



## **D2.1 SMCNetZero Digital Forum**

**31/10/2023**

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Description of the related task and the deliverable. Extract from DoA & GA	<p><b>T2.1 SMCNetZero Digital Forum (Leader: BAB, Duration: M5-M12, Contributors: all)</b></p> <p>Building from the inputs collected as part of WP1, the SMCNetZero Digital Forum will aim to be a virtual “one stop shop” (housed within the BABLE Smart Cities platform) dedicated to connecting various innovation ecosystem actors in SMCs for knowledge share and collaboration toward decarbonisation. Knowledge share areas will include, but are not limited to, best practices, neutral solution blueprints, products, policy information and a repository of existing tools, as well as build on and connect to existing relevant and successful EU level initiatives and project and their resources, such as e.g. the EU Smart Cities Marketplace and its Small Giants Initiative (led by partner UDNA). The Digital Forum will also provide opportunities within the platform for SMCs to connect to other relevant innovation ecosystem actors (supporting the matchmaking in WP4), including underrepresented SMEs and financial investors, and will enable/ support all actors in delivering innovation together, particularly focusing on creating pathways of access to innovation leader countries and resources toward furthering innovation in traditionally less-represented regions and countries.</p>		
Participants	All partners		
Comments			
V	Date	Authors	Description
1	27/10/2023	Shannon Macika & Melike Nur Ülsever	Working document ready for internal review
2	30/10/2023	All partners	Peer-review comments attended, finalisation
3	31/10/2023	PC	The coordinator submits the deliverable to the EU

### Dissemination level

PU	Public	<b>x</b>
SEN	Sensitive	

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## About SMCNetZero

SMCNetZero brings together six successful urban innovation initiatives in Europe with seven (7) regional and Pan European networks and their partners to create a **Satellite Network of innovation actors** to support public sector representatives from Small and Medium-sized cities (SMCs), SMEs, academia, NGOs, and investors across Europe to **facilitate decarbonisation in SMCs**.

The SMCNetZero consortium is composed of:

- BABLE Smart Cities**, Germany (BAB)
- ODRAZ - Održivi razvoj zajednice**, Croatia (ODZ)
- Smart City Cluster**, Spain (SCC)
- Southern Regional Assembly**, Ireland (SRA)
- BLOXHUB**, Denmark (BXH)
- WE BUILD DENMARK**, Denmark (WBD)
- UrbanDNA**, United Kingdom (UDNA)

This project is unique in that its diverse consortium partners and broad commitment from target stakeholders in the Satellite Network ensure **focus in regions with less innovation capacity**, with written confirmed commitment from nearly 100 innovation actors at the proposal stage, to participate in the activities- including an emphasis on largely underrepresented regions and stakeholders.

The project will leverage its diverse Satellite Network to:

- Gain an in-depth understanding of SMC needs and barriers towards achieving Net Zero emissions.
- Raise awareness and simplify access to existing successful initiatives supporting decarbonisation.
- Support matchmaking between supply and demand sides by linking SMEs, researchers, and investors with SMCs.
- Help identify and open access to funding for enabling innovation deployment in SMCs currently underrepresented in the European innovation ecosystem.

SMCNetZero's vision is to **create and strengthen local innovation ecosystems' interrelations in SMCNetZero regions** through brokerage and knowledge-building activities as well as digital resources to increase capacity **for planning, deploying, and**

**scaling up of decarbonisation solutions**, overall focusing on increasing the inclusivity of these innovation ecosystems and minimizing existing innovation divides.

To achieve this vision, SMCNetZero has the following primary strategic objectives:

- Open up opportunities and stimulate the dissemination of information and exchange of knowledge on best practices on decarbonization for SMCs (and as a result, SMEs).
- Increase implementation prospects between providers of zero-emission solutions and public authorities from SMCs by designing, developing and providing a digital space and accompanying toolkit for collaborating, learning and networking.
- Identify and engage innovation leaders from the public and private sectors from “strong” innovator regions and “moderate” to “modest” innovator regions within the project’s focus countries.
- Design and deploy engagement and knowledge-building activities for ensuring wide participation for SMCNetZero and maximum impact.
- Facilitate the understanding and implications of the implementation and scale-up of innovation projects in SMCs.

