneutrale Stadt

<https://klimaneutralestadt.at/en>

Austria's "Klimaneutrale Stadt" (Climate Neutral City) is a national mission-oriented initiative supporting cities and municipalities in their transformation towards climate neutrality by 2040. It is coordinated by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action (BMK) and the Klima- und Energiefonds (Austrian Climate and Energy Fund), and implemented in partnership with AustriaTech, the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG), research institutions, city administrations, private companies, and civil society.

The programme acts as a collaborative framework for multi-level governance, bringing together national, regional, and local stakeholders under one mission-driven structure. More than 45 pioneer cities (Pionierstädte) have joined the initiative, covering about 40% of Austria's population. Each city develops its own "Zielbild" — a vision and roadmap toward climate neutrality — co-created with local communities, businesses, universities, and urban planners.

Stakeholder engagement is at the heart of the initiative:

- Cities and municipalities lead local implementation, preparing integrated transition plans and aligning them with national policies and EU Missions.
- Research and innovation actors (universities, applied research centres) develop and test new technologies, planning tools, and systemic solutions in energy, mobility, and building sectors.
- Private companies and utilities contribute through innovation partnerships, pilot investments, and technological co-development in areas such as renewable energy, e-mobility, and data platforms.
- Citizens and local NGOs participate in co-creation processes, living labs, and public consultations to ensure social acceptance and inclusiveness of transition measures.
- National agencies (BMK, FFG, AustriaTech) ensure strategic alignment, financing, monitoring, and capacity building across all participating cities.

Regular Dialogue Forums (Dialogforen) and Thematic Working Groups facilitate exchange among stakeholders, enabling collective learning and replication of solutions. These formats create a strong community of practice that bridges local action with national policy and European frameworks such as the EU Mission "Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities".

The initiative also offers targeted R&D and innovation funding through the annual call "Technologies and Innovations for the Climate Neutral City" (TIKS). These calls support cooperative projects involving municipalities, research institutions, and businesses. Each project is expected to demonstrate not only technological innovation but also governance innovation — new forms of cross-sector partnerships and financing models.

By fostering a broad partnership ecosystem and aligning stakeholders across governance levels, Klimaneutrale Stadt provides a proven model of mission-driven collaboration. It illustrates how climate neutrality can be accelerated when cities, governments, and knowledge actors co-create solutions, share data, and pool resources. For the Danube Region, this Austrian initiative demonstrates how structured multi-stakeholder cooperation can transform local ambitions into measurable, system-wide progress toward the European Green Deal objectives.