FIRST COHORT OF MISSION LABEL CITIES

BOLD COMMITMENTS TO 2030

SUMMARY

In October 2023, 10 cities were awarded the EU Mission Label, recognising their plans to achieve climate neutrality by 2030 as outlined in their respective Climate City Contracts (CCC). This factsheet is part of a series exploring the insights gained from the first cohort of cities to receive the Label.

- **Accelerating the transition:** All 10 cities had a climate/decarbonization target in place before developing their CCC. CCCs were used to accelerate existing targets.

- **Stepping stones:** 5 out of 10 CCC were built on preexisting 'Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans' (SECAPs).

- **City networks:** All 10 cities identified their membership in national or transnational city networks as key enablers of their commitment to climate neutrality by 2030.

- **EU initiatives:** 5 out of 10 cities stated that the Covenant of Mayors was a stepping stone to undertaking the CCC ambition.

- **Institutional barriers** (55%) are the most relevant challenges among the 10 cities, with the fragmentation of responsibilities across government levels most frequently cited.

FIRST COHORT OF MISSION LABEL CITIES

Mission Label was received in October 2023.

SØNDERBORG, DENMARK

CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA

KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA

MANNHEIM, GERMANY

VALLADOLID, SPAIN

VITORIA-GASTEIZ, SPAIN

MADRID, SPAIN

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

VALENCIA, SPAIN

ZARAGOZA, SPAIN

WHAT IS THE MISSION LABEL?

The Mission Label is the European Commission's recognition of cities' successful development of their Climate City Contracts (CCCs), which outline the overall vision for climate neutrality and contain an action plan as well as an investment strategy.

ACCELERATING THE TRANSITION: CLIMATE NEUTRALITY TARGETS OF THE FIRST MISSION LABEL CITIES

All cities in this first cohort had a decarbonisation target in place prior to developing their CCC. For example, five of the 10 cities built on previously developed SECAPS. In a helpful example, the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz provides a clear explanation in their CCC as to how the GHG target in their SECAP was aligned with the Mission target.

- Valladolid's CCC is targeting -85% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to a Business-as-Usual 2030 scenario (BAU 2030).

- Valencia's CCC is targeting -84% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to a Business-as-Usual 2030 scenario.

- Klagenfurt's CCC is targeting –83% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to 2011 levels.

- Sønderborg's CCC is targeting –83% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to 2007 levels.

- Vitoria-Gasteiz' CCC is targeting -82% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to a Business-as-Usual 2030 scenario.

- Cluj-Napoca's CCC is targeting at least -80% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to 2021 levels.

- Zaragoza's CCC is targeting -80% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to a Business-as-Usual 2030 scenario.

- Stockholm's CCC is targeting –80% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to 1990 levels.

- Madrid builds its climate neutrality target on the 1990 baseline emissions. The city's current ambition is a reduction of 65.3% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. There is also a more ambitious 'extended scenario' aiming at -75% emissions compared to 1990.

- Mannheim's CCC is targeting over –80% GHG emissions by 2030 as compared to 2020 levels, with two possible pathways identified, one reaching -86%, the other -93%.

City	Baseline year for the CCC target	CCC emissions reduction target 2030	Previous emissions reduction target	Baseline year for the previous targets
Valladolid	BAU 2030	-85%	-65% (SECAP 2019) -79% (economic model 2019)	2019
Valencia	BAU 2030	-84%	-58% (SECAP 2019) -79% (economic model 2019)	2019
Klagenfurt	2011	-83%	-63%	2018
Sonderborg	2007	-83%	-65.30%	2020
Vitoria-Gasteiz	BAU 2030	-82%	-83.4% (SECAP 2019) -80.9% (economic model 2019)	2019
Cluj-Napoca	2021	-80%	n.a.	n.a.
Zaragoza	BAU 2030	-80%	-88.7% (SECAP 2019) -82.7% (economic model 2019)	2019
Stockholm	1990	-80%	-45.60%	2020
Madrid	1990	-65.3% -75% (extended scenario)	-61%	2015
Mannheim	2020	-80% -93%	n.a (SECAP 2019)	2019

Table 1. Emission reduction targets of first 10 Mission Cities.