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## Executive Summary

The **SMCNetZero Digital Forum** is a dynamic online platform designed to address the unique challenges faced by Small and Medium-sized Cities (SMCs) and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in their pursuit of decarbonisation. This report outlines the methodology and key findings that have shaped the development of the Digital Forum. Additionally, it provides detailed guidance on how to effectively navigate the Digital Forum and utilise its features. The report also outlines the next steps for the Digital Forum, ensuring a clear path forward in advancing sustainable urban development for SMCs and SMEs.

This document summarises the work developed for the SMCNetZero Digital Forum throughout the project's Work Package 2 (WP2), whose objectives are:

- Improving accessibility to innovation for all innovation actors
- Simplifying sharing of knowledge and best practices
- Enabling connections and networking amongst innovation actors
- Enabling and accelerating sharing of best practices with regards to decarbonisation in SMCs
- Facilitating knowledge sharing among SMCs

The document is organised as follows. Section 1 summarises the methodology and process of creating the SMCNetZero Digital Forum; Section 2 outlines the main objectives, the Digital Forum's target audience and the importance of this collaborative digital space; Section 3 provides comprehensive guidance on accessing and navigating the SMCNetZero Digital Forum and its features; and, finally, Section 4 outlines upcoming activities for the SMCNetZero Digital Forum.



resources. The Digital Forum will provide a repository of such best practices, showcasing successful projects and strategies for sustainable urban development particular to SMCs.

- **Access to Materials:** SMCs require access to relevant materials and resources for implementing climate action plans. The Forum will offer a library of materials, from reports to case studies, to support their initiatives.
- **Practical Tools for Implementation:** Implementing climate action plans can be challenging. The Forum will provide practical tools and guidance to assist SMCs in effectively implementing and monitoring their sustainability initiatives.
- **Knowledge About Available Solutions:** SMCs need information about available sustainable solutions and technologies. The Digital Forum will be a knowledge hub, providing insights into the latest solutions and their applicability.
- **Access to Financial Skills and Funding:** Access to funding and financial expertise is crucial. The Digital Forum will facilitate access to financial resources and provide guidance on securing funding for sustainable projects.

#### **For SMEs:**

- **Matchmaking Service:** SMEs can benefit from connecting with potential partners or clients. The Forum will offer a matchmaking service, enabling SMEs to find partners for collaboration.
- **Showcasing Successes:** SMEs need a platform to showcase their successes in sustainable initiatives. The Forum will provide a space for SMEs to highlight their achievements and gain recognition.
- **Learning from Best Practices:** Learning from the experiences of others is invaluable. The Digital Forum will curate best practices, allowing SMEs to gain insights from successful sustainability projects.
- **Knowing the Needs from Cities:** Understanding the specific needs of cities is crucial for SMEs. The Forum will provide information on city requirements and priorities for climate action.
- **Knowledge About SMCs Climate Action Plans:** SMEs often work in collaboration with SMCs. The Forum will offer insights into SMCs' climate action plans, enabling SMEs to align their efforts with city initiatives.
- **Overview of EU Policies:** SMEs operating within the EU will benefit from an overview of relevant policies and regulations. The Forum will provide information on EU policies impacting sustainability.

- **Knowledge of Complementary Companies:** SMEs may seek complementary companies for joint services or products. The Forum will facilitate connections and provide information on potential partners for collaborative projects.

### 3. What functionalities can the Digital Forum offer to address these user needs?

The envisaged Digital Forum shall offer a wide range of functionalities to effectively address the specific needs of its users:

- **About Page:** This page provides users with a general overview of the Forum. It includes information about the project's partners, the community it serves (SMEs and SMCs) and details about the services and offerings available through the project.
- **Dashboards:** The Dashboards feature is visually engaging and interactive. It connects to the broader BABLE smart cities platform (in which the SMCNetZero Digital Forum is embedded), allowing users to explore pins and connections on maps, providing further information upon clicking. Users can easily search for topics of interest, view the "latest activity" banner and get an orientation on project lifecycles and available resources. User registration is made simple, with optional fields for identifying as an SMC, SME or other community member.
- **Knowledge Share Area:** This section offers different points of entry depending on the user's status and stakeholder group. It facilitates connections between cities, also particularly SMCs, and includes a chat function for real-time communication. Additionally, it provides a "how to participate" overview, ensuring that users understand how to engage with the platform.
- **Resources:** In the Resources section, users can access a wealth of materials. This includes training materials, tools for estimating budgets, policy guides to adapt locally, best practices, different use cases from SMEs offering insights on what has worked well, solution frameworks, and reports for in-depth information.
- **Tools for SMCs:** Users can access at least four decarbonisation-relevant tools derived from existing projects, ensuring practical support for SMCs. Additionally, a funding finder tool designed by BABLE is available to assist in locating financial resources for sustainable initiatives.
- **The Latest:** This section keeps users updated with the most current information. It includes news, subscriptions for newsletters, and showcases the latest successful collaborations, fostering a sense of community and knowledge sharing.

