

Zápis: IGLO Green WG – Mission Cities and Good example practice from the city of Mannheim

Datum:	14/4/2026
Místo konání:	online
Zapsal:	David Chvála, consultant for research

IGLO Green WG – Mission Cities & NetZeroCities (Thomas Osdoba) + Mannheim Case (Eileen Roth)

Mission on Climate Neutrality – NetZeroCities framework

The EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities is operationally supported by NetZeroCities, coordinated by Climate-KIC over the past five years. The overarching objective is to develop a structured, systemic approach to enabling climate neutrality in cities, with a strong focus on capacity-building and implementation support.

Cities are positioned as long-term leaders in climate action, but achieving climate neutrality remains structurally complex. The approach therefore emphasizes:

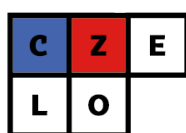
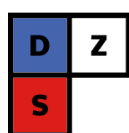
- multi-sectoral collaboration,
- systemic mapping of interdependencies,
- governance frameworks and regulatory alignment,
- strengthening institutional capacity and capabilities.

Support is organised across thematic domains including energy systems, built environment, circular economy, mobility and transport, nature and green industry, as well as social innovation, learning, and enabling technologies.

Support architecture and instruments

NetZeroCities provides a multi-layered support system:

- **City Expert Support Facility** – deployment of external experts for targeted tasks.
- **City Learning Programme** – structured peer learning and training.
- **City Advisors and Finance Specialists** – advisory services including financial engineering.
- **NetZeroCities Portal** – open-access platform with tools, transition maps, and financial guidance.
- **Twinning Programme** – city-to-city knowledge transfer.
- **Capital Hub** – engagement with private finance (structured around four key steps).
- **Community of Practice** – ongoing exchange between participating cities.



A central governance instrument is the **Climate City Contract**, which functions as a coordination mechanism aligning stakeholders, investment pipelines, and political commitments. Cities are supported in developing **project portfolios**, rather than isolated interventions, with a strong emphasis on **blended finance models**.

Additional elements include policy labs, open online courses, and alignment with broader EU priorities such as the Clean Industrial Deal (e.g. clean mobility, energy systems). A renewed agenda for cities was announced in December 2025.

Position of Cities in the next MFF (discussion points)

The discussion around the post-2027 MFF indicates uncertainty regarding the future structure of support:

- The Mission timeline extends beyond 2030, but the **form of continued support remains unclear**.
- Open question: whether funding will prioritise:
 - direct support to cities and their projects, or
 - continued/platform-based support structures (e.g. NetZeroCities-type mechanisms).
- European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy is expected to establish a **new cities platform**, potentially shifting the balance towards a more centralised or structured support model.
- This has implications for how funding is channelled—less project-level direct funding versus more systemic/platform-level support.

Case Study – Mannheim

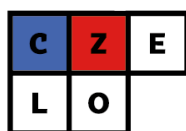
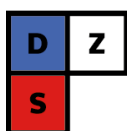
Mannheim was presented as a representative example of an industrial city attempting to transition towards climate neutrality under structurally constrained conditions. The city is a major industrial hub, particularly in the chemical and energy sectors, and hosts one of the largest coal-fired power plants in Germany. It is also among the warmest cities in the country, adding further pressure in the context of climate adaptation.

A key enabling factor has been the early development of a climate strategy, in place since approximately 2015. From the outset, the city recognised that emissions are only partially within municipal control. A significant share is determined by national legislation or by the behaviour of local actors such as citizens and private companies. As a result, the governance model is based on influencing and coordinating stakeholders rather than direct control.

To implement the transition, Mannheim has established several dedicated structures:

- a **department for climate action**, responsible for strategic coordination and screening,
- a **Local Green Deal framework**, focused on engagement with industrial partners,
- a **Climate Action Agency**, supporting citizens in mitigation, energy transition, adaptation, and awareness-raising.

Implementation is organised through a comprehensive plan structured around:



- 8 strategic actions,
- 80 measures,
- approximately 320 individual activities.

Governance is ensured through an interdisciplinary setup, with eight project managers each responsible for one strategic objective. At present, around 75 measures are ongoing, while roughly 10% have been fully implemented. The city has also concluded approximately 280 cooperation agreements (“deals”) and participated in several EU-funded projects.

Engagement with industry has been facilitated by long-standing relationships with key partners, allowing for a model based largely on negotiated agreements rather than regulatory enforcement.

At the same time, Mannheim faces several structural challenges. The transformation of the energy system is identified as the main bottleneck. This is not a single-issue constraint but rather a combination of factors:

- limited financial resources for certain measures,
- insufficient administrative and technical capacity,
- regulatory barriers, particularly where local authorities lack competence (e.g. restricting car usage).

In terms of decarbonisation, the city is not focusing on retrofitting existing coal infrastructure. Instead, it is pursuing a systemic shift, particularly in the heating sector, moving away from coal towards alternative sources such as waste-based systems.

Overall, Mannheim has reduced emissions by approximately 40% compared to 1990 levels. However, it does not expect to reach full climate neutrality by 2030, reflecting the complexity of the transition in an industrial context.

