



**URBAN  
TRANSITIONS**  
MISSION

Call for expressions of interest to join the Urban Transition Mission

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## By, and for cities

*Version as of 20 October 2022*



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## Introduction

The Urban Transitions Mission will work directly with a cohort of 50 ambitious cities worldwide to demonstrate integrated pathways towards holistic, people-centred urban transitions built around clean energy and innovative net-zero carbon solutions.

Cities interested in engaging with the Mission are invited to apply by expressing their interest via an **open call**, open between **22 September and 29 October**.

The Mission will select up to 50 cities to join the first cohort, kicking off its work in 2023. The cohort is expected to commit to work with the Mission at least until 2025.

Following the selection process, additional eligible cities that will not be able to join the first cohort, will be invited to take part in a second cohort of 250 cities whose activities are planned to start in mid-2023, early 2024..

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) aim to inform cities, Mission Innovation member countries, and stakeholders of the Urban Transitions Mission (UTM) and to clarify this selection and engagement process.

The FAQs and the Online Application Form for cities are available at:

[www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/urban-transition-mission](http://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/urban-transition-mission).

# 1. The Urban Transitions Mission

## What is Mission Innovation?

Launched alongside the Paris Agreement in 2015, [Mission Innovation \(MI\)](#) brings together governments, public authorities, corporates, investors and academia to enable widely affordable clean energy globally and achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. Mission Innovation is the main intergovernmental platform addressing clean energy innovation through action-oriented cooperation. Our members represent over 90% of global public investments in clean energy innovation and have increased their annual investments by USD\$5.8 billion since 2015.

Mission [Innovation 2.0](#) was launched on 2 June 2021 as a global initiative catalysing a decade of action and investment in research, development and demonstration to make clean energy affordable, attractive and accessible for all. This will accelerate progress towards the Paris Agreement goals and pathways to net zero.

The [Mission Innovation's Urban Transitions Mission](#) has been launched in the framework of Mission Innovation, which is a global initiative of 22 countries and the European Commission (on behalf of the European Union) catalysing a decade of action and investment in research, development and demonstration to make clean energy affordable, attractive and accessible for all.

## What is MI's Urban Transitions Mission (UTM)?

The [Urban Transitions Mission](#) (UTM) was [launched at the COP26 in November 2021](#), with the aim to increase the capacity of cities worldwide, empowering them to shape urban transitions based on robust knowledge and a strong net-zero community of support and exchange. Thanks to increased capacity and access to knowledge, cities will be able to mobilise their inherent strength and the potential of their communities – and develop their own customised solutions to effectively transition to net-zero. The Mission aims to close the gap between research, development and deployment on systemic transition pathways to net-zero, resilient and human-centred cities through multi-level, multi-sectoral, and outcome-oriented partnerships.

## How long is the UTM intended to last?

Mission Innovation activities aim at accelerating net-zero by 2030, which is therefore the year of the Mission's goal.

The UTM will continue to engage and further collaborate with partners and stakeholders, as highlighted in the [Joint Statement of the Urban Transitions Mission](#). After this period,

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the UTM may extend its activities for five more years to continue to support the delivery of the mission's goal by 2030.

## What is the Goal of the UTM?

The Mission will work with a cohort of 50 ambitious cities worldwide to demonstrate integrated pathways towards holistic, people-centred urban transitions built around clean energy and innovative net-zero carbon solutions. By 2030, these pathways will be validated by a group of 250 cities and inspire cities across world regions on their journey towards decarbonisation.

The Mission will mobilise decision makers across all levels of government to prioritise climate-neutral and net-zero pathways enabled by clean energy and systemic innovation across all sectors and in urban governance. By accelerating capacity-building and closing the gap between research, development and deployment, the Mission will empower cities to adopt innovative solutions and help reach the tipping points in the cost and scale of those solutions for urban transitions.

The global replication potential of the partnership can lead to tipping points in the cost and scale of integrated climate-resilient and accessible solutions across sectors and across world regions.

## What is the difference between the Urban Transitions Mission and the EU Cities Mission?

The [EU Mission: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities](#) is one of the EU Missions, initiatives in the framework of the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme for the years 2021–2027 as a new way to bring concrete solutions to some of our greatest challenges. EU Missions combine research and innovation with new forms of governance and collaboration, as well as citizens engagement.

The Cities Mission will involve local authorities, citizens, businesses, investors as well as regional and national authorities to deliver 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030, and ensure that these cities act as experimentation and innovation hubs to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050

As foreseen in its implementation plan, the Cities Mission takes a cross-sectoral and demand-led approach, creating synergies between existing initiatives and basing its activities on the actual needs of cities.

