CLIMATE CITY CONTRACT

STAKEHOLDER HANDBOOK

Interreg Danube Region

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HARMONMISSIONS

A Practical Guide for Stakeholders Participating in Climate-Neutral City Transitions

This Handbook is inspired by the EU Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities and is aligned with the NetZeroCities approach, https://netzerocities.eu/ .

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Executive Summary

The **Climate City Contract (CCC) Stakeholder Handbook** provides practical guidance for engaging stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of Climate City Contracts within the framework of the EU Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities. It emphasises that climate neutrality cannot be achieved by municipal governments alone, as most urban emissions are influenced by actors outside local administrations, including businesses, utilities, universities, civil society organisations, investors, and citizens. The handbook promotes a collaborative governance approach in which stakeholders act as co-creators of the transition rather than passive consultees.

The handbook outlines the specific roles of key stakeholder groups and introduces a structured methodology for assessing their readiness and capacity through a **Stakeholder Climate Neutrality Audit**. This audit evaluates factors such as climate maturity, emissions influence, implementation capacity, investment potential, innovation capacity, collaboration readiness, and commitment levels. The results help cities prioritise stakeholders, develop tailored engagement strategies, and integrate stakeholder commitments into Climate City Contracts.

A central element of the handbook is the **Stakeholder Forum**, which serves as the primary platform for participation, collaboration, and co-creation. Through thematic working groups, workshops, consultations, and living labs, stakeholders jointly design climate actions, investment priorities, and governance arrangements. The handbook highlights that successful stakeholder engagement depends on transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and continuous learning.

The document further emphasises the importance of **co-creating climate actions**, ensuring that proposed measures reflect local needs, capacities, and opportunities while building broad ownership and support. Stakeholders contribute to the development of commitments, action plans, and investment plans across sectors such as energy, mobility, buildings, circular economy, nature-based solutions, and digitalisation.

Finally, the handbook introduces the concept of a **Local Climate Neutrality Ecosystem**, which transforms stakeholder engagement into long-term collaboration. By strengthening partnerships, knowledge exchange, innovation networks, and joint investment initiatives, cities can create a self-sustaining ecosystem that supports implementation, scaling of solutions, and continuous progress towards climate neutrality.

While developed in the context of the EU Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, this handbook is equally relevant for cities outside the Mission framework. It provides practical methodologies and tools that can support any municipality seeking to accelerate its transition towards climate neutrality through stronger stakeholder engagement, collaborative governance, and long-term partnerships.

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1. Understanding Climate City Contract (CCC)

A Climate City Contract (CCC) is a strategic agreement that brings together a city, public institutions, businesses, universities, civil society organizations, and citizens around a shared commitment to achieve climate neutrality. Developed within the framework of the European Commission's Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, the contract is not a legally binding document but rather a collaborative roadmap that defines a city's climate goals, planned actions, governance arrangements, and investment needs. It helps align different stakeholders behind a common vision and creates a transparent framework for coordinating efforts and tracking progress.

For stakeholders outside the municipality, the Climate City Contract serves as an invitation to participate in the city's climate transition.

It identifies opportunities for cooperation, innovation, investment, and joint action across sectors such as energy, mobility, buildings, waste management, and digital solutions. By bringing together public and private actors, the CCC helps mobilize resources, strengthen partnerships, and accelerate the implementation of climate solutions that contribute to a more sustainable, resilient, and competitive city.

2. Why Stakeholders Matter

Actors outside municipal administrations influence most urban greenhouse gas emissions and control many of the assets, investments, and behaviours that shape a city's climate trajectory. While local
governments provide leadership and coordination, climate neutrality cannot be achieved through municipal action alone. Utilities, businesses, property owners, universities, financial institutions, civil society organisations, and citizens all play a critical role in shaping energy use, mobility, buildings, waste management, and investment decisions.

Achieving climate neutrality therefore requires a shift from traditional government-led planning to collaborative governance based on shared ownership and collective action. Climate City Contracts (CCCs) provide a framework for bringing together public, private, academic, financial, and civic actors around a common vision and shared commitment to climate neutrality.

