

Strengthening Legal and Fiscal Levers for Climate Action in Barcelona

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EU MISSION PLATFORM | CLIMATE NEUTRAL AND SMART CITIES

Executive snapshot



Achieving Barcelona's climate neutrality goal requires more than ambitious strategies. It also depends on the city's ability to use regulatory, fiscal and institutional instruments to influence behaviour, investment and urban development patterns.

Through support from the EU Cities Mission via the City Expert Support Facility (CESF), Barcelona conducted a structured analysis of its regulatory, fiscal and governance frameworks to identify opportunities to strengthen local climate action.

The review was carried out with Analistas Financieros Internacionales (Afi) support, and focused on how municipal competences can be used more effectively to accelerate decarbonisation across key urban sectors.





Knowledge Report

THE IMPACT

The analysis strengthened Barcelona's capacity to translate its climate commitments into operational policy instruments. The work provided the City Council with a clearer understanding of how its regulatory competences, fiscal instruments and administrative procedures can support climate neutrality goals.

By analysing the city's strategic plans, tax ordinances and regulatory frameworks, the project identified opportunities to strengthen the use of municipal instruments to influence the behaviour of citizens, businesses and other organisations. The project produced a structured catalogue of 37 legally grounded policy proposals aimed at improving the alignment between fiscal signals, regulatory obligations and climate objectives across priority sectors such as mobility, energy, buildings, waste, water and green spaces. These proposals are presented in the **Strategic Analysis Report**, which provides detailed legal and fiscal recommendations tailored to Barcelona.

A complementary **Replication Report** assessed the transferability of these proposals across Catalonia, Spain and the EU, identifying the legal, institutional and political conditions under which similar approaches could be adopted by other cities.

Together, these reports provide both a practical roadmap for Barcelona and a structured source of transferable insights for other Mission Cities seeking to strengthen the legal and fiscal foundations of climate action within multi-level governance systems.

THE APPROACH

Diagnosis

A comprehensive review of Barcelona's climate governance framework was conducted, including strategic climate plans, municipal tax ordinances, fees and public prices, environmental regulations and administrative procedures affecting climate-relevant activities.

Cross-sectoral assessment

The review assessed how strategic climate objectives are translated into enforceable instruments across six priority sectors: energy, mobility, buildings, waste, water and green spaces. This phase identified gaps, overlaps and asymmetries between strategic commitments and operational tools.

Policy design

Based on the diagnostic phase, a structured catalogue of policy proposals was developed. The proposals include measures within municipal competences, measures requiring reforms at regional or national level, and innovative proposals for further exploration.

Replicability analysis

The project analysed the potential transferability of the proposed measures to other cities. A structured matrix assessed legal feasibility, institutional capacity, political feasibility and urban scale considerations to determine under which conditions similar approaches could be implemented elsewhere.



OUTCOMES AND LEARNING

- A comprehensive analysis of Barcelona's regulatory, fiscal and institutional framework supporting climate action
- A structured diagnosis identifying gaps and opportunities in how climate objectives are operationalised through municipal instruments
- A catalogue of policy proposals designed to strengthen the use of fiscal and regulatory levers in climate policy
- A replicability framework assessing how these approaches could be adapted by other cities in Spain and Europe
- Strengthened institutional understanding within the City Council of how municipal competences can be mobilised to support decarbonisation

What worked

The project demonstrated the value of combining legal analysis, fiscal policy review and climate governance expertise when designing municipal climate instruments. Anchoring the analysis in the specific competences of the Barcelona City Council ensured that the proposals remained realistic and implementable within existing legal frameworks.

Transferable insight

Many cities have well-developed climate strategies but fewer operational tools to implement them. The Barcelona experience highlights the importance of aligning fiscal and regulatory instruments with strategic climate objectives. Understanding the scope of municipal competences is critical for designing effective climate policies within multi-level governance systems.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?



Learn more about [Barcelona](#)

Read the Report: [Strategic analysis and innovation opportunities: Regulatory, legal, and fiscal framework supporting Barcelona's decarbonisation and climate action efforts](#)

Read the Report: [High-level Report: Replication of regulatory, legal, and fiscal framework innovation: Catalonia, Spain, EU](#)

Still got questions? Ask us:
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NEXT STEPS FOR THE CITY

Barcelona will continue exploring how the proposals identified in the CESF project can inform future regulatory and fiscal reforms. Possible next steps include reviewing selected municipal ordinances and tax structures to strengthen climate incentives, further assessing innovative financing mechanisms for climate action, and strengthening coordination across departments involved in climate policy implementation.

The city also intends to share its experience with other Mission Cities through peer-learning activities, contributing to collective knowledge on competence-based climate governance.

