

NEWSLETTER



Word of the editor

Dear readers,

As the year comes to an end, we reflect on the progress of the HARMONMISSIONS project. Although our regions differ, we share a common objective: strengthening climate neutrality and resilience in the Danube region through knowledge exchange, capacity building, and awareness raising. In the months ahead, we will deepen cooperation, including through new opportunities within EU Missions and territorial cooperation programmes, and wish all partners a successful and inspiring 2026.

City of Košice (KSC)

ANNOUNCEMENT

URBACT City Festival

The URBACT project, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and by the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, is organizing the URBACT City Festival in Nicosia, Cyprus on 31 March – 01 April 2026. The Festival will promote the 273 European cities involved in 30 URBACT Action Planning Networks representing their stories and actions.

<https://urbact.eu/city-festival-2026/programme-festival-2026>.

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EU Cities Mission Reaches New Milestone with 103 Cities Awarded Mission Label

In October 2025, the EU Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities marked a significant milestone as 103 cities have now been awarded the prestigious EU Mission Label, recognising their progress towards climate neutrality by 2030. This achievement surpasses the Mission's original target of supporting 100 cities in transforming their climate plans into action.

The latest round of awards was presented at the European Week of Regions and Cities (October 13-15, 2025) in Brussels, where eleven additional cities received the label. Among these are **Bratislava in Slovakia and Zagreb in Croatia — two major urban centres in the Danube region now** officially recognised for their commitment to climate action. These cities join other labelled cities that have developed solid Climate City Contracts — comprehensive strategies outlining how they will cut emissions, increase resilience, and attract investment for sustainable projects.

Receiving the Mission Label not only acknowledges ambitious climate planning but also gives cities access to specialised support mechanisms. Labelled cities gain entry to the Climate City Capital Hub, an international resource connecting them with finance, investors, and advisory services such as those provided by the European Investment Bank. This financial support is crucial for turning strategic plans into reality on the ground.

Cities participating in the Mission now span a diverse range of European regions, reflecting the broad commitment to decarbonising urban environments. For Danube regional cities such as Bratislava and Zagreb, the label highlights their role as trailblazers in sustainability and innovation in Central and Southeastern Europe. With the EU Mission Label, these cities are better positioned to attract investment and share best practices with other urban areas working towards climate neutrality.



Source: <https://netzerocities.eu/2025/10/15/mission-label-awards-over-100-cities-reach-climate-neutrality-milestone/>

References: EU Cities Mission marks milestone: 103 cities now labelled on the path towards climate neutrality - Research and innovation

(https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/eu-cities-mission-marks-milestone-103-cities-now-labelled-path-towards-climate-neutrality-2025-10-15_en)

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EU Missions Work Programme 2026–2027 - A detailed overview of new opportunities for climate action and climate-neutral cities

On **December 16 2025**, the European Commission officially adopted and published the **Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026–2027**, including the dedicated section on **EU Missions**. This document provides the **legal and strategic framework** for all upcoming calls under EU Missions in 2026 and 2027 and marks a crucial step towards the final phase of Horizon Europe implementation. The published programme confirms that **EU Missions are moving decisively from experimentation towards large-scale implementation**, with a strong focus on climate adaptation, urban transformation and systemic change.

This overview focuses specifically on **climate-relevant missions**, particularly those addressing **climate adaptation and climate-neutral cities**.

2026: Key priorities for climate transformation

Mission 1: Adaptation to Climate Change

The 2026 calls under the Adaptation Mission place a strong emphasis on **implementation, governance and capacity-building**, moving beyond research and pilot actions. Key thematic areas include:

- **National Adaptation Hubs** - Strengthening coordination between national, regional and local levels to ensure coherent climate adaptation governance and effective implementation.
- **Deployment of climate adaptation solutions** - Supporting local and regional authorities in the practical roll-out of adaptation measures, including nature-based and technological solutions.
- **Standardisation of climate services** - Developing interoperable tools, services and methodologies to support climate risk assessment and adaptation planning.
- **Linking disaster risk management with climate adaptation** - Bridging the gap between short-term emergency response and long-term resilience strategies.
- **Protection of cultural heritage from climate impacts** - Addressing climate risks affecting cultural assets and historical sites.
- **Resilience of inland waterways and related infrastructure** - Enhancing climate resilience of water-based transport systems and associated infrastructure.
- **Financing local adaptation measures** - Exploring innovative financing mechanisms and blended finance approaches to scale up adaptation investments.
- **Soil resilience to climate extremes** - Demonstrating solutions that increase soil resilience to floods, droughts and heatwaves.

Key message:

The 2026 Adaptation Mission calls clearly prioritise **practical implementation, multi-level governance and scalable solutions**, rather than purely research-oriented activities.

Mission 4: 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030

The 2026 calls for climate-neutral cities focus on **core urban systems** that are critical for decarbonisation. Highlighted topics include:

- **HORIZON-MISS-2026-04-CIT-01** - Energy-efficient urban and suburban public transport systems, including the integration of shared mobility solutions.
- **HORIZON-MISS-2026-04-CIT-02** - Transition to **low-temperature district heating and cooling systems** in multi-apartment buildings, addressing one of the largest sources of urban emissions.

