Interreg Danube Region

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HARMONMISSIONS

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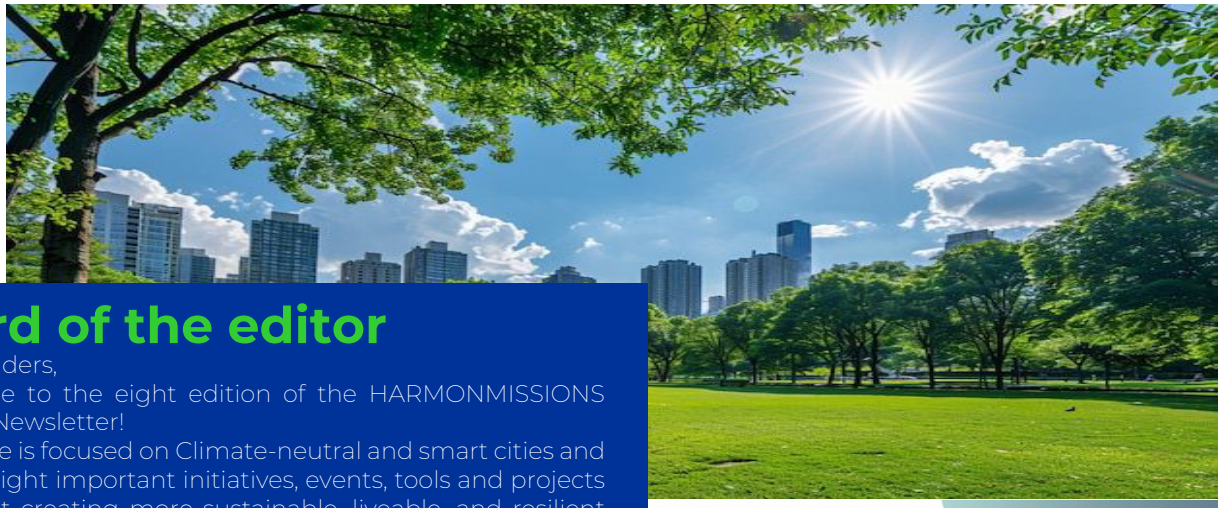
NEWSLETTER



Word of the editor

Dear readers,

Welcome to the eight edition of the HARMONMISSIONS project Newsletter!

This issue is focused on Climate-neutral and smart cities and we spotlight important initiatives, events, tools and projects aimed at creating more sustainable, liveable, and resilient urban environments across the Danube Region. From measuring urban mobility to greening our cities and improving building energy efficiency, these initiatives provide crucial pathways for local governments and communities.

The issue highlights the valuable role of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Indicators (SUMI) in measuring progress of cities in achieving more sustainable urban mobility, focusing on cleaner air, safer streets, and more affordable transport. They offer a common set of metrics for cities to track their performance, focusing on harmonization, using consistent definitions and data so results are comparable over time and between different cities. We showcase the GreeinInCities project, funded under the Horizon Europe framework, tackling urban inequalities by integrating nature and technology to improve quality of life in neglected urban areas. Furthermore, we present findings of a recent study on energy efficiency in 14 countries, including both EU and non-EU members, which found that the rate of energy renovations is low and often "shallow".

NetZeroCities is offering a free "Online Planning Lab" for cities committed to climate neutrality. This project-based Mini-Lab guides cities in developing their action plans for the net-zero transition. The course, which starts on September 16, 2025, includes 6 core sessions and 20 optional "spotlight" sessions to explore topics in depth.

LIR Evolution

ANNOUNCEMENT

Design Your City's Climate Strategy: Free Online Planning Lab

NetZeroCities, managing the Platform of the EU Cities Mission, is announcing an opportunity for cities across the EU and affiliated countries.

The program is a **project-based Mini-Lab where cities are guided to develop their action plan.**

The course is 6 core + 20 spotlight sessions, taking place twice a week for 2 hours, starting **September 16th** 2025.

More information & sing up availanle on this link https://netzerocities.eu/2025/06/13/design-your-citys-climate-strategy-join-our-free-online-planning-lab/.

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Author: City of Košice

Energy Efficiency of Buildings in the Danube Region: Key Challenges and Opportunities

Buildings are among the largest consumers of energy and key contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in the Danube region. Improving their energy performance is vital for achieving the EU's climate targets. A recent study across 14 countries – including both EU and non-EU members – analysed the condition of residential buildings, renovation rates, and the policy landscape.

Although the housing stock is growing due to urbanisation and demographic shifts, average apartment sizes are shrinking, raising new demands on spatial and energy efficiency. One of the key findings is the low rate and shallow depth of energy renovations. Many existing national strategies were drafted before the EU's 2020 Renovation Wave and often lack ambition or relevance to today's goals. Non-EU countries frequently have no structured renovation policies at all.

The study on Energy Efficiency of Buildings identifies several barriers to effective renovation. Financial support is often insufficient or unstable. Legislative frameworks are outdated or incomplete. Data on building energy performance is lacking, which hinders planning and monitoring. Socially, many residents remain unaware of the benefits of renovation or available incentives.

There is a clear gap between current national plans and the EU's 2030 and 2050 energy targets. Without stronger coordination between policies and smarter use of funding tools, most countries will struggle to reduce consumption and emissions on time.

Still, there are positive examples. Countries that combine government subsidies with private investment and good project design have achieved meaningful energy savings. Based on these findings, the study recommends the creation of unified building and energy databases, harmonised legislation, capacity building through knowledge exchange, and stable financing mechanisms.