- **Matchmaking Function:** For project promoters and others seeking collaboration opportunities, the matchmaking function allows users to outline their projects and capabilities. It also includes a stage gate readiness guide/assessment to ensure that collaborations are well-prepared and aligned with the platform's objectives.

#### 4. What are the essential elements required to make the Digital Forum successful?

To make the Digital Forum successful, several essential elements are required. These elements help establish the platform's identity and ensure a cohesive and engaging user experience. The identified elements include:

- **Logo:** A distinctive and memorable logo serves as the visual identity of the Digital Forum. It should reflect the core values and mission of the platform, making it easily recognizable to users.
- **Colour Palette:** A thoughtfully chosen colour palette helps convey the platform's personality and brand. Consistent colours contribute to a cohesive visual experience and can evoke specific emotions or associations.
- **Imagery:** High-quality imagery, such as photographs and illustrations, plays a crucial role in engaging users and conveying information. Images should align with the platform's theme and be used strategically to enhance content.
- **Layout and Graphics:** An intuitive and user-friendly layout is essential for easy navigation. Clear information hierarchy and appealing graphics ensure that users can access content and features without confusion.
- **Keywords:** Keywords are vital for search engine optimization (SEO) and helping users find relevant content. They should be strategically integrated into the platform's content and metadata to improve visibility and discoverability.

#### 5. What are our expectations for the Digital Forum from our project partners?

The project partners expect simplicity, clarity and differentiation in our Digital Forum. We anticipate clear evidence of successful projects brought to fruition, along with a demonstrable ability to aggregate demand. We aim to cultivate a dynamic community of cities, continuously learning and expanding in both knowledge and numbers, with the sustainability to operate the Digital Forum independently beyond the initial project funding. We also seek political support to mobilise cities at the EU level, emphasising our unique value proposition. Ultimately, we envision the Forum as a collaborative hub,

...serving as a knowledge library where SMCs and SMEs can connect, partner, and collaborate effectively.

As project partners, we anticipate that the Digital Forum will serve as a dynamic online space, housed within the existing BABLE Smart Cities platform, to facilitate interaction and collaboration between various innovation ecosystem actors in SMCs, aiming to address challenges, bridge gaps and inspire new solutions.



## Key Takeaways Workshop

The goal of this workshop was to gather insights and ideas to inform the design of the Digital Forum on 31st of May.

Target Audience	Needs of for forum	Functionality required & basic functions	Examples
<b>Primary Targets:</b> SMCs/SMEs, Environment & Technique department Climate action officers, Supporting Policy Officer Business Developers Entrepreneurs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Examples of Best Practices,</li> <li>2. Other SMCs to aggregate demand,</li> <li>3. Knowledge of policy context</li> <li>4. Easy access to SMEs</li> <li>5. Matchmaking services for SMEs</li> <li>6. Capacity building practices</li> <li>7. Community</li> <li>8. Engagement &amp; collaboration</li> </ol>	<b>Sections</b> About, Dashboard, Knowledge share area	Get general info on page.Best Practices, Newsletter sign-up section
		<b>Other suggested sections</b> Resources, Address book	The latest news, use cases
<b>Funding finder tool by BABLE</b>		Collection of useful funding opportunities	
<b>Tool 1</b>		<b>Tool 2</b>	E.g. iPlan, Digital Twin, Carbon Footprint Analyzer
<b>Tool 3</b>	<b>Tool 4</b>		
<b>Secondary targets</b> Multiplier Networks Citizens Universities Other Projects Clusters Interest organizations / NGOs.			

Figure 2: Key Takeaways from the internal project Digital Forum Workshop - May 2023

### Incorporating the Key Results from D1.1 Market Analysis Report

In our collaborative journey to develop the Digital Forum, we conducted interviews with our Small and Medium-sized Cities (SMCs) and Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SMEs).