To accelerate their transition, the first cohort of Mission Label cities also built on their existing roles in multilevel ecosystems, tapping into their memberships and affiliations to identify opportunities and synergies. These included previously signed charters and commitments, memberships in climate-focused city networks, involvement in European or international projects and initiatives, or awards that legitimise their leadership in climate action (Figure 1). In the analysed cohort of Label Mission Cities, the five Spanish Mission Cities stood out as the cities referring to the highest number of memberships and affiliations in their CCC.
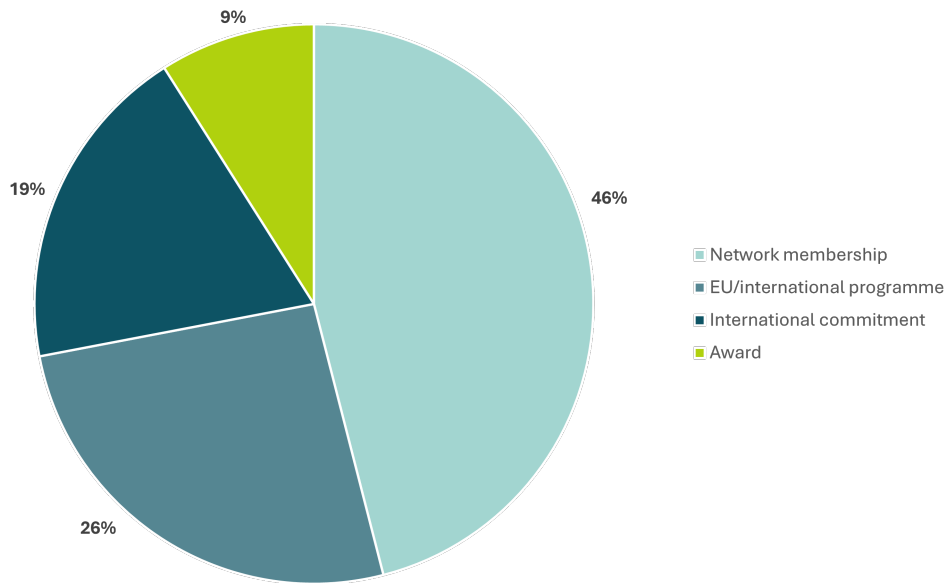

Figure 1. References to EU and international programmes, signed climate commitments, city networks, and awards in 10 CCCs.

City networks were the most acknowledged opportunities. All 10 cities highlighted their membership in city networks as key enablers of their commitment to climate neutrality by 2030.

Membership in city networks covers any associations, alliances, and networks of cities and municipalities that the Mission Cities indicated that they are part of.
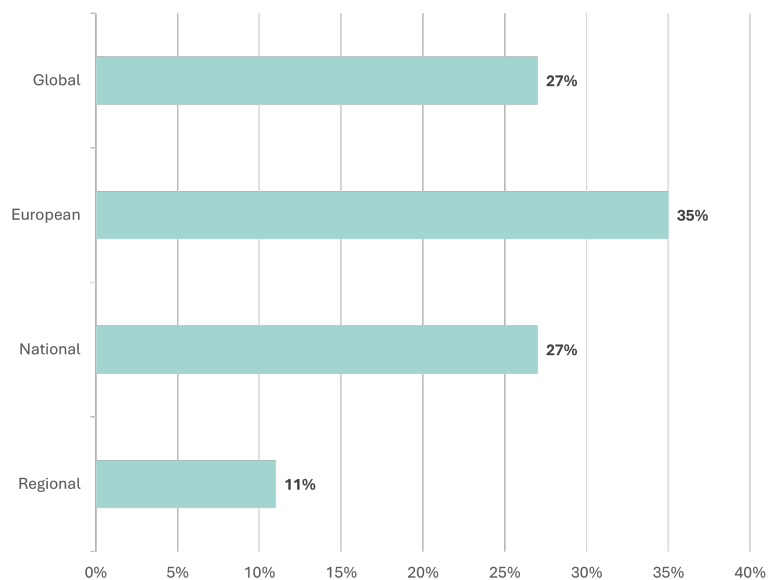

Figure 2. Distribution of city networks cited in CCCs by main level of operation.

Among city networks, the most mentioned were Eurocities, the Spanish Network of Cities for Climate, and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. But while European-wide networks were the most frequently cited, the first cohort of Mission Label cities also acknowledged global, national, and regional networks.

