

# Spain and Sweden joining hands to scale the EU Cities Mission

Swedish input to a joint Development Statement

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# Introduction

Seven Swedish and seven Spanish cities have been selected among the 112 EU Mission Cities. The Swedish Mission Cities have formed a joint Development Statement for Cities Mission 2.0. The Statement was first presented at the 1st Swedish Cities Mission Forum in Umeå, Sweden, on May 29, 2024. This Statement builds upon the Spanish Mission Cities vision for the EU Cities Mission that was presented in late 2023.

This Statement is co-developed by the Swedish Mission Cities, with support from the Swedish national platform Viable Cities and Spanish national platform CitiES2030. Viable Cities and CitiES2030 are working closely together to support cities on their journey towards climate neutrality by 2030 and a good life for all within planetary boundaries.

**Firstly**, the seven Swedish EU Mission Cities support and mandate the visions of the Spanish Mission Cities, as listed in the 12 points below, to continue advancing the EU Cities Mission and to support cities in the process of continuous learning and accelerated transition (see Annex 1 below for further description of each point).

- Leadership and political commitment within the EC
- Strategic multi-year financial framework for the Mission to 2030
- Private financing
- Human resources dedicated to the Mission
- Fair transition
- Integration between mitigation and adaptation
- Knowledge tools and open source
- Monitoring, Mission Tracking Indicators
- Regulatory changes and administrative streamlining
- Breaking of silos. Inter-administrative collaboration
- Partnerships for Mission
- Mission as a preliminary step to scope 3

**Secondly**, the Swedish Mission Cities would like to stress the need for a common strategy on “scaling as the new normal”. Three key aspects on how this can be done are described below. The aim is to influence and accelerate the continued development of and work with the EU Cities Mission, as well as speed up learning and the transition to climate-neutral cities:

- Scaling out through replication and mechanisms to engage more cities
- Scaling up through policy change
- Scaling deep through change of mindset



# 1. Scaling out through replication and mechanisms to engage more cities

The importance of frontrunners, leading the way, cannot be understated. However, cooperation – not competition – between cities, national governments and the EU remains essential to reach our joint goal: climate neutrality. The transition needs to be addressed at all levels – local, regional, national, EU – and the efforts need to be coordinated to support the Mission.

To scale the impact of the EU Cities Mission from 112 to eventually engaging all European cities and beyond, we need to find mechanisms like national platforms to invite and engage more cities, while still challenging and supporting the existing forerunner EU Mission Cities.

Since 2018, Viable Cities has piloted a national program to support scaling out, now supporting 23 Swedish cities including the seven Mission Cities, together making up around 40 % of the Swedish population. In 2024, a further scaling is planned to expand the EU Cities mission in Sweden, inviting additional cities that have committed themselves to accelerating the transition and being role models to join the national platform, and potentially connect to the EU Cities Mission.

Similar nationally adapted approaches are now being tested in Spain, Romania, Austria and elsewhere, and could be a powerful movement to eventually support all cities towards the EU Cities Mission.

**We propose** a powerful multi-level governance approach to strengthen the link between cities, and national and EU Mission platforms such as NetZeroCities – while at the same time supporting forerunner cities in their efforts. As such, we strongly support the development of structures to facilitate scaling through replication of successful methods, policies, and activities. These include the Swedish “System Demonstrators”, the Pilot- and Twinning Programs, and the development of NetZeroCities Policy Labs. These initiatives have the potential to be important levers in the systemic, mission-driven approach to achieving climate neutrality, emphasizing the importance of policy alignment and collaboration.



## 2. Scaling up through policy change

As cities, we see that the Mission must involve and engage different sectoral areas of our city administrations, as well as at the regional, national and EU level. Furthermore, there is a need to elevate political commitments across relevant parts of the European Commission services and national ministries, as well as improving the coordination work that European and national Mission platforms are developing for the benefit of cities.

An early promising example in this regard is the work of six Swedish national government agencies, from different ministries. These have undertaken the task of mapping their joint funding sources and policy support to create an understanding for cities' needs, and stronger support for the local transition.

**We propose** that the next phase should focus on strengthening collaboration and multi-level governance to facilitate smart policy development and regulatory innovation across critical sectors of the climate transition. This includes addressing aspects such as, but not limited to, redirecting financial resources, as well as effectively implementing and scaling up pilot programs and tools that can foster multi-dimensional changes concurrently. The aim is to transition from the pilot stage to establishing new norms, thereby moving away from a fragmented approach, "projectification", towards a more integrated and sustainable model.