Both the EU Cities Mission and the UTM benefit from the support of the European Commission, which, in the case of the Urban Transitions Mission, is a co-lead partner (together with Global Covenant of mayors and JPI Urban Europe). Synergies and

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complementarity among the two Mission will be continuously sought, while working towards the same goal of achieving net-zero as quickly as possible, by 2030.

For EU cities participating in both EU Mission and UTM, the UTM will strive to strengthen and complement the support provided by the EU Mission as much as possible.

The UTM will not require cities to follow any specific or new methodological approach, but will focus on helping cities to revise their existing climate and energy action plans, to prioritise actions according to scientific data and evidence, and bridge implementation gaps to reach net-zero, based on innovation needs.

The UTM will broker access to solutions. Thanks to a Global Innovation Alliance of partners offering support, resources and expertise (e.g. IRENA, UNFCCC Global Innovation Hub, etc.), the UTM will provide cities joining its cohorts with the opportunity to apply innovation, test, pilot and scale up solutions, and to access dedicated R&I funding and capacity building – these opportunities will be delivered in collaboration with national governments, private sector and global institutions, as well as by piloting research and innovation on the ground in collaboration with other Missions.

An overview of the main common points and differences is given in the table below:

	<b>EU Cities Mission</b>	<b>Urban Transitions Mission</b>
Scope	Cities from European and associated countries	Cities across the globe, signatories of the Global Covenant of Mayors
City cohort	100 cities + 12 from EU associated countries	50 (2022) – 250 (2024) cities
Focus	R&I, collaboration, system approach	
Timeline	2021 – 2030	
City pathways/ methodologies	City Climate Contract	Existing plan enhanced via the urban transition net-zero framework

### Are cities part of the EU Cities Mission eligible to apply for the UTM?

Yes, any city can apply. The UTM welcomes EU Mission cities and look forward to both the knowledge they can transfer from their work with other EU cities into this global mission, as well as the opportunity for them to share back with other EU Mission Cities what they have learned from their global peers.

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## Do cities part of the EU Cities Mission need to apply to join the UTM?

Yes. All cities interested in joining the UTM must apply by filling in the [online form](#).

## 2. Cities' engagement in the Mission

### What does the UTM offer to cities?

- A framework designed to help cities strengthen their own climate plans and strategies, prioritise actions, and reap the benefits of systemic approaches to reach their net-zero target.
- A global platform for knowledge exchange, that provides cities with direct access to good practices, integrated solutions, peer-learning opportunities and guidance for each step of their city climate journey.
- Help to identify needs-based solutions in partnerships with the UTM Global Innovation Alliance, other Missions and in collaboration with other cities across the world, also granting high international visibility.
- The opportunity to apply innovation, test, pilot and scale up solutions and to access dedicated R&I funding and capacity building via the [MICall series](#).
- Opportunities to engage with the national level to foster innovation, access climate finance and collaborative governance models.

### What commitment is expected of a city participating in the UTM?

- Revising their existing climate and energy action plans and prioritising actions to reach net-zero. Cities will showcase their innovation and progress via existing reporting commitments.
- Serving as both a solution provider to support net-zero pathways – inspiring, applying solutions, and acting as an innovation hub – identifying R&I gaps and challenges to help other cities in the urban transition to net-zero.
- Participating in the Annual Innovation Summit and engaging in knowledge-transfer and capacity building opportunities with other UTM cities to accelerate their journey to net-zero.
- Engaging in dialogue with the national government and the Mission's Global Innovation Alliance.

### Will participating cities receive a set budget of financial support?

No, the Mission doesn't have a set budget to support cities directly, at this time.

Nonetheless, the Mission will offer cities opportunities to explore access to finance and investigate innovative financing mechanisms via a global knowledge exchange centre to

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be launched in early 2023. Cities engaged in the UTM will also have opportunities to access dedicated R&I funding and capacity building via the [MICall series](#).

In addition, the UTM will collaborate closely with partners of the **Global Innovation Alliance** (including MI Member governments, city partner organisations, private sector, urban research & innovation clusters, finance institutions and youth organisations) to accelerate implementation of the city cohort's climate action, and identify related resources and knowledge.

## What is the timeline of the city cohort selection?

1. The call for cities is announced at the "Mayors & Ministers Dialogue on innovation driven urban transition" GCEAF event (Pittsburgh, 22 Sept, 16:15–17:15 ET)
2. As of 22 Sept, more info and the link to the online questionnaire and FAQ are available on the GCoM website, as well as MI UTM and partner websites
3. City can express their interest until 29 Oct 2022
4. 50 cities are selected for the cohort and announced before end 2022
5. First cohort engagement kicks off in early 2023

## What is the difference between the first and second cohort of cities?

A first cohort of 50 cities will be identified by the end of 2022, while a second cohort of 250 cities will follow by 2024.