- **European and international programmes:** cities also frequently referred to their involvement in European or international programmes, projects, or initiatives as relevant activities to consolidating their 2030 climate neutrality ambition. Involvement in the EU Horizon programme, via various projects, was the most common opportunity identified.

- **International commitments:** referring to signed commitments, charters, and accords, also played a significant role, being the third most mentioned steppingstone towards the first CCC ambitions in this cohort of Mission Label cities. Half of the cities noted the Covenant of Mayors as vital in motivating them to develop their CCC.

- **International awards:** several cities mentioned being embolden by the acknowledgement of their climate action leadership through international awards. The European Green Capital award was mentioned most frequently.

CHALLENGES AND RISKS

To successfully implement the various measures outlined in their action plans and carry out their transition towards climate neutrality, cities are aware that they need to map and overcome challenges that stand in the way. Most of the challenges identified by the first cohort of Mission Label Cities are associated with institutional, technological/infrastructural, and behavioural issues (Figure 3). The prevalence of concerns is reflected both across the whole sample, as well for each individual city (Figure 4).
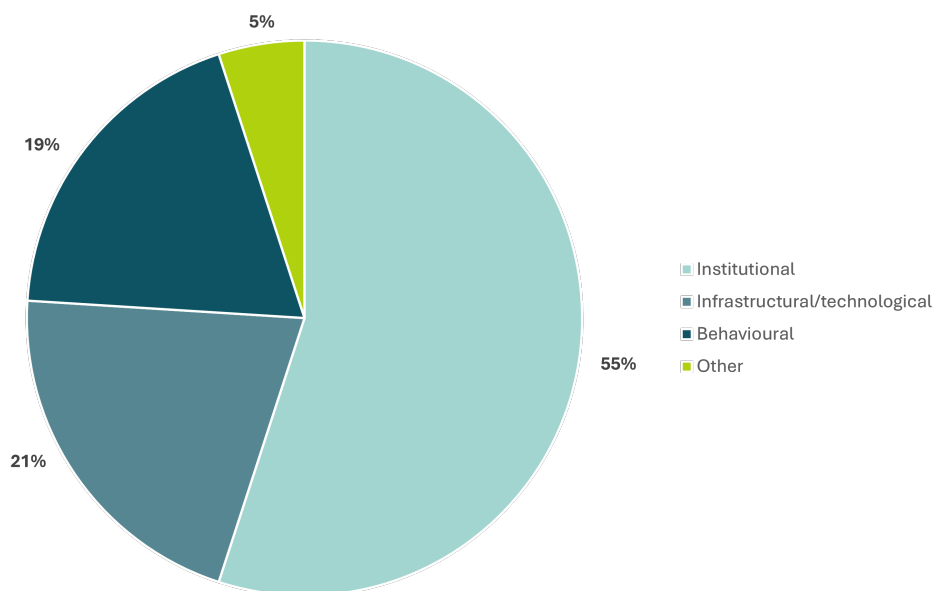