Because climate neutrality requires systemic transformation across multiple sectors, no single institution possesses the authority, resources, or expertise needed to deliver the transition independently. Decarbonising energy systems, transforming mobility, renovating buildings, and advancing circular economy solutions all depend on cooperation among diverse stakeholders.

Active stakeholder involvement also increases the legitimacy and effectiveness of climate action. When stakeholders help shape priorities, design interventions, and monitor progress, they are more likely to support implementation and contribute resources. CCCs recognise stakeholders as co-creators of the transition, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and commitments that transform individual
actions into a coordinated city-wide effort.

For cities pursuing climate neutrality, stakeholder engagement should be viewed as a strategic investment. Building trust, fostering long-term partnerships, and creating platforms for collaboration are essential prerequisites for successful Climate City Contract implementation.

3. Stakeholder Roles in the Climate Neutrality Transition

Key stakeholders in the transition to climate neutrality and in the preparation and implementation of the Climate City Contract (CCC) include cities and the municipalities, the academic community, the private sector, non-profit organizations, and residents. However, the central government and its agencies, as well as regional governments and their agencies, also play an important role.

Table 1 Key stakeholders and their roles and contributions to the preparation and implementation of the Climate City Contract

Stakeholder	Key roles and contributions to the preparation and implementation of the Climate City Contract
Cities and Municipalities	**Strategic integrators** – aligning climate goals with urban development, mobility, energy and social policies. **Conveners of stakeholders** – bringing together businesses, utilities, universities, NGOs, housing providers and citizens to co-create solutions. **Political guarantors** – ensuring long-term commitment, accountability and legitimacy through political leadership. **Investment coordinators** – identifying financing needs, preparing project pipelines and connecting climate priorities with public and private funding sources.
Academic Sector	**Scientific advisor and analyst** – develops greenhouse gas inventories, baseline assessments and decarbonisation pathways. **Systems integrator** – identifies connections between energy, mobility, buildings, land use, social systems and the economy to avoid fragmented solutions. **Innovation catalyst** – provides access to research projects, pilot technologies, startups and innovation hubs. **Capacity builder** – strengthens the skills of municipal staff and local stakeholders through training, workshops and knowledge exchange. **Independent evaluator** – supports monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of climate actions.

Stakeholder	Key roles and contributions to the preparation and implementation of the Climate City Contract
Private Sector	**Investor and co-financier** – mobilizes capital and co-finances climate infrastructure and transformation projects. **Technology and solution provider** – delivers expertise and solutions in renewable energy, energy efficiency, smart mobility, digitalization and the circular economy. **Market enabler** – creates demand for low-carbon solutions through procurement, service provision and supply chains. **Risk-sharing partner** – participates in public-private partnerships and helps distribute financial, technological and operational risks. **Employer and change agent** – influences behaviour through workplace practices, mobility schemes and corporate culture.
Non-Profit Sector	**Facilitating participatory processes** and ensuring the involvement of citizens, community groups, and vulnerable populations. **Providing expertise** on climate mitigation and adaptation, energy poverty, social justice, circular economy approaches, and nature-based solutions. **Acting as intermediaries between local authorities and higher governance levels**, helping cities align local actions with national and EU climate frameworks.
Citizens	Playing a role throughout the entire Climate City Contract lifecycle. During the planning phase, they help identify priorities, opportunities, and potential social impacts. Beyond formal participation, **citizens contribute through everyday behavioural choices** related to energy use, transport, consumption, and waste management.

4. Stakeholder Climate Neutrality Audit

Achieving climate neutrality requires cities to move beyond general stakeholder engagement and develop a clear understanding of which actors have the greatest influence on emissions, investment decisions, innovation capacity, and implementation potential. The Stakeholder Climate Neutrality Audit is a structured assessment tool designed to evaluate the readiness, capacity, and commitment of stakeholders to contribute to the Climate City Contract (CCC) and the city's climate-neutrality pathway.