# 3. Scaling deep through change of mindset

A sustainable future can only be achieved through the collective effort of many – on all levels of society. This calls for both political courage and strategic, mission-driven development work to align resources effectively, but also to reimagine the current framework and foster a holistic view on sustainability.

Scaling deep is about creating a new accepted “normal” at the societal level, for example by efforts to redefine norms, values and behavioral patterns. Such changes are necessary to achieve a lasting transition to climate-neutral and sustainable cities. Deep transformation requires citizens, organizations and decision-makers to rethink their fundamental assumptions and act according to these new principles.

A just transition is a prerequisite for the Cities Mission to be viable and should have clear goals not only for avoiding exacerbating existing inequalities, but also to combat them. Therefore, the perspectives of diversity, just transition, equity and equality need to be embedded in all actions of the transition portfolio, evaluation and analysis. This requires constant reflecting on who has the room to speak, and to continuously work to facilitate shared and distributed power. It is about co-creating new narratives and using a language that is inclusive and close to people’s every-day-life. Building and engaging inclusive local transition arenas and teams with a strong mandate also carries the possibilities of co-benefits in terms of building trust in institutions and democratic processes.

Transformative change will require not only technological solutions, but changes in individual and collective behaviour and a rethinking of how institutions and systems can effectively enable this. Understanding the global implications of climate neutrality – i.e. looking at human needs, supply chains, how policy and finance enables the system as well as considering consumption-based emissions – will also support the creation of more just cities, as it covers demographic, spatial, interspecies and temporal equity. This demands that we on all levels understand, and act, on our own global footprint – a common “glocal” work.

**We propose** to have an open and inclusive conversation across the EU Cities Mission that considers all different aspects of the transition, including its impact. The Mission can make sure that a just transition is never avoided, even though it may be politically charged. Furthermore, the Mission should strive towards a common understanding of what a just transition implies – and act accordingly. In this context, there is an opportunity for the Cities Mission to take on board more clearly the New European Bauhaus’s principles of sustainability, inclusiveness, and aesthetics.

Finally, cities’ contributions to a more just and social Europe deserve a broad recognition and require visibility to generate positive impacts beyond the local level!



# Supporting the Development Statement

This Development Statement is supported by:

- City of Gothenburg, City of Gävle, City of Helsingborg, City of Lund, City of Malmö, City of Stockholm, City of Umeå, in cooperation with Viable Cities, the national Cities Mission platform in Sweden
- In cooperation with CitiES2030, the national Cities Mission platform in Spain



# Annex 1. Spanish Mission Cities proposals and priorities

## Summary

The European Cities Mission (ECM) is a necessary instrument to support the priorities of the European Union and contribute to the objectives of the European Green Deal, within the framework of the international Paris Agreement. In this sense, the ambition to make at least one hundred climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030 is essential if Europe is to become a climate-neutral continent by 2050.

The ECM is a coordinated effort by the European Commission to mobilize resources and involve public and private actors, which is helping to transform cities using an innovative methodology (set out in the ECM Board document and implementation plan) and which is proving useful to generate systemic changes with sufficient speed and scale. Proof of this effort is the work of several Directorates-General around the ECM (mainly through the “owners’ group”) and the development of the “mission label”.

However, much remains to be done, so that, within the framework of the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the Mission, this document proposes twelve proposals aimed at supporting, accelerating, and strengthening its implementation. The purpose of the document is twofold: to reaffirm the value of the European mission-oriented approach to address the greatest societal challenges we are facing, and to focus on decisions necessary to guarantee the success of the Mission based on what we have learned and with the most absolute institutional loyalty to the process.

These proposals arise from a process of co-creation between Spanish “mission-cities” and are the result of working sessions during the process of developing the Climate City Contracts.

Proposals include increased leadership and political commitment; the importance of ensuring that the transition is fair; the development of appropriate financial instruments, with the proposal of a strategic multiannual financial framework for the mission to 2030 or the incentivization of private financing; increased human resources dedicated to the mission; integration between climate change mitigation and adaptation; the Spanish vision on the EU Cities Mission 2 development of open source knowledge tools and mission monitoring systems and indicators; the introduction of regulatory changes and administrative streamlining; the development of initiatives to promote inter-administrative collaboration, the inclusion of Metropolitan Areas and the consideration of intermediary cities; the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships; and the consideration of the ECM as a preliminary step to incorporate scope 3 mitigation measures. These proposals are even more relevant as the first cities have received the Mission Label, that should catalyse and accelerate the implementation of the Mission.