Figure 3. Prevalence of challenges identified across the first cohort of Mission Label Cities.
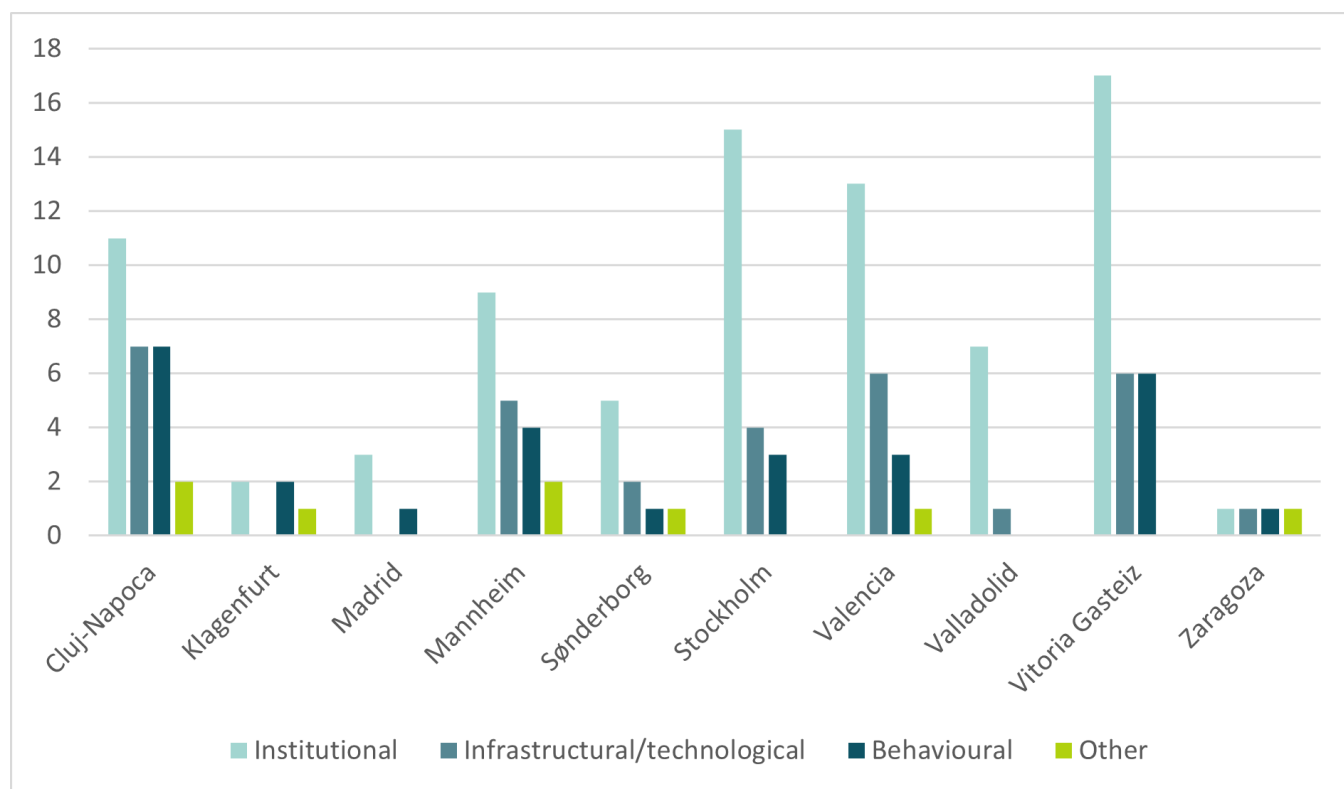
Figure 4. Prevalence of challenges (count) by type and by city.

Institutional barriers (55%) are the most frequently mentioned across the whole sample (Figure 3), as well as by each of the 10 cities (Figure 4). Cities refer predominantly to fragmented responsibilities across levels of governance, regulation, and inadequate funding schemes. Horizontal and vertical collaboration and unclear responsibilities, lack of capacity and skills, and inadequate funding schemes were also cited (see Table 2 for a complete break-down).

Infrastructural and technological barriers (21%) sum up to the second most prevalent issue among the 10 cities, both across the sample (Figure 3) and for 8 out of the 10 cities (Figure 4). Klagenfurt and Madrid represent the exceptions that did not reference these barriers at all. The challenges included here referred largely to the difficulty of covering the high upfront costs of infrastructure and technology acquisition, but also to undersized infrastructure and lack of mature technology.

Following closely behind are **behavioural barriers (19%)** (Figure 3). These issues are particularly prominent for Cluj-Napoca, Vitoria-Gasteiz, and Zaragoza, and they are mentioned by 9 out of the 10 cities (Figure 4). The main challenges highlighted under this category refer to an insufficient level of awareness and understanding of, for example, climate action and its co-benefits. Opposition to climate action due to conflicting priorities is also a key issue, along with poor stakeholder involvement.

Finally, **other challenges (5%)** mentioned include risks linked to market uncertainties or natural disasters.

A more detailed breakdown of the challenges mapped by the first cohort of Mission Label Cities is presented in Table 2 below, together with the number of times these challenges were mentioned.