The audit builds upon stakeholder ecosystem mapping, which serves as a strategic process for identifying, visualising, and understanding the roles, relationships, influence, and interests of actors involved in the urban transition. While ecosystem mapping answers the question "Who are the relevant stakeholders and how are they connected?", the Climate Neutrality Audit addresses the next critical question: "How prepared and capable are these stakeholders to actively contribute to climate neutrality?"

Objectives of the Audit

The primary objective of the Stakeholder Climate Neutrality Audit is to provide evidence-based insights that support stakeholder engagement, commitment-building, and implementation planning.
Specifically, the audit aims to:

- Assess stakeholders' climate maturity and understanding of climate-neutrality objectives.
- Evaluate their influence on greenhouse gas emissions and their capacity to contribute to emissions reduction.
- Identify innovation potential, investment capacity, and implementation capabilities.
- Analyse willingness and readiness to participate in Climate City Contract actions.
- Detect barriers, risks, and opportunities that may affect stakeholder participation.
- Support the development of tailored engagement and partnership strategies.

Stakeholder Audit Step by Step

A Stakeholder Climate Neutrality Audit should be implemented as a structured and participatory process that combines stakeholder analysis, engagement, assessment, and validation. Rather than functioning as a compliance audit, its purpose is to understand the readiness, influence, capacities, and commitment of key actors to contribute to the city's climate-neutrality transition and Climate City Contract (CCC).

Step 1: Stakeholder Ecosystem Mapping

Objective

Identify all relevant stakeholders that influence, contribute to, or are affected by the city's climate-neutrality transition.

Key Activities

- Conduct a stakeholder mapping workshop involving representatives from different sectors.
- Review existing city strategies, plans, partnerships, and projects.

- Identify stakeholders from:
  - Municipal departments and public agencies
  - Utilities and infrastructure providers
  - Private sector and business associations
  - Universities and research institutions
  - NGOs and civil society organisations
  - Financial institutions and investors
  - Community groups and citizen representatives
  - Regional and national authorities

Recommended Tools

Power–Interest Matrix, Stakeholder Influence–Impact Grid, Social Network Analysis, Salience Model

Expected Outputs

- Comprehensive stakeholder database
- Ecosystem map showing relationships and influence
- Preliminary stakeholder categorisation
- Identification of key actors and potential gaps in representation

Added Value

This step establishes a shared understanding of the urban climate ecosystem and helps ensure that no critical actors are overlooked during the Climate City Contract process.

Step 2: Preliminary Stakeholder Screening

Objective

Develop an initial understanding of stakeholder readiness and climate-related activities before conducting more detailed assessments.

Key Activities:

Distribute a short self-assessment questionnaire covering:

- Existing climate and sustainability strategies
- Climate governance structures
- Emissions monitoring practices
- Participation in climate projects
- Investment activities
- Innovation initiatives
- Partnership experience

Recommended Tools

Online surveys, Self-assessment questionnaires, Organisational profiling templates.

Expected Outputs

- Initial readiness assessment
- Baseline information for interview preparation
- Identification of stakeholders requiring deeper investigation

Added Value

This stage helps optimise resources by focusing detailed assessments on the most relevant stakeholders.

Step 3: In-Depth Stakeholder Interviews

Objective

Gather qualitative insights into stakeholder capacities, ambitions, barriers, and potential contributions to climate neutrality.

Key Activities

Conduct semi-structured interviews (typically 45–90 minutes) with key stakeholders.

Suggested interview themes include:

- Climate Maturity
- Existing climate targets and commitments
- Organisational sustainability practices
- Previous experience with climate projects
- Emissions Influence
- Areas of influence over urban emissions
- Operational and supply-chain emissions
- Potential for emissions reduction
- Investment Capacity
- Planned investments
- Access to funding mechanisms
- Potential contributions to the CCC Investment Plan
- Innovation Potential
- Research and development activities
- Participation in pilot projects and living labs
- Capacity for scaling innovative solutions
- Collaboration Readiness
- Existing partnerships and networks
- Experience with multi-stakeholder initiatives
- Openness to co-creation processes
- Commitment Level
- Willingness to participate in the Climate City Contract
- Readiness to make formal commitments
- Available resources for implementation

- Recommended Participants

Priority should be given to:

- Major employers
- Utilities
- Public transport operators
- Universities
- Developers
- Investors
- NGOs
- Community leaders
- Public institutions with significant influence on emissions

Expected Outputs

- Stakeholder profiles
- Identification of opportunities, barriers, and risks
- Evidence base for stakeholder segmentation

Added Value

Interviews often reveal strategic information that cannot be captured through surveys alone, including organisational motivations, informal relationships, and political considerations.