## **Preliminary considerations**

Improving the quality of life of people living in our cities and a legacy of sustainable, safe, and healthy cities for future generations are the two main motivations of the European Cities Mission (ECM). They are the purpose and the “why” of the Mission.

The ECM is an innovative public policy instrument, based on multi-level governance, radical multi-stakeholder collaboration, innovation and experimentation and continuous learning. As such, it is capturing the attention of diverse urban actors in Europe and aims to multiply the transformation capacity of cities to achieve the European Green Deal's goal of achieving a climate-neutral Europe by 2050. Therefore, it is essential to defend the Mission's ambition to achieve at least 100 smart and climate-neutral cities by 2030 and to ensure that these cities act as experimentation and innovation hubs to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050.

In this context, a central element of the Mission is to foster active collaboration between cities. Hence the importance of the Mission's sub-European platforms which, with varying degrees of formality, are making possible the development of new forms of collaboration. Platforms such as citiES 2030 in Spain or Viable Cities in Sweden are becoming shared learning and leadership spaces for the implementation of joint initiatives from which other cities can learn. Other countries such as Portugal, France, Greece, Germany, Austria, Romania, and The Netherlands are developing national platforms, and citiES 2030 is closely collaborating with them. Thus, the ECM constitutes a space for the radical transfer of knowledge and learning, in which collaboration prevails over competition between cities.

With the signing of the first City Climate Contracts and the award of the first Mission Labels (to 10 cities, 5 of them from Spain), the ECM entered a new moment. A first group of cities have already set out what they need to do to achieve climate neutrality, so that, after a more technical first phase, the effort must now focus on implementation, with solid and visible political involvement and commitment. It is necessary to provide the Mission with political leadership commensurate with the importance of this initiative for the achievement of the strategic objectives of the European Commission; and consequently, inspiring and facilitating similar political leadership at different levels of governance.

We know that the ECM is a collective journey and not an individual destination. From this knowledge, we must recognize that there are now 10 mission cities, but there will soon be many more with a Mission Label acting as hubs and inspiration for other European cities. If we are able to learn, act and resolve the key success factors identified after the experience of the first 10 cities awarded with the label, we will be able to anticipate and accelerate the needs of the cities that will follow. It is urgent to incorporate now, after an objective learning, that global view of the process in order to guarantee its success.

It is essential to understand that mission cities are, first and foremost, demonstrative cities. In that sense, its success can be instrumental in demonstrating the viability of the Green Deal and the effectiveness of EU sectoral policies in tackling climate change.

What is not possible to implement in cities cannot be demonstrated in any other area, to the extent that cities are configured as “the system of systems”. That is, the system where all the relevant socio-technical systems in the fight against climate change converge and are integrated: mobility, energy, building and rehabilitation, green infrastructure, food, circular economy, waste, etc. In the Mission Cities, the future of climate change policies in



Europe is at stake.

Mission cities are courageous cities that have decided to take a step forward by doubling up their climate ambition and, due to their demonstrative nature, they need to be treated as exceptional, as the development of the Mission entails risks that must be shared.

Mission cities are the space in which to demonstrate the validity of European public policies on climate change. Therefore, they must be protected and resourced to ensure their short-term successes, because the long-term success of climate neutrality in all European cities and territories depends on it.

This risk is also shared through collaboration between cities, as for example in the work developed by the seven Spanish cities within the framework of the national platform *ciEES* 2030. Thus, using the same methodologies, jointly developing administrative procedures, or working together around specific challenges (such as building retrofitting) cities are overcoming the barriers and risks of implementing the mission.

The ECM is, first and foremost, a European project. It is a way of making Europe, of moving towards that Europe that we want and that we can proudly bequeath to future generations. Therefore, we understand that it is essential to give a political impetus to the Cities Mission at the different levels of governance (European, Member States, regional and local authorities) with a clear commitment and leadership.

With all the considerations previously stated, we decisively summarize the following statement. After two years of drive, ambition, and work in the context of the ECM, we can share the learning obtained along the way:

- The mission-oriented approach proposed by the European Commission works and generates public economic, social, and environmental value.
- The ECM can solve one of the greatest complexities we face as a society, with political courage and adequate resources and instruments.
- The ECM allows the will to join together towards the common purpose and from different sectors of society, which ensures the necessary systemic action.

The Mission is helping to transform cities into a process of continuous learning. And in this framework, we propose, from the most absolute institutional loyalty to the process, from the cities, the following aspects to continue advancing in this project.

### **1. Leadership and political commitment within the EC**

It is necessary to focus on the implementation of the actions from all stakeholders included in the Climate City Contracts, with visible political involvement and commitment. It is necessary to provide the Mission with political leadership appropriate to the importance that this initiative has for the achievement of the strategic objectives of the European Commission, and consequently, inspiring and facilitating political leadership at the different levels of governance.