Type	Subtype	No.	Total
Institutional	Fragmented responsibilities (multi-level-governance)	24	83
	Regulation (local)	19	
	Funding systems/schemes	9	
	Regulation (multi-level governance)	9	
	Lack of capacity and skills	8	
	Fragmented responsibilities (local ecosystem of actors)	7	
	Institutional gap (community/neighbourhood)	3	
	Fragmented responsibilities (internal/administrative)	3	
	Political risk	1	
Infrastructure/ technological	High upfront costs	23	32
	Undersized infrastructure	7	
	Lack of mature technology	2	
Behavioural	Awareness	14	28
	Opposition	10	
	Participation	4	
Other	Market uncertainties	6	8
	Climate change / extreme events	2	

Table 2. Prevalence of challenges by type across the 10 cities (count)

When grouped by sector, the breakdown of these challenges reveals an uneven distribution (Figure 5). Cross-sectoral challenges are by far the most prevalent across the 10 cities (42%). Barriers impacting the transport sector represent close to a third of the total (28%), followed by energy production, waste, and stationary energy that are mentioned in almost equal proportions (11%, 9%, and 8% respectively). The first cohort of Mission Label Cities is least concerned about land use and spatial planning.
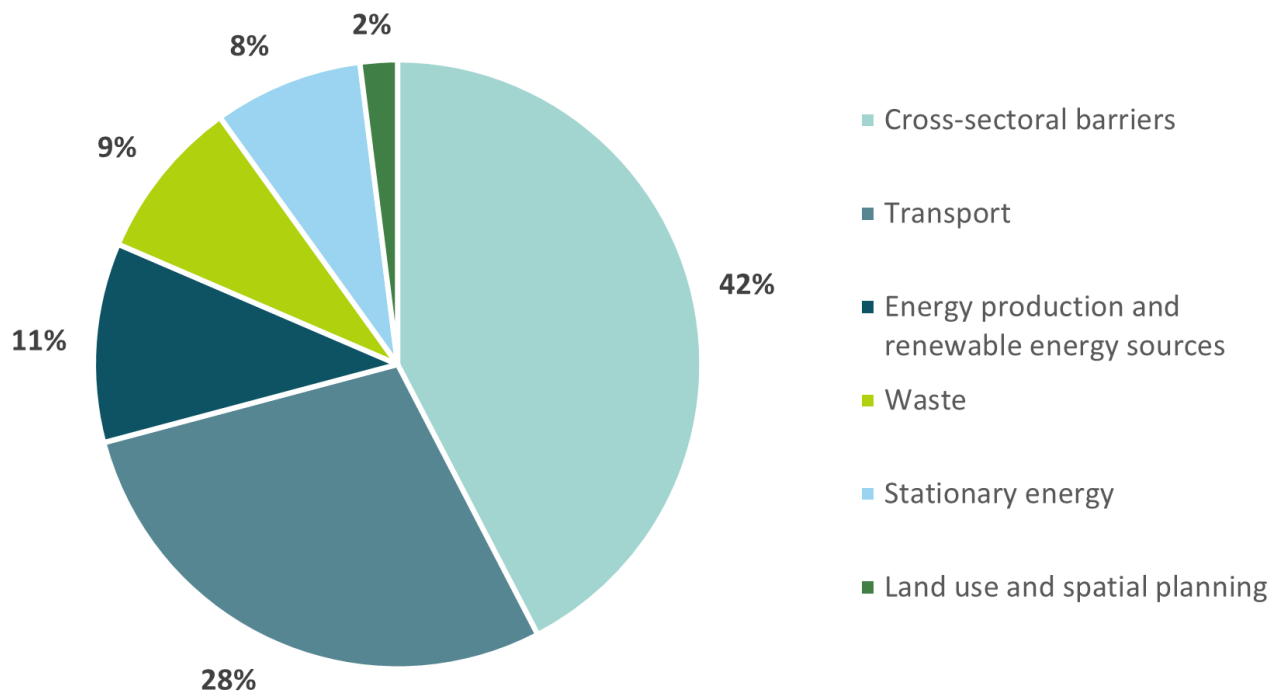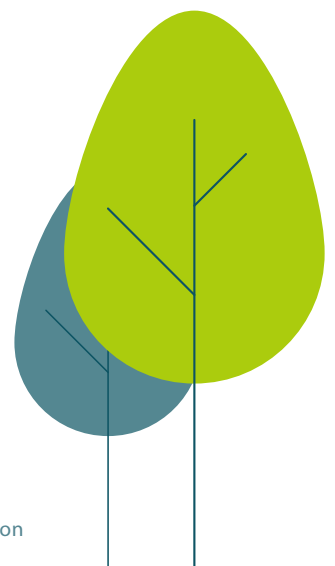

Figure 5. Percentage of barriers identified, according to sector.