Step 4: Stakeholder Assessment and Scoring

Objective

Evaluate stakeholders against a common set of criteria to support prioritisation and engagement planning.

Key Assessment Dimensions

The audit should evaluate stakeholders across several dimensions listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Dimensions for evaluation

Dimensions for evaluation	Description	Key indicators
Climate Maturity	Assessment of the stakeholder's awareness, experience, and strategic commitment to climate action.	Existence of climate or sustainability strategies Previous climate-related projects and initiatives Experience with emissions reduction measures Alignment with climate neutrality objectives

Dimensions for evaluation	Description	Key indicators
Emissions Influence	Evaluation of the stakeholder's direct or indirect influence on greenhouse gas emissions within the city.	Operational emissions footprint Influence over energy consumption, mobility, buildings, or industrial processes Capacity to affect emissions through products, services, or policies
Implementation Capacity	Assessment of the stakeholder's ability to contribute to the delivery of climate-neutrality actions.	Human resources and expertise Organisational capacity Technical capabilities Project management experience
Investment Capacity	Evaluation of the stakeholder's ability to mobilise financial resources for climate action.	Available financial resources Access to funding mechanisms Investment potential Capacity to co-finance climate initiatives
Innovation Potential	Assessment of the stakeholder's ability to develop, test, and scale innovative climate solutions.	Research and development activities Participation in innovation projects Involvement in living labs and pilot initiatives Capacity to support technological and social innovation
Collaboration Readiness	Evaluation of the stakeholder's willingness and ability to engage in multi-stakeholder cooperation	Previous partnership experience Participation in networks and collaborative initiatives Openness to co-creation processes Commitment to knowledge sharing
Commitment Level	Assessment of the stakeholder's readiness to formally support and contribute to the Climate City Contract.	Willingness to make public commitments Readiness to allocate resources Long-term engagement potential Support for climate-neutrality targets
Stakeholder Influence	Evaluation of the stakeholder's strategic importance within the urban climate transition ecosystem.	Institutional influence Market influence Community reach and credibility Ability to mobilise other actors

Dimensions for evaluation	Description	Key indicators
Risk and Resistance Assessment	Identification of potential barriers, concerns, or resistance that may affect implementation.	Potential opposition to climate measures Organisational constraints Regulatory or financial barriers Perceived risks associated with the transition
Social Inclusion and Just Transition Impact	Assessment of the stakeholder's contribution to a fair, inclusive, and socially balanced climate transition.	Contribution to social cohesion Support for energy poverty reduction Promotion of equitable access to climate benefits

Recommended Tools

Multi-criteria assessment matrix, Weighted scoring model, Stakeholder dashboards

Expected Outputs

- Stakeholder ranking
- Comparative assessment results
- Priority stakeholder groups
- Identification of capacity-building needs

Added Value

The scoring process creates a transparent and evidence-based foundation for engagement and commitment strategies.

Step 5: Stakeholder Segmentation

Objective

Classify stakeholders according to their strategic importance and readiness to contribute to climate neutrality.

Suggested Categories

- **Champions** – highly committed actors capable of leading climate initiatives.
- **Enablers** – organisations that provide resources, expertise, or infrastructure.
- **Followers** – stakeholders willing to engage but requiring support or incentives.
- **Critical Actors** – organisations with significant influence on emissions whose participation is essential but may be uncertain.
- **Laggards or Detractors** – stakeholders with low engagement or potential resistance to change.

Expected Outputs

- Stakeholder engagement strategy
- Tailored communication plans
- Priority actions for each stakeholder group

Added Value

Segmentation enables cities to allocate resources efficiently and develop differentiated engagement approaches.