● **HORIZON-MISS-2026-04-CIT-NEB-B4P-CCRI-03** - Circular economy models in the construction sector, from individual buildings to neighbourhood and city scale, aligned with climate-neutrality objectives.

Key message:

The calls promote an **integrated approach to urban transformation**, covering mobility, heating systems and circular construction practices as interconnected elements of climate-neutral cities.

2027: Deepening transformation and innovation

Mission 1: Adaptation to Climate Change (2027)

In 2027, the Adaptation Mission further strengthens its focus on **transformative and cross-border approaches**, including:

- **Transformational adaptation in transnational regions**, supporting cooperation across borders and river basins.
- **Use of artificial intelligence and advanced digital tools** to improve climate resilience at local and regional level.

Mission 4: 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities (2027)

New topics for 2027 reflect a broader technological and market-oriented focus, including:

- **Urban microgrids** to enhance energy flexibility and system integration.
- **“Hydrogen cities”** – pilot applications of hydrogen solutions for specific urban uses.
- **Inclusive and climate-resilient multimodal mobility systems**, supporting modal shift and accessibility.
- **Circular urban logistics**, reducing emissions in last-mile delivery and freight transport.
- **Pre-Commercial Procurement (PCP)** as a tool to accelerate innovation and market uptake of climate solutions.

Trend for 2027:

A clear expansion towards **advanced technologies, digitalisation and procurement-based innovation**, while maintaining a strong focus on climate neutrality and resilience.

What successful proposals will need

- Strong **multi-level governance structures**
- Clear pathways from pilot actions to **scalable implementation**
- Integration of **digital, social and financial dimensions**
- Alignment with broader EU policy frameworks and missions

Emerging trends across missions

- Increased focus on **implementation readiness**
- Integration of **AI and data-driven climate services**
- Stronger links between **technology, governance and financing**
- Emphasis on **urban and regional transformation**, not isolated projects

Key takeaways for stakeholders

- The publication of the Work Programme confirms that **EU Missions are entering a decisive implementation phase**.
- Cities, regions, research organisations and innovative companies now have **clear thematic priorities and timelines**.
- Climate adaptation and climate-neutral cities are treated as **systemic transformation agendas**, not sector-specific actions.
- **Early preparation and strategic partnerships** will be essential to compete successfully in 2026–2027 calls.



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Strengthening Higher Education for Europe's Green Mobility Transition

INTEC – International Engineering Competence Centres for Sustainable Mobility

Start date: 15 April 2023

End date: 14 April 2026

Funding scheme: Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE), Strand 2

Project reference: 101081873-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE-STRAND-2

Coordinator: FH JOANNEUM Gesellschaft mbH (Austria)

Partner countries: Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Germany, Austria

Sustainable mobility is a cornerstone of the European Green Deal and a key prerequisite for achieving climate neutrality by 2050. While the European Union is advancing ambitious targets for reducing transport emissions, neighbouring Western Balkan countries face persistent challenges related to skills gaps, limited multidisciplinary cooperation, and insufficient alignment between higher education and labour market needs. The EU-funded INTEC project addresses these challenges by strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Albania and Montenegro to educate the next generation of engineers capable of driving the transition towards greener mobility systems

INTEC focuses on improving the quality and relevance of higher education by developing innovative, practice-oriented learning approaches in the field of sustainable mobility. The project brings together engineers and experts from electronic, mechanical, automotive and related disciplines, responding directly to the growing demand for multidisciplinary competences. Through an in-depth needs analysis and close cooperation with industry, public authorities and civil society, INTEC designs targeted capacity-building activities that enhance students' employability while supporting regional green development.

A central element of the project is the implementation of four comprehensive capacity-building training programmes covering future mobility concepts, alternative powertrain solutions, the use of renewable energy in mobility, as well as blended-learning methods and soft skills for engineers. These trainings strengthen teaching and assessment mechanisms, support continuous professional development of academic staff, and contribute to modern governance, quality assurance, innovation and internationalisation within participating HEIs.

For long-term impact, INTEC establishes six International Engineering Competence Centres (IECCs) at partner universities in Albania and Montenegro. Acting as hubs for knowledge exchange and cooperation, the IECCs connect universities, businesses, policy makers and students through joint workshops, applied projects and community-building events. More than 600 participants are expected to benefit directly from these activities, while the centres themselves are embedded as sustainable structures within the universities, ensuring continuity beyond the project lifetime.

By promoting people-to-people contacts, intercultural understanding and international collaboration, INTEC also contributes to stronger regional integration. Three international public events bring together researchers, students, companies and decision-makers to discuss pressing issues in sustainable mobility, stimulate dialogue and generate new joint initiatives. Ultimately, the project strengthens the role of higher education as a driver of innovation, supports the modernisation of local economies, and positions Albania and Montenegro as active contributors to Europe's green mobility transition.

Project partners include: Polytechnic University of Tirana, University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali", POLIS University (Albania); University of Montenegro, University of Donja Gorica, Adriatic University Bar, Gama Auto d.o.o., NVO Alfa Centar (Montenegro); University of Split (Croatia); Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences (Germany); AVL List GmbH and FH JOANNEUM Gesellschaft mbH (Austria)

INTEC >>>