Public awareness campaigns are also crucial for increasing participation. Better cooperation across the region could accelerate progress and unlock both environmental and socio-economic benefits.

Improving building energy efficiency is not only a matter of fulfilling EU obligations but also an opportunity to improve living standards, reduce energy poverty, and strengthen local economies in the Danube region.

Reference: Overview of new and refurbished residential buildings stock (2022)
https://energy.danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/sites/6/2022/10/Energy-Performance-of-Buildings-in-Danube-Region_final.pdf

Model building of a nursery school, Oštepová Street, Košice, Modernization Funded by EU sources – European Regional Development Fund, Integrated Operational Program 2014-2020, co-financed by the city of Košice.

Author: Institute of Modern Technologies Montenegro

Moving Cities Forward: Why SUMI Matters

Cities across Europe are rethinking how people move. From cleaner air to safer streets and more affordable transport, sustainable urban mobility is high on the agenda. But how can we know if our cities are truly making progress?

That's where Sustainable Urban Mobility Indicators (SUMI) come in. Developed with support from the European Commission, SUMI offers cities a common set of indicators to track mobility performance. The key is harmonization, using consistent definitions and data so that results are comparable across time and between cities.

SUMI focuses on the following core indicators that every city is encouraged to measure. These include:

- Affordability of public transport for the poorest group
- Accessibility of public transport for mobility-impaired groups
- Air pollutant emissions
- Noise hindrance
- Road deaths
- Access to mobility services
- Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)
- Congestion and delays
- Energy efficiency
- Opportunity for active mobility
- Multimodal integration
- Satisfaction with public transport
- Traffic safety active modes
- Modal split

Together, these indicators provide a holistic view of mobility, covering social equity, environment, safety, and user experience.

Additional indicators, such as commuting travel time, mobility space usage, or perceptions of security, can give cities even deeper insights.

Collecting mobility data is not new, but collecting it consistently is the real challenge. SUMI sets out clear definitions and methods so that a "trip" in Lisbon means the same thing as a "trip" in Helsinki.

The guidelines recommend:

- Annual data collection (with a maximum five-year gap).
- Representative surveys that reflect the entire population, not just a select group.
- A mix of traditional surveys and new technologies like smartphone tracking or GPS, while keeping inclusivity and privacy in mind.

This harmonisation means cities can benchmark themselves, identify gaps, and track the impact of policies over time.

The EU's Expert Group on Urban Mobility (EGUM) reviewed SUMI to test its usefulness for cities. Their opinion was clear:

- SUMI is a practical and valuable tool that helps cities measure progress in implementing Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs)
- The indicators support not just reporting, but strategic decision-making - for example, showing whether investments in cycling, public transport, or clean vehicles are paying off.
- By highlighting affordability, accessibility, and equity, SUMI ensures that mobility is not just efficient but also fair and inclusive.
- However, EGUM stressed the need for capacity-building: smaller cities in particular need support in collecting and managing mobility data.

They also noted that SUMI should remain flexible: while the core indicators are essential, cities should be able to choose additional measures that reflect their local priorities.

For local governments, SUMI is more than a reporting tool, it's a compass for better decision-making. With clear indicators, cities can:

- Spot inequalities in transport affordability and accessibility.
- See if investments in cycling lanes or clean buses are paying off.
- Compare their performance with peers across Europe.
- Build a stronger case for EU and national funding.

Above all, it helps ensure that urban mobility becomes safer, greener, and fairer for everyone. The SUMI guidelines show that sustainable mobility is not just about building infrastructure, it's about measuring impact and learning from each other. With the right data, cities can turn ambition into action.

As the saying goes: you can't improve what you don't measure. SUMI gives Europe's cities the tools to measure and the confidence to improve.

Source:
[1] https://transport.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/sumi_wp1_harmonisation_guidelines.pdf
[2] file:///C:/Users/ncore/Downloads/EGUM_SUMP_subgroup_SUMI_opinion%20(1).pdf

GreenInCities – Nature as an Equal Partner in Urban Development

Start date: 1 January 2024

End date: 31 December 2027

Total cost € 13.049.208,75

EU contribution € 11.986.364,50

Funding Scheme: HORIZON-IA - HORIZON Innovation Actions

In many neglected urban areas, persistent challenges such as pollution, social disparities, and inadequate infrastructure undermine residents' quality of life. Limited access to essential services and green spaces further impacts well-being, while conventional regeneration strategies and smart technologies have largely benefited wealthier districts, deepening the urban divide.

The EU-funded GreenInCities project, under the Horizon Europe framework, addresses these inequalities by raising societal awareness, moving beyond traditional greening methods, and integrating cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and immersive realities. Recognising nature as an equal stakeholder, the project pioneers a holistic approach to climate adaptation – enhancing liveability, functionality, and resilience in vulnerable communities, and fostering inclusive, sustainable cities for all.

Nova Gorica is one of the project's leading cities. Its local pilot focuses on the Koren stream area, linking Panovec city forest with the urban centre. The initiative pays special attention to vulnerable human groups (refugees, elderly people, children, migrants) and non-human communities (birds, bats, bees, domestic animals). Planned actions include the creation of open structures with green elements, a community garden with an outdoor kitchen, and spaces for socialising, integration, elderly engagement, and children's education. These interventions aim to boost biodiversity, strengthen social cohesion, and improve functional use of public space.

The *GreenInCities* consortium unites 31 partners from 13 countries. The lead partner is the *Institut D'Arquitectura Avançada de Catalunya,* with local partners from Slovenia - Municipality of Nova Gorica and University of Nova Gorica.

More about the project: https://www.greenincities.eu/nova-gorica