Step 6: Validation Through the Stakeholder Forum

Objective

Review and validate audit findings through a transparent and participatory process.

Key Activities

- Present results to the Stakeholder Forum.
- Facilitate discussions on stakeholder classification and priorities.
- Validate findings and assumptions.
- Identify missing stakeholders or emerging actors.
- Refine engagement and partnership strategies.

Recommended Methods

Stakeholder Forum meetings, Co-creation workshops, World Café sessions, Focus groups, Consensus-building exercises.

Expected Outputs

- Validated audit results
- Improved stakeholders buy-in
- Shared understanding of roles and responsibilities

Added Value

Validation strengthens trust, legitimacy, and ownership of the Climate City Contract process.

Step 7: Integration into the Climate City Contract

Objective

Translate audit findings into concrete Climate City Contract commitments, actions, and investment priorities.

Application of Results

- Commitments: Identify stakeholders ready to make formal commitments.
- Action Plan: Align responsibilities with stakeholder capacities and expertise.
- Investment Plan: Mobilise investors, businesses, and public institutions capable of financing climate actions.
- Governance Framework: Define stakeholder roles within implementation and monitoring structures.

Expected Outputs

- Stakeholder commitment framework
- Partnership development roadmap
- Climate-neutrality implementation ecosystem

Success Factors

A successful Stakeholder Climate Neutrality Audit requires comprehensive stakeholder representation, transparent assessment criteria, and a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure credible and actionable results. Strong political support and active stakeholder participation are essential for building trust, legitimacy, and commitment throughout the audit process.

The greatest value of the audit is achieved when its findings are directly integrated into the Climate City Contract, informing stakeholder engagement strategies, partnerships, commitments, and implementation planning.

5. Stakeholder Forum Management

The Stakeholder Forum serves as the central platform for participation, collaboration, and co-creation within the Climate City Contract (CCC) process. Climate neutrality cannot be achieved by municipal administrations alone; it requires coordinated action from public authorities, businesses, academia, civil society organizations, utilities, investors, and citizens. The Stakeholder Forum provides the governance structure through which these actors can collectively contribute to the design, implementation, and monitoring of climate-neutrality actions.

Objectives of the Stakeholder Forum

The Stakeholder Forum should pursue several strategic objectives:

- Facilitate inclusive participation in the Climate City Contract process.
- Support co-creation of climate-neutrality actions and investments.
- Strengthen collaboration across sectors and governance levels.
- Improve transparency and accountability in decision-making.
- Build trust among stakeholders and foster shared ownership.
- Mobilise resources, expertise, and investments for implementation.
- Create a platform for continuous learning, monitoring, and adaptation.

Core Functions

- **Strategic Consultation:** The Forum provides structured opportunities for stakeholders to review plans, discuss priorities, identify challenges, and contribute to strategic decision-making.
- **Co-Creation and Innovation:** Stakeholders collaborate in designing actions, projects, policies, and investment initiatives related to energy, mobility, buildings, circular economy, nature-based solutions, and digitalisation.
- **Partnership Development:** The Forum facilitates the creation of partnerships among public institutions, businesses, universities, NGOs, community groups, and investors.
- **Monitoring and Learning:** The Forum supports monitoring of commitments and implementation progress while promoting knowledge exchange and continuous improvement.

Forum Structure

A successful Stakeholder Forum should include representatives from all sectors and authorities. To ensure effective participation, the Forum may establish thematic working groups focused on priority sectors such as:

- Energy and Buildings
- Sustainable Mobility
- Circular Economy
- Climate Adaptation and Nature-Based Solutions
- Finance and Investment
- Citizen Engagement and Social Inclusion

Governance Principles

The Forum should operate according to clear governance principles:

- **Inclusiveness:** Ensure broad representation of stakeholders and actively engage underrepresented groups.
- **Transparency:** Provide open access to information, meeting outcomes, and decision-making processes.
- **Accountability:** Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expected contributions.
- **Collaboration:** Promote dialogue, mutual respect, and cross-sector cooperation.
- **Adaptability:** Allow governance arrangements and participation mechanisms to evolve as the Climate City Contract develops.