In particular, the Mission must involve the different sectoral areas of the European Commission transversally and have a clear impetus at the highest level, as it constitutes a demonstrator of European policies. We therefore suggest stressing and elevating the political commitment at the multi-departmental group (owners' group) and improving coordination with the work that European and National platforms are developing. The Mission is a way of "making Europe" and bringing Europe closer to its citizens.

### **2. Strategic multi-year financial framework for the Mission to 2030**

The Cities Mission involves innovation policies and a wide range of sectoral policies that make sense in their articulation through the Urban Agenda. In that sense, it is structured



around two sides of the same coin: courageous public investment policies and innovation policies to promote systemic transformation. In order to ensure the success of the Mission, it is necessary to articulate a clear financial framework for both policies, focused on mission-cities because of their demonstrative nature.

It is necessary to have a comprehensive and strategic financial framework for each of the Mission cities. Public funding for the Mission cannot be made conditional on access to funding through successive calls for projects, as this leads to excessive fragmentation of climate and urban transformation projects in general. There is, therefore, a need for an instrument such as a "Mission Fund" that avoids the work through calls and that could be developed, as an example, with the remaining Next Generation EU funds.

One of the advantages of the Missions approach is its measurable, assessable, time-bound, and impact-oriented nature. This would allow the articulation of a progressive financial framework linked to results, with partial milestones that allow new credit to be enabled for subsequent phases. A financial framework demanding with cities and with biennial review, so that short-term decarbonisation objectives are established, actions are financed and, if results are achieved, their financing is expanded.

The framework must be multi-stakeholder and multi-level, with flows of funds at different levels and commitments at European, Member State, regional and local level for the various actors. The commitment of the Member State is fundamental because the Mission is European and is articulated through them in the playing field of the cities.

Member States should not limit themselves to supporting the initiative as external observers to it but should have their own action and investment plans for Mission cities.

### **3. Private financing**

According to the analyses carried out in the first City Climate Contracts, the role of private financing is crucial to achieve the objective of climate neutrality in 2030, implementing the portfolio of transformational projects that constitute the Climate Action Plans. A global view can contribute to making these projects more effective, by increasing the scale of work to all Mission cities, promoting the green economy based on sustainability and digitalization, with the consequent generation of jobs.

In this sense, the Cities Mission must contribute to contrast and establish forms of public-private collaboration, including new business models and profitable projects from the climate, social and economic point of view. Thus, the mission label should play a fundamental role in attracting high-impact investments, through a portfolio approach that combines different investment options.

### **4. Human resources dedicated to the Mission**

If we want to accelerate the urban transition, we must strengthen the mission teams. According to a study published by Energy Cities, the main bottleneck in Europe for the energy transition of cities is the limitations in human resources of local public administrations. It is therefore necessary to understand the difficulties and logic of human resources at the local level; as well as the key role of Member States in supporting demonstration cities. There are formulas such as the figure of Local Innovation Agents promoted by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Government of Spain, designed with cities through the Innpulso Network and that can provide City Councils with specific profiles aimed at promoting innovation in municipalities. Other relevant examples are Local Climate Agents or Local Sustainability Agents. One of the major impacts of the Mission in terms of co-benefits is the generation of quality and qualified employment in the field of innovation and sustainability. The Mission must demonstrate this impact and create the necessary green and sustainable jobs.



In addition, integrated and holistic work must be promoted from the local level, taking advantage of the synergies that exist between the 2030 Agenda, the localization and monitoring of the SDGs, the circular economy, SECAPs, etc. Isolated actions should not be maintained, since in that case the Mission team could form another watertight unit that would enlarge the pre-existing problem, mainly for the purpose of coordinating the necessary initiatives aimed at the same end: the transformation of the city.

### **5. Fair transition**

The ECM should incorporate the perspective of fair transition and consider the impacts on low-income sectors of the population and those especially vulnerable, such as people with disabilities, as well as transformations in the world of work. The Mission should be specifically geared towards reducing inequality and incorporating a gender perspective in its development and implementation. This would not happen without new instruments that disincentivize a focus only on bankable or “low-hanging fruit” actions.

### **6. Integration between mitigation and adaptation**

The Mission is not just an initiative on reducing emissions, but it essentially affects the model of city we want: a city where people live better and healthier. In this sense, incorporating the perspective of adaptation is unavoidable to think about how the fight against climate change can contribute to making cities better. It is therefore necessary to consider the synergies and mutual benefits between the European Cities Mission and the European Adaptation Mission. In that regard, national platforms could play an important role.

