

Missions for sustainability: New approaches for science and society

Session abstract

Template for session organizers

The session abstracts should provide a brief overview of the session scope and design and a **synthesis of the key discussion points and results** of each session. They should always position the issues addressed in **relation to the [main themes](#)** of the conference.

The session abstracts will serve to prepare a **conference documentation** for dissemination to the interested general public (PDF). They may equally be used as a basis for producing a summary in other formats (multimedia). In addition, these abstracts will inform a **position paper** on mission-oriented research and innovation, prepared by the Leibniz research network after the event.

Please do not attribute statements to individual participants (results-oriented abstract)

Please use accessible language / English only

Total length: ~1500 words

Session organizer(s)

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Session title

Achieving Climate Neutral Cities by 2030: Mission Impossible?

Session description (~500 words)

Achieving climate neutrality rapidly is one of the key missions of the 21st century to ensure a liveable planet. It requires fundamental changes within and across multiple action domains (energy, transport, food, etc.) and sectors (public, private, civil society). Cities play a key role in achieving climate neutrality due to both the accumulation and combination of mitigation challenges and the innovative potential and transformative power attributed to cities. In this session we focussed on the transformative capacities that cities need to transform multiple urban systems toward climate neutrality and will identify pathways to increase this capacities in different local, regional and national contexts.

Especially we discuss the opportunities and challenges of both vertical and horizontal coordination of mission oriented policy and research.

The following overarching questions were discussed in two rounds:

How to integrate all policy domains (energy, transport, food, etc.) and all actors (public, private, civic) in the implementation of the Mission on Climate Neutral Cities?

How to coordinate actions for the implementation of the Mission on Climate Neutral Cities vertically (EU, National, Regional, Local)?

Main discussion points and reflections (~500 words)

The session included two rounds of discussion focusing on both questions to the speakers and questions from the audience. The main points of both rounds are summarised below:

- Cities cannot solve the challenges alone, do it in a holistic approach, counting on the support of the local ecosystems with cities being at the core.
- Knowledge created should be available not only for selected cities within the Mission but for all other cities, too.
- Missions are more of tools rather than clear pathways, but it is still complicated for a city to make use of the tools provided by the European Commission.
- Cities have to be able to use the opportunity of participating in various Mission and the city administrations need the capacity to “translate” these politics in their local context.
- Missions experience a certain “jump” from local directly to the EU level (mainly bypassing regional and national governance levels) - this needs to change, with the interaction between the levels being strengthened and local levels needed for the implementation of the Mission.
- Stakeholders need to be acknowledging the resource scarcity - implementation of any idea is also limited and needs to take into account and be realistic about shortage of resources.
- There is a need not only for regulation but also for de-regulation.
- National/ regional governments have to take the leadership and be the intermediary in translating the information to the city level (in order to align the policies).
- The cities quite often miss the capacity to dig through the information - cities need support in access to good information in a quick, efficient way.

Main results and conclusions (~500 words)

Main outcomes of the discussion covered the domains of integrated policy-making of the Mission on Climate Neutral Cities as well as the coordination actions for the implementation of the Mission on Climate Neutral Cities vertically along the EU - national -regional -local axis. The main considerations and the outcomes are summarised below.

- The successful implementation of the Mission is possible only through counting on the cooperation between industry, academia, research centres, and financial institutions.
- The intention of the Mission is not imposing the rules and the procedures but on co-creation of a strategy to achieve climate neutrality (keyword: a clear strategy).
- The stakeholders from the city level expressed the need for such strategy to be more consistent with the activities.
- There is a strong need to maintain the action for almost a decade which requires a certain commitment that is not dependent on the change in administration
- The city administrations need sectoral partners with a clear commitment to the strategy over an extended period of time - at the moment that represents a challenge in need of a solution.
- Connected to the previous point, the city administrations also see a certain disconnect between strategic levels and the level of implementation that comes with the changes in political environment (e.g. the change of mayors).
- At the same time, the Mission strongly points out the peer-to-peer learning (e.g. among city administrations) that is of huge importance; the Online Platforms potentially allow for such exchange to take place.
- In order to facilitate said peer exchange, the twinning program pilots will be designed, providing the room for replication that goes beyond the online space.
- Mutual learning and knowledge sharing are seen as important elements. Learning formats the Mission Platform will provide are the before mentioned "City Panels" which include Mission Cities but as well other Cities from all over Europe. Further Cities will be clustered and linked to national and European Stakeholder groups. The City Clusters might at least be based on national clusters, with another important parameter being the climate "Readiness".
- One of the open questions focuses on the challenge of aligning both worlds: The EC has made a considerable campaign of explaining the goal for 100 cities to be climate neutral by 2030; the cities are motivated to be a part of the Mission. How to translate this info to other cities in Europe?