Recommended Engagement Methods

A combination of engagement methods should be used to support participation:

- **Regular Forum Meetings:** Strategic meetings held two to four times per year to review progress and discuss priorities.
- **Thematic Working Groups:** Smaller expert groups focusing on specific sectors or challenges.
- **Co-Creation Workshops:** Facilitated sessions for developing actions, projects, and policy proposals.
- **Citizen Assemblies and Public Consultations:** Mechanisms to incorporate community perspectives and strengthen democratic legitimacy.
- **Living Labs: Collaborative environments** where stakeholders test and evaluate innovative solutions in real-world conditions.
- **Digital Participation Platforms:** Online tools supporting continuous communication, information sharing, and feedback collection.

Monitoring Participation and Performance

To ensure effectiveness, the Forum should monitor:

- Stakeholder participation rates
- Diversity and inclusiveness of representation
- Number of collaborative initiatives generated
- Stakeholder satisfaction and trust levels
- Progress on commitments and actions
- Contribution to Climate City Contract implementation

Annual reviews should assess Forum performance and identify opportunities for improvement.

Expected Outputs

A well-functioning Stakeholder Forum should produce:

- Stakeholder engagement plans
- Co-created climate actions and project portfolios
- Partnership agreements and collaboration initiatives
- Recommendations for Climate City Contract updates
- Stakeholder commitment declarations
- Monitoring reports and learning outcomes

Success Factors

Experience from Mission Cities and NetZeroCities initiatives demonstrates that successful Stakeholder Forums are characterised by strong political support, professional facilitation, transparent governance, active stakeholder ownership, and a clear connection between participation and decision-making. When effectively managed, the Forum becomes a permanent governance mechanism that supports the long-term transition towards climate neutrality.

6. Co-Creation of Climate Actions

Co-Creation of Climate Actions is a collaborative process through which cities and stakeholders jointly design, prioritise, and refine the actions required to achieve climate neutrality. Within the Climate City Contract (CCC) framework, co-creation ensures that climate actions are not developed solely by municipal administrations but are shaped by the knowledge, resources, experience, and ambitions of the wider urban ecosystem. By involving stakeholders throughout the design process, cities can increase the feasibility, legitimacy, and long-term ownership of climate measures.

Co-creation transforms stakeholders from passive consultees into active partners and co-implementers of the transition. It helps align climate ambitions with local realities, encourages innovation, and builds the collective commitment necessary for successful implementation.

Objectives of Co-Creation

The primary objectives of co-creation are to:

- Develop climate actions that reflect local needs, opportunities, and capacities.
- Mobilise stakeholder knowledge, expertise, and innovation.
- Build consensus around priorities and implementation pathways.
- Increase stakeholder ownership and commitment to climate-neutrality goals.
- Identify synergies across sectors and reduce potential conflicts.
- Ensure that actions contribute to a just, inclusive, and socially acceptable transition.

Core Areas of Co-Creation

Co-creation should address all major sectors contributing to climate neutrality, including:

- Energy systems and renewable energy deployment.
- Sustainable mobility and public transport.
- Buildings and energy efficiency.
- Circular economy and waste management.
- Nature-based solutions and urban resilience.
- Digitalisation and smart-city solutions.
- Social inclusion and just transition measures.

Stakeholders should also contribute to the development of the three core components of the Climate City Contract:

- Commitments – defining stakeholder contributions and responsibilities.
- Action Plan – identifying concrete interventions and projects.
- Investment Plan – exploring funding opportunities and investment needs.

Recommended Methods

Cities should apply a combination of participatory methods, including:

- Co-creation workshops and design-thinking sessions.
- Multi-stakeholder working groups.
- Citizen assemblies and public consultations.
- Living labs and pilot projects.
- Focus groups and thematic expert panels.
- Digital collaboration platforms and online engagement tools.

These methods help generate ideas, test solutions, build consensus, and integrate diverse perspectives into climate action planning.