The interviews revealed a wide array of tools vital for performance enhancement and innovation. Notably, our SMCs and SMEs interviewees highlighted the significance of performance management tools, such as ESG tools, in measuring and tracking environmental, social, and governance factors. Data visualization tools, like QGIS, were recognized for their ability to simplify complex information presentation. Furthermore, product management tools, exemplified by the EPD generator, emerged as valuable assets for streamlining product development processes. Energy-related tools, specifically carbon foot printing tools, were acknowledged for their role in assessing and

reducing carbon emissions. In the context of virtual networking, the Digital Twin and similar tools were seen as instrumental in creating digital replicas of physical assets. These insights, gathered from our SMC and SME partners, not only guided our platform's design but also emphasized the importance of collaboration and knowledge exchange within the digital and sustainable development communities.

These findings played a pivotal role in shaping the platform and its functionality.



## Key Take Aways from Interviews

The answers of interviewees were collected and analysed for the Digital Forum.

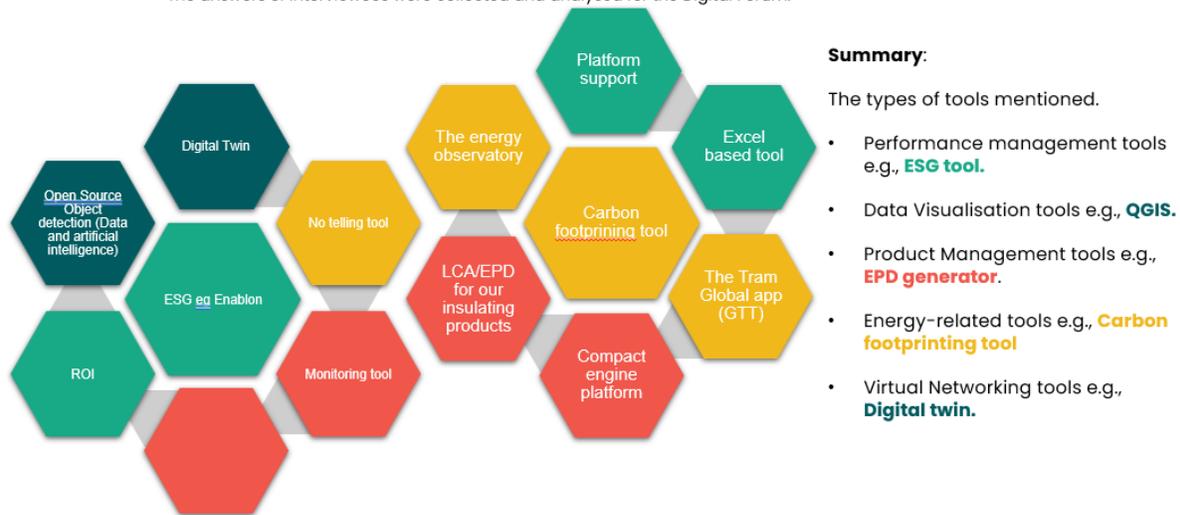


Figure 3: Key takeaways from the interviews conducted as part of the SMCNetZero D1.1 Market Analysis Report

Following an insightful workshop with our partners and insights gained from the interviews, we harnessed the collective knowledge to refine our Digital Forum concept. BABLE communicated the workshop results to its internal product development team, ensuring that the platform aligned with our users' needs. In every bi-weekly consortium meeting, BABLE showcased our progress and improvements to all partners, fostering a collaborative development process.

### User Testing

In our continuous efforts to enhance the overall user experience of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum, we conducted thorough UX research (for detail, please kindly refer to Appendix I). The aim of this UX research was to evaluate the user experience of the Digital Forum from various perspectives, including user impressions, navigation, purpose understanding, use case creation, new user onboarding and the identification

of any potential gaps or desired features. This research aims to provide insights and actionable recommendations to improve the overall usability and functionality of the Digital Forum platform, enhancing user satisfaction and engagement.



