



Blueprint for Net-Zero Apartment-block Neighbourhoods

CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA

Emissions domains addressed by the Pilot Activity



Consumption of non-electricity energy for thermal uses in buildings & facilities



Multi-sector waste management & disposal



Land use (agriculture, forestry & other land uses)



Consumption of electricity generated for buildings, facilities & infrastructure



All vehicles & transport (mobile energy)

Key Focus Areas

Climate neutrality | Apartment blocks | Energy efficiency | Smart city | Circular economy | Citizen engagement | Participatory budgeting

Levers of Change

Democracy and participation | Financing and funding | Governance and policy | Learning and capabilities | Social innovation | Technology/infrastructure

Description of the Pilot Activity

Cluj-Napoca's ageing, high-density housing stock is the city's largest source of emissions. This pilot combined renovations and smart technologies with participatory planning and behavioural change initiatives to transform apartment-block neighbourhoods into climate-neutral, liveable communities. The "ECO and not EGO" approach engaged more than 10,000 young people and their families, demonstrating that youth can be powerful drivers of intergenerational change.

Impact & Results

The pilot engaged 8,200 citizens directly through the Cluj-Napoca 2030 Net Zero City Coalition, the first Civic Imagination and Innovation Centre event, the M100 platform, and multiple Innovation Camps and workshops. Building administrators used a gamified self-assessment tool to identify knowledge gaps and strengthen competencies. Municipal staff participated in capacity-building workshops on energy efficiency, circular economy, and funding access.

Through the Net-Zero Caravan, youth participatory budgeting, and the Civic Imagination and Innovation Centre, residents took active roles in co-creation. The mindset shifted—climate neutrality came to be perceived less as an abstract goal and more as a shared, practical responsibility. Small-scale tactics delivered outsized impact: encouraging children to spark parent conversations, organising informal caravan events with food, using trusted local influencers, showing concrete benefits. These modest, cost-effective initiatives generated extensive press coverage and inspired other Romanian cities.

Innovation Highlights

A dedicated person answering citizens' questions online built credibility and trust—demonstrating that digital engagement succeeds through responsiveness, not just presence.

Youth participatory budgeting successfully implemented school-based sustainability projects, showing that young people take responsibility when given meaningful roles.