### **7. Knowledge tools and open source**

In keeping with the Mission’s spirit of radical collaboration and continuous learning, it is essential to have tools that are easily interchangeable, subject to continuous improvement, including the economic models and emissions quantification tools used.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop and use knowledge and open-source tools; not only because they are tools developed with public funds, but also because, from a pragmatic point of view, the objective is the reuse and continuous improvement of them through processes of radical collaboration. Research and science on how to fine-tune solutions at the local and city-specific level needs open access to data, algorithms, and learning.

### **8. Monitoring, Mission Tracking Indicators**

Monitoring the fulfilment of the objectives of the Mission is a fundamental aspect. A short set of reliable and comparable indicators should be agreed upon, ensuring that targets and progress are monitored, and which should also be linked to the objectives of the European Green Deal. These indicators could be based on the use of innovative monitoring tools, such as some of the Earth observation products of the European Copernicus programme (Urban Atlas, for example), and aligned with the EU taxonomy for sustainable activities. In addition, the level of achievement in achieving objectives could be linked to the availability of funding and resources through the multiannual financial framework mentioned above.

### **9. Regulatory changes and administrative streamlining**

According to the experience developed during this time, one of the fundamental aspects for the success of the mission is innovation within the Public Administration itself, to refine its orientation to impact and streamline procedures. In this sense, the development of regulatory sandboxes, climate living labs or innovative public procurement mechanisms oriented to the climate mission must be supported and promoted.

Likewise, according to the declarations of climate emergency in force, it would be necessary to consider the possibility that contracts with an impact on the Climate



Mission could be processed through the emergency route, and that the decarbonization of the city could be declared as a public service. This would speed up and facilitate the promotion of high-impact projects for the Mission.

#### **10. Breaking of silos. Inter-administrative collaboration.**

Metropolitan Areas Inter-administrative collaboration Metropolitan Areas. As a global initiative, the Mission requires the encouragement of the formation of transversal teams that allow progress in the cultural change necessary for the development of integral city projects, with an interdisciplinary and multi-actor character.

In this regard, the mission should foster the creation of inter-administrative teams at the metropolitan level. The reality of cities is, in large part, metropolitan, and the solutions to be implemented for the Mission must assume this perspective.

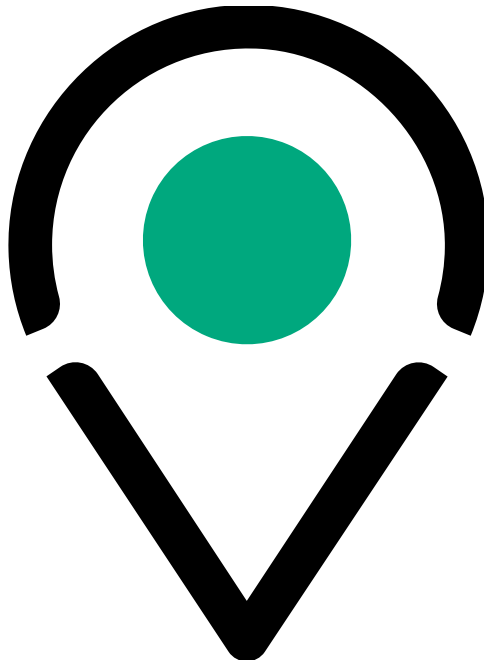
#### **11. Partnerships for Mission**

The ECM requires bringing together all the relevant actors of the city in a common purpose, incorporating the perspective of the quintuple helix: 1) Public administrations, 2) private sector, 3) civil society, 4) academia, and 5) media and dissemination. In this sense, it is essential to promote and provide resources to promote the social communication of the Mission and the structuring of multi-stakeholder platforms at the city level (e.g. city alliances, or transition arenas) that allow integrating the specific commitments of the different actors in the City Climate Contracts.

#### **12. Mission as a preliminary step to scope 3**

The Mission does not end in 2030. This date marks only the end of the first stage on the road to the objectives defined by the European Green Deal. Work is needed now to prepare the transformations needed to reduce scope 3 emissions, with an eye on 2040 and 2050. Far beyond the scope 2 emissions impact domains, the Mission relates to a city and society model, so cities will need to justify how the Mission's deployment is laying the groundwork for developing scope 3, considering the flows of urban metabolism. One option to incentivize such an approach is to consider Scope 3 emission reductions as one of the possible compensation mechanisms for 2030 Scope 1 and 2 residual emissions.





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