## Designing SMCNetZero Digital Forum

Step by step, how do we designed the Digital Forum

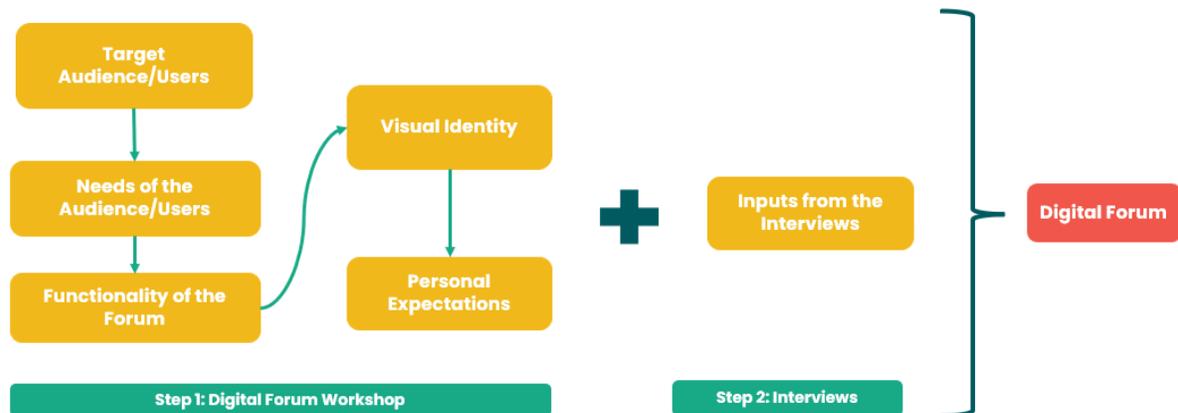


Figure 4: Overall process for the designing of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum

We conducted this UX research with a total of 10 participants, including partners and potential Digital Forum users. Moreover, we assured you that responses would remain entirely anonymous. The research was performed in the Maze user testing app (<https://maze.co/>) and the final results also included some additional data and statistic collected through the live Digital Forum via Matomo Analytics (<https://matomo.org/>):

- Task-based evaluation
- Screen recording
- Outcome analysis

To achieve this objective effectively, we requested enabling screen recording during the test users' interactions with the platform. It was important to note that there were no right or wrong answers; the questionnaire was designed to gather natural and honest feedback. We anticipated that completing the survey would have required no more than 10 minutes. To assist tracking progress, a blue bar at the top of the screen would have indicated completion status.

General impressions from the testers:

- *“The tasks were very direct and used the same words as the sub-headline - so easy to manage.”*
- *“I didn't have any issues in terms of understanding where to go.”*
- *“From all the activities, the sign-up has been the task that took me the longest - finding that sign-up is under forum was based on my BABLE platform experience.”*

In conclusion, based on the results of this user testing, to enhance the user experience on the SMC NetZero platform, several improvements can be considered:

- Firstly, placing the logo within the sign-up button on the landing page can significantly streamline the user flow and reduce the steps required to access the forum.
- Secondly, adjusting the copy from "Add forum entry" to "Add new post" for increased user recognition can contribute to a more user-friendly interface.
- Overall, the general impressions suggest that users can readily find what they are looking for and perform their intended tasks efficiently. Addressing any impediments in the login and sign-up processes can further improve the platform's bounce rate and user engagement, ensuring a smoother and more enjoyable experience for all users.

This Maze user testing was immensely appreciated to refine and optimize the SMCNetZero Digital Forum. Finally, all the hard work accumulated into the successful launch of the platform on September 19<sup>th</sup> during the public project webinar “Tailoring Success with SMCNetZero, marking a significant milestone in our shared journey of the project.

## 2. SMCNetZero Digital Forum Overview

### **Aim of the Digital Forum**

The SMCNetZero Digital Forum is driven by an in-depth understanding of the specific challenges and needs faced by SMCs. Its primary goal is to establish a dynamic online platform where SMCs, SMEs and other relevant stakeholders can share knowledge, build connections, and accelerate efforts towards decarbonisation. The SMCNetZero Digital Forum aims to simplify access to existing successful initiatives, raise awareness and offer tailored support, capacity building, workshops, and tools. This collaborative endeavour is directed towards advancing sustainability within the SMC community by

setting up a connected network of initiatives and organisations representing various involved innovation actors, which is also directly in alignment with the overall project goals.

### **Relation to the BABLE smart cities platform**

The SMCNetZero Digital Forum operate as a virtual "one-stop shop" integrated as a sub-space within the existing BABLE Smart Cities platform, serving as an expansive resource hub. Therefore, users of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum are able to access both the niche resources that the Digital Forum offers tailored the SMC and SME needs while also taking advantage of the broader offering and opportunities offered through the BABLE platform.