Expected Outputs

A successful co-creation process should result in:

- A portfolio of jointly developed climate actions.
- Stakeholder-supported priorities and implementation pathways.
- Clearly defined responsibilities and commitments.
- Increased alignment between public policies, private initiatives, and community needs.
- Innovative solutions that can be scaled and replicated.

Success Factors

Successful co-creation requires broad stakeholder participation, skilled facilitation, and a transparent process that links stakeholder input directly to decision-making. Climate actions are more likely to succeed when stakeholders understand how their contributions influence outcomes and when co-created solutions are translated into concrete commitments, investments, and implementation measures. Most importantly, co-creation should be viewed as a continuous process that strengthens collaboration, trust, and shared ownership throughout the climate-neutrality transition.

7. Local Climate Neutrality Ecosystem Development

Following stakeholder mapping, the Stakeholder Climate Neutrality Audit, the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum, and the co-creation of climate actions, the next step is to transform stakeholder engagement into a long-term collaborative ecosystem. While the previous stages focus on identifying stakeholders, assessing their capacities, engaging them in governance processes, and co-designing climate actions, Local Climate Neutrality Ecosystem Development focuses on strengthening and institutionalising the relationships between stakeholders who have committed to supporting the Climate City Contract (CCC).

The objective is not to identify new actors but to create a durable framework for cooperation among stakeholders that enables continuous implementation, innovation, investment mobilisation, and collective problem-solving throughout the climate-neutrality transition. In this sense, the ecosystem becomes the operational backbone of the Climate City Contract, connecting stakeholders around shared goals, joint initiatives, and long-term partnerships.

Objectives of Ecosystem Development

The primary objectives of ecosystem development are to:

- Strengthen relationships and trust among Climate City Contract stakeholders.
- Transform individual commitments into coordinated collective action.
- Facilitate cross-sector collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- Support joint implementation of climate-neutrality projects and initiatives.
- Mobilise investments, innovation, and resources through partnership approaches.
- Create mechanisms for continuous learning, adaptation, and scaling of successful solutions.

Core Components of the Ecosystem

A climate-neutrality ecosystem is built around stakeholders already engaged in the Climate City Contract process, including public authorities, businesses, academia, utilities, financial institutions, civil society organisations, and community representatives.

Rather than functioning as a formal governance body, the ecosystem serves as a collaborative network that enables stakeholders to work together beyond individual projects or consultation processes. Key components may include:

- Strategic partnerships and cooperation agreements.
- Thematic collaboration networks.
- Innovation and knowledge-sharing platforms.
- Joint project development initiatives.
- Investment and financing partnerships.
- Living labs and pilot implementation partnerships.
- Peer-learning and capacity-building activities.

Recommended Development Approaches

Cities can strengthen their climate-neutrality ecosystem through:

- Facilitating regular interaction among stakeholders beyond formal Stakeholder Forum meetings.
- Supporting the creation of thematic partnerships focused on priority sectors such as energy, mobility, buildings, circular economy, or nature-based solutions.
- Establishing living labs and pilot initiatives that bring together multiple stakeholders around real-world challenges.

- Creating knowledge-sharing mechanisms to exchange experiences, lessons learned, and good practices.
- Encouraging joint funding applications and collaborative investment initiatives.
- Connecting local stakeholders with regional, national, and European climate-neutrality networks.

These approaches help move stakeholders from consultation and planning towards long-term collaboration and joint delivery.

Expected Outputs

A successful ecosystem development process should result in:

- Stronger and more resilient stakeholder relationships.
- Long-term partnerships supporting Climate City Contract implementation.
- Increased collaboration across sectors and organisations.
- Joint climate-neutrality projects and investment initiatives.
- Enhanced innovation and knowledge exchange capacity.
- Greater ability to scale and replicate successful climate actions.