The first cohort of cities will apply and test the urban transition net-zero framework (please refer to the [Mission's action plan](#)<sup>1</sup> Mission activity 4 for more information) offered by the Mission to help cities in their pathway to net-zero, to enhance the ambition and system approach of their climate action plan. The framework will be further refined through the engagement of and support to the second cohort of 250 cities.

Cities in the first cohort will have the opportunity to apply innovation, test, pilot and scale up solutions and to access dedicated R&I funding and capacity building via the [MICall series](#). Networking opportunities, access to knowledge and capacity building activities will be offered to cities in both cohorts.

Lessons learned from both cohorts will help refine the urban net-zero framework, which will be provided to cities across the globe as a key instrument to accelerate a systemic net-zero urban transition. By 2030, the UTM aims to disseminate the framework to the 12,500+ GCoM Signatories to accelerate the net-zero urban transition globally.

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<sup>1</sup> Downloadable here <https://explore.mission-innovation.net/mission/urban-transitions/>



## Will the UTM ask cities to apply any specific approach/methodology?

The Urban Transition Mission offers cities an urban transition net-zero framework that will build on the knowledge and expertise of a Global Innovation Alliance of supporting partners and organizations and the first-hand experience of the cities engaged.

The framework to help and guide cities in developing and implementing their pathway to net-zero transitions, helping cities to strengthen their existing climate and energy action plans, across all steps of their city climate action journey, as well as aiding prioritization, gap identification, and assessment of co-benefits of climate, to help them adopt system wide approaches to reach net-zero.

The UTM will not promote one specific methodology, but builds upon actions plans and strategies already developed by each city (e.g. EU Cities Climate Contracts). The plans/strategies must be compliant with the Global Covenant of Mayors climate commitment, steps of the action journey, and reporting requirements.

### 3. Eligibility and application process

#### Are there size limitations for cities applying?

Yes, in order to be eligible to apply, the city must have at least 50,000 inhabitants.

#### Are applications by regional/provincial governments eligible?

No, at this time only application by cities and local governments will be accepted.

Sub-national governments, such as regions and provinces, are invited to support cities applying, but they will not be considered eligible applicants themselves.

In the second call that the Mission will launch in 2024, it may be that regional/provincial authorities will be accepted. Please flag your specific case and interest ahead of that time.

#### Can groups of (small) municipalities apply jointly?

No, for the first cohort of cities and local governments are eligible.

In the second call that the Mission will launch in 2024, joint applications might be considered. Please contact us and flag your specific case and interest ahead of that time.

#### What are the other eligibility criteria for a city to express their interest?

The eligibility criteria, reflected in the online application form, are the following. In order to be eligible, the city must:

- Be a Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM) signatory<sup>2</sup>
- Have a climate action plan/strategy covering the whole city (e.g. SECAP/SEACAP/CAP or equivalent)
- Commit to engage and to allocate appropriate resources to the roll-out of this Urban Transition Mission

#### Which are the steps for cities willing to apply?

Check your eligibility and that you truly have a mandate, and overall support, to apply on behalf of your city to this programme.

Fill in the application form before 29 October.. It includes requests for brief explanations on your city's climate and energy action planning and priorities, interests, any project/action ideas that you have started developing and what capacity you would foresee to be able to

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<sup>2</sup> \* or plan to be within one month of engaging with the Mission  
(<https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/our-cities>)

commit for their development. It also includes questions related to your city's previous experiences on international cooperation and participation in programmes and initiatives (e.g. in programmes such as International Urban Cooperation programme (IUC), Cities rate to Zero, Cities Mission on Smart and Climate Neutral Cities, etc..).

Cities will be notified by the end of 2022 if they have been selected or not, and potentially about engagement in future cohorts.

Successfully selected cities are planned to start engagement in 2023. They commit to actively engage with the UTM and the city cohort at least until 2035, and to revise their existing climate and energy action plans and prioritising actions to reach net-zero. Cities will showcase their innovation and progress via existing reporting commitments.

If you have any questions with regard to the work of the city cohort, please contact [info@globalcovenantofmayors.org](mailto:info@globalcovenantofmayors.org)

### Why is it important that the applicant has a clear, official mandate to apply?

In order to ensure adequate political support, technical capacity and access to resources, it is essential for applicants to confirm they have the relevant mandate to apply on behalf of the city. To this end, we encourage applicants to discuss the engagement in the UTM with the appropriate political and administrative representatives, across all relevant municipal departments.

### Should the applicant be a political or a technical representative?

The city applying shall identify autonomously who to mandate for the application.

We recommend identifying the individual/team in charge to engage with the Urban Transition Mission already in the application phase.

