

Sustainable energy-focused district investment platform approach for Dutch Cities

NET ZERO CITIES

EU MISSION PLATFORM | CLIMATE NEUTRAL AND SMART CITIES

Executive snapshot



How can cities turn ambitious climate plans into projects that attract investment and deliver results? Seven Dutch Mission Cities - Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Groningen, Helmond, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht - used support from the City Expert Support Facility (CESF) to tackle this challenge together. Their focus was on district-scale projects such as heat networks, building retrofits and neighbourhood energy transitions.

The participating cities shared a common obstacle: while their climate projects promised significant environmental and social benefits, many were not yet ready to secure financing. Governance complexity, affordability concerns and regulatory uncertainty made it difficult to move from planning to implementation.

Through a coordinated process, the cities developed a comparable portfolio of investment-ready business cases and used these insights to shape a shared financing concept. The result is a practical model for connecting local climate action with the large-scale capital needed to accelerate climate-neutral transformation.





Knowledge Report

THE IMPACT

This initiative created a bridge between local climate ambitions and national-scale finance. Instead of advancing projects independently, the participating cities established a common framework that made investment needs easier to compare, assess and aggregate.

By demonstrating that diverse projects can be structured as a coherent pipeline, the initiative laid the foundation for a shared financing mechanism capable of mobilising public and private capital. This provides cities with a clearer route to deliver climate infrastructure at scale while ensuring that affordability and social value remain central to investment decisions.

THE APPROACH

The work unfolded in three stages.

First, each city refined district-level business cases using a harmonised methodology aligned with the national Businesscase Warmtenetten model. This created a consistent basis for assessing technical, financial and governance readiness.

Second, the business cases were analysed as a single portfolio to identify recurring barriers, thematic strengths and opportunities for standardisation across cities.

Third, these findings informed the co-design of a national investment platform, supported by stakeholder consultations, comparative analysis of European financing models and digital pipeline tools.



OUTCOMES AND LEARNING

- A harmonised portfolio of district-level climate business cases across seven Dutch Mission Cities.
- A cross-city analysis highlighting common investment barriers and enabling factors.
- A detailed concept for a national investment platform, including governance arrangements, eligibility criteria and operational processes.
- Built-in technical assistance, digital pipeline tracking and affordability safeguards to support a wider range of projects.
- A phased roadmap for piloting and scaling the platform nationally.

What worked:

Working across multiple cities created stronger results than isolated project development. A shared methodology reduced duplication, enabled peer learning and helped cities present projects in a format that is more understandable to investors and decision-makers.

Transferable insight:

Cities often face similar financing challenges even when their local contexts differ. By standardising project preparation and aggregating opportunities into a common pipeline, cities can increase investment readiness and build stronger cases for national support.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE CITY

The next priority is to translate the proposed investment platform into an operational financing mechanism. This includes securing institutional ownership, mobilising capital, testing project intake procedures and advancing the most mature projects toward implementation.

If implemented, this model could help the participating cities accelerate district-scale climate investments and provide a replicable approach for other countries seeking to finance the transition to climate neutrality.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?



Learn more about the Dutch Mission Cities - [Amsterdam](#), [Eindhoven](#), [Groningen](#), [Helmond](#), [Rotterdam](#), [The Hague](#) and [Utrecht](#)

Still got questions? Ask us:
hello@netzerocities.eu