### **Definition of the target users**

While the exact size may be defined slightly differently by various entities and projects, to ensure a standard of focus, the following definitions were agreed to be considered within the scope of the SMCNetZero project with regards to sizes and resources of SMCs and SMEs:

- **Small and Medium Sized Cities (SMCs):** Cities with a population between 5k and 100k inhabitants will be the targeted ones. Those towns/cities having independent governance structures (e.g. cities with Mayors, city councils) and motivation to be net zero will be preferred. However, if in any case, a partner identifies a city of interest that falls slightly outside these boundaries, it may also be considered.
- **Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs):** Companies with <250 employees that offer innovative solutions and services to support decarbonization in cities, preferably those with experience in the development of net zero initiatives for small and medium sized local authorities.

## **3. User Experience in the Digital Forum**

### **How to access the Digital Forum**

Users can access the SMCNetZero Digital Forum through two primary channels:

- **Directly visiting the dedicated [project webpage](#)**, and clicking on the displayed "Forum" button in the top header.
- **Through the [BABLE Smart Cities platform](#)**, navigating to the "HOME" tab in the top header and selecting "SMCNETZERO FORUM".



Figure 5: Accessing the SMCNetZero Digital Forum from the project website

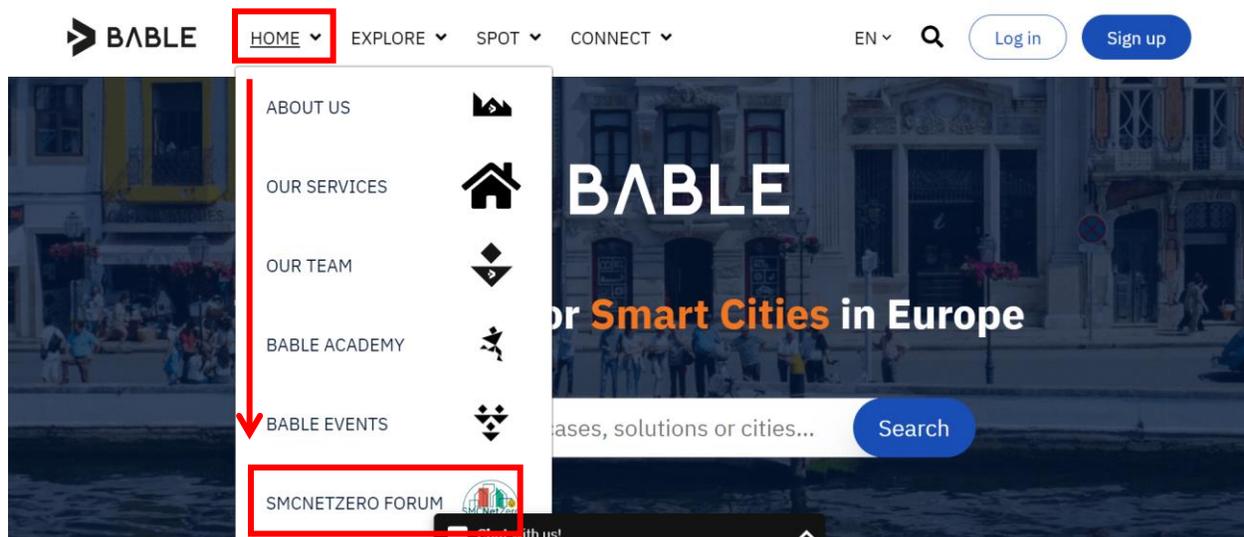


Figure 6: Accessing the SMCNetZero Digital Forum from the BABLE smart cities platform

## How to sign in and log in to the Digital Forum

Non-signed-in users have access to limited sections of the Digital Forum. Upon accessing the SMCNetZero Digital Forum, users are first directed to the Login/Sign-Up

Page, designed to familiarise non-registered users with the platform and guide them through the account creation process. Further down the Digital Forum landing page, users will find a brief overview of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum’s objectives, details about Project Partners, highlights of the Digital Forum community members and updates on NetZero News and Events.