The applicant/team should be able to communicate in English and have the capacity to carry out the cooperation in English.

### What are the main principles applied in the selection process?

The selection of the city cohorts will follow an open and transparent process. Expressions of interest, submitted [via an online form](#), will be evaluated against a number of key principles, including: ambition in climate target setting, readiness of the city's climate action strategy, existing knowledge and solutions to be shared with peers, planned cross-sector solutions and measures, readiness to test innovation, track-record of stakeholder engagement and international cooperation.

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With the aim to foster the highest impact and transferability of the innovation tested by the cohort, the Mission will strive for a balanced engagement of cities worldwide, as relevant, considering: geographical distribution, diversity in sizes, climate and urbanisation contexts, and differentiated sectoral priorities, among others.

## 4. Clarifications on requested input

### How can I check the alignment with the Paris agreement and my national target?

Countries committing to the Paris Agreement are required to prepare, communicate and maintain **Nationally determined contributions (NDCs)**<sup>3</sup> or which show the country's effort to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, and are key to ensure the success of the Agreement's long-term goals. You can explore your country's national targets on the [UNFCCC NDCs registry](#) and compare your city target with that of your country found in that database.

If the city sets a science-based climate target, that is aligned with the Paris Agreement. You can find a useful tool in the [Science-based targets for Climate: A guide for cities](#), which is a technical guide developed by the [Science-based target network](#) bringing extensive and tailored detail on how cities can set a science-based target. The guide helps cities to understand what a science-based target for cities is and guides them in choosing a methodology for setting an interim science-based target by 2030 and a net zero target for 2050. It also explains how to join the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's \(UNFCCC\) Race to Zero](#).

Because they are GCoM signatories, cities in the Mission's cohort pledge to set targets at least as ambitious as their country's Nationally Determined Contributions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

### What is a valid greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory?

The Global Covenant allows flexibility for cities developing city-wide greenhouse gas inventories, within two years of commitment. The inventory must include at least carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide emissions from stationary energy, transportation, and waste sources<sup>4</sup>.

In order for cities' greenhouse gas emissions data to be consistent and transparent GCoM introduced the [Common Reporting Framework \(CRF\)](#) in 2018 as the first global reporting framework for standardising and sharing information on local climate activities. The CRF guides cities in assessing their greenhouse gas emissions, climate change risks, and vulnerabilities, as well as planning and reporting in an integrated and coherent way. This

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<sup>3</sup> Paris Agreement, Article 4, paragraph 2. More information at <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs>

<sup>4</sup> You can find more information here <https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/journey/#1593370692184-241679ee-77ed>

standard not only enables cities to identify and take the right actions in a timely manner, but also allows for better identification of shared challenges, greater cooperation, and development of common responses to the impacts of climate change.

## What is a valid Risk and Vulnerability (R&V) assessment?

Cities are also required to complete a risk and vulnerability assessment to identify current and future climate hazards that the city may face from the impacts of climate change. These assessment processes aim to analyse a city's current ability to adjust or respond to climate change while also providing a city with information about how future change will affect it<sup>5</sup>.

## What is a valid Climate Action Plan?

Once a city sets evidence-based goals and targets, cities create an action plan to address climate mitigation and adaptation. These plans indicate what actions a city will take to achieve its greenhouse gas emissions reduction target and climate change adaptation goals.

## Is offsetting allowed by the Mission as a measure to reach net-zero?

The Mission aims at supporting net-zero cities in the long term, where ultimately the offsetting should be minimal and used only to address residual emissions not abatable in another way. Though, offsetting can be a powerful method to address the intermediate process and still allow to reduce the cities' emissions.

## How is net-zero defined? What is the difference with climate neutrality?

Referring to the world as a whole, the IPCC defines net-zero "when anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere are balanced by anthropogenic removals over a specified period". Race to Zero considers individual actors to have reached a state of net zero when "an actor reduces its emissions following science-based pathways, with any remaining GHG emissions attributable to that actor being fully neutralised by like for-like removals (e.g. permanent removals for fossil carbon emissions) exclusively claimed by that actor, either within the value chain or through purchase of valid offset credits." In order to reach that, the action plan shall ultimately include scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions of a city, considering the entire community<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> You can find more information here

<https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/journey/#1593370692184-241679ee-77ed>

<sup>6</sup> More information on "[GHG Protocol for Cities – An Accounting and Reporting Standard for Cities](#)" and the [Common Reporting Framework \(CRF\)](#)

## 6. Contacts

You couldn't find an answer to your question?

Please contact us at [info@globalcovenantofmayors.org](mailto:info@globalcovenantofmayors.org) and we will be happy to support.