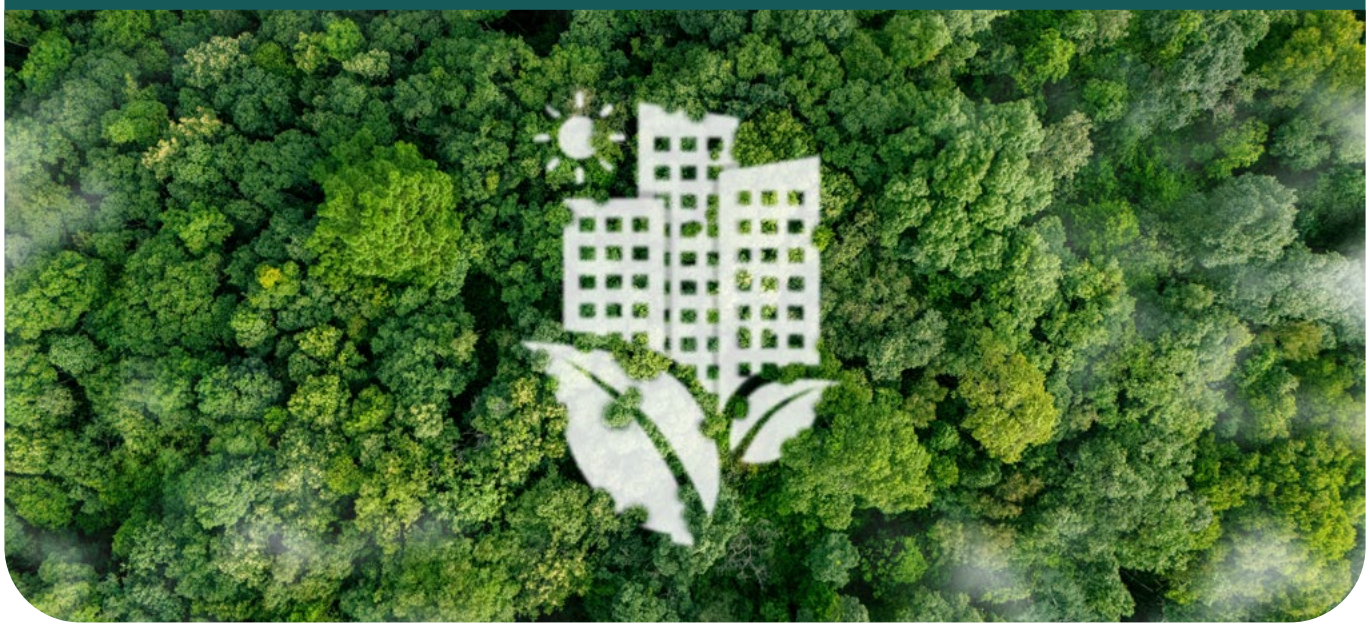
Success Factors

Successful ecosystem development depends on trust, shared ownership, and continuous engagement among stakeholders. Relationships established during stakeholder mapping, auditing, forum activities, and co-creation processes should be actively maintained and strengthened through regular collaboration and visible joint achievements. The most effective ecosystems create value for all participants, provide opportunities for collective learning, and foster a culture of cooperation that extends beyond the formal Climate City Contract process.

Strategic Outcome

The ultimate outcome of Local Climate Neutrality Ecosystem Development is the creation of a self-sustaining network of stakeholders that actively collaborates to implement, finance, improve, and scale climate-neutrality actions. By strengthening the relationships formed during the Climate City Contract preparation process, the ecosystem becomes a long-term driver of urban transformation and a key enabler of climate neutrality.

Strong partnerships, shared ownership, and active stakeholder participation are fundamental prerequisites for successful Climate City Contract implementation and long-term urban transformation.



RELATED RESOURCES

Collaborative platforms, https://netzerocities.eu/case-studies/

A DIVERSE ECOSYSTEM OF SUPPORTERS, https://netzerocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/CCC-Highlights-A-diverse-ecosystem-of-supporters-2024-12-16.pdf

M100 – Mirror Mission Cities Hub Romania, https://m100.ro/

Klimaneutrale Stadt, Austria, https://klimaneutralestadt.at/en

The “citiES 2030” platform, https://cities2030.es/en/

Bratislava Mayor’s Climate Challenge, Slovakia, https://bratislava.sk/en/enviroment-and-construction/climate/bratislava-mayors-climate-challenge