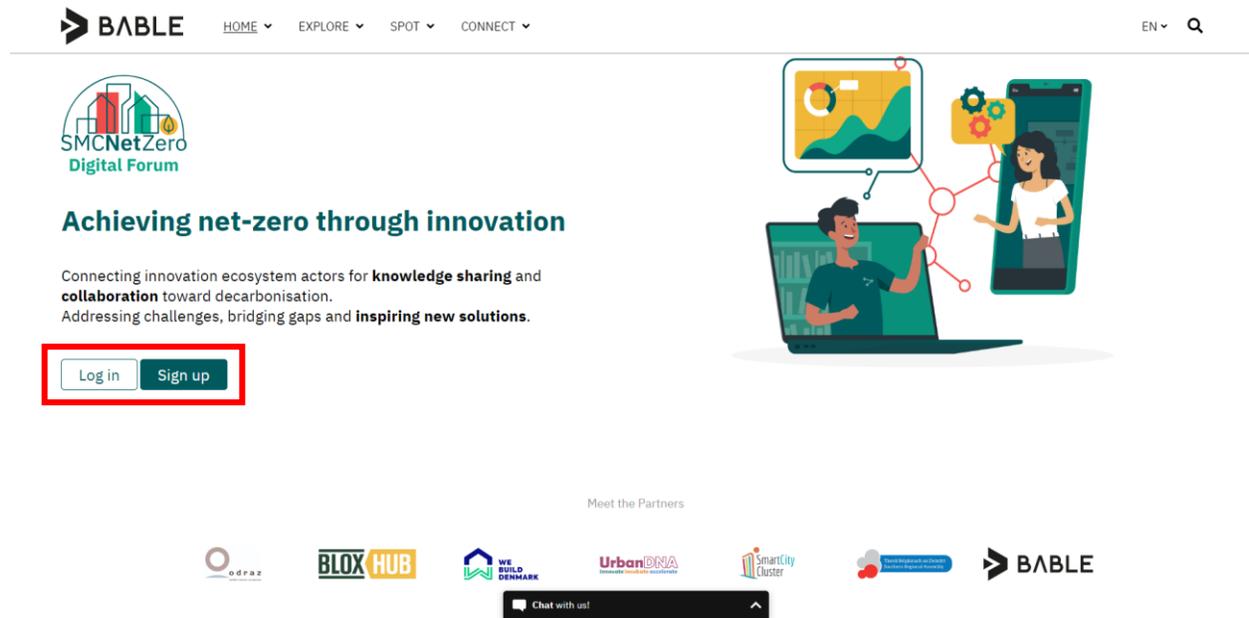


Figure 7: Signing up for the SMCNetZero Digital Forum from the Forum landing page at <https://www.bable-smartcities.eu/home/smc-net-zero.html>

Creating an account on SMCNetZero Digital Forum is cost-free and is the most effective way to benefit from the project resources and its community of stakeholders.

To utilise the interactive features and access restricted content on the platform, users must log in, allowing the system to establish their level of access. During the registration process, users will receive information about the collection and utilisation of their data through an integrated Privacy Notice on the platform. By creating an account for the Digital Forum, users are also creating an account to the broader BABLE Smart Cities platform, and this is explicitly referenced on the dedicated sign-up page.

Once signed in, users gain access to various additional functionalities, including the ability to engage in discussions, explore Net Zero Use Cases and utilise additional features. The Digital Forum landing page, which users are directed to upon logging in, features a button that provides direct access to the Forum area. Alternatively, users can

navigate through the top header of the Forum, which currently includes the following sections: “FORUM”, “USE CASES”, “TOOLS”, “PODCAST” and “ARTICLES”.

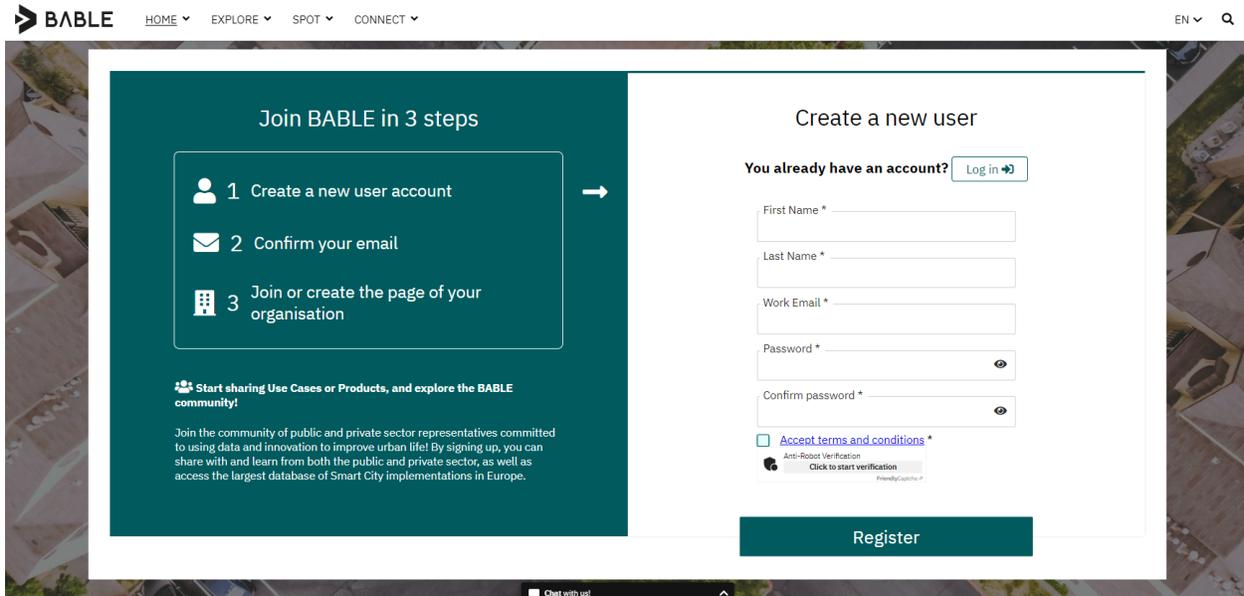


Figure 8: Creating a new user account for the SMCNetZero Digital Forum

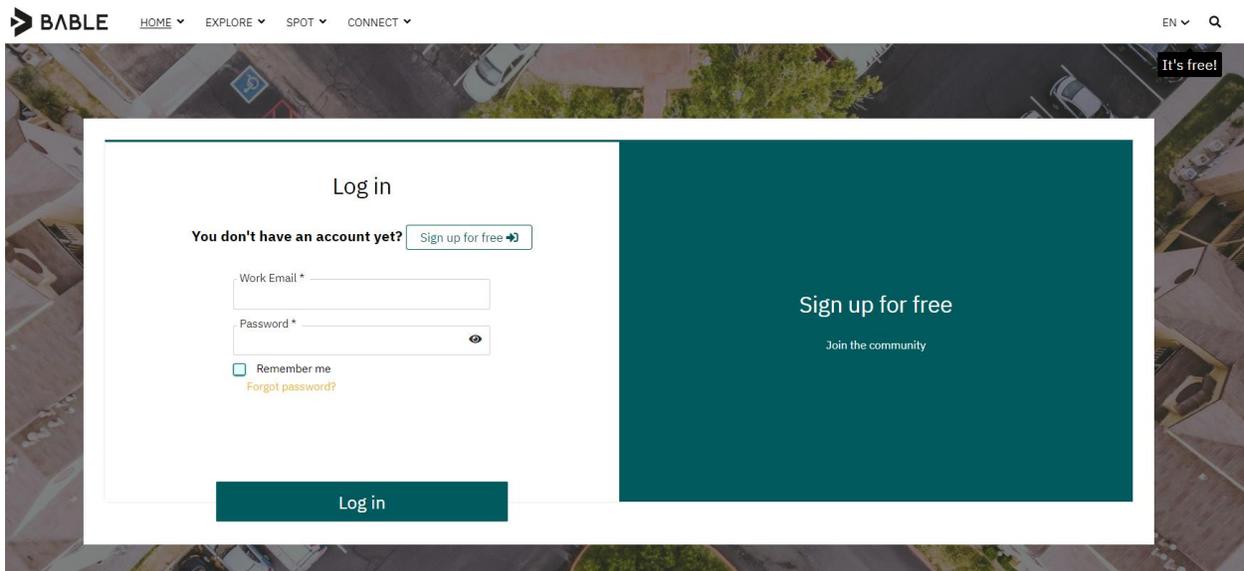


Figure 9: Signing in with an existing user account to the SMCNetZero Digital Forum

## How to update your individual user profile

Updating your profile in the Digital Forum is a straightforward process. Begin by navigating to your profile picture in the top right corner of the platform, where you'll find

an 'Edit Profile' option. Click on this option to access your profile settings. From there, you can make changes to your profile information, such as your name, profile picture, contact details, sectoral experience and any other relevant information you wish to update. Be sure to save your changes once you've made the necessary updates, by simply going to the bottom of the page and clicking the “save” button on the bottom right. It's that simple! Keeping your profile current ensures that you have the most accurate and relevant information available to your fellow community members. Your profile is updated then for both the SMCNetZero Digital Forum specifically as well as the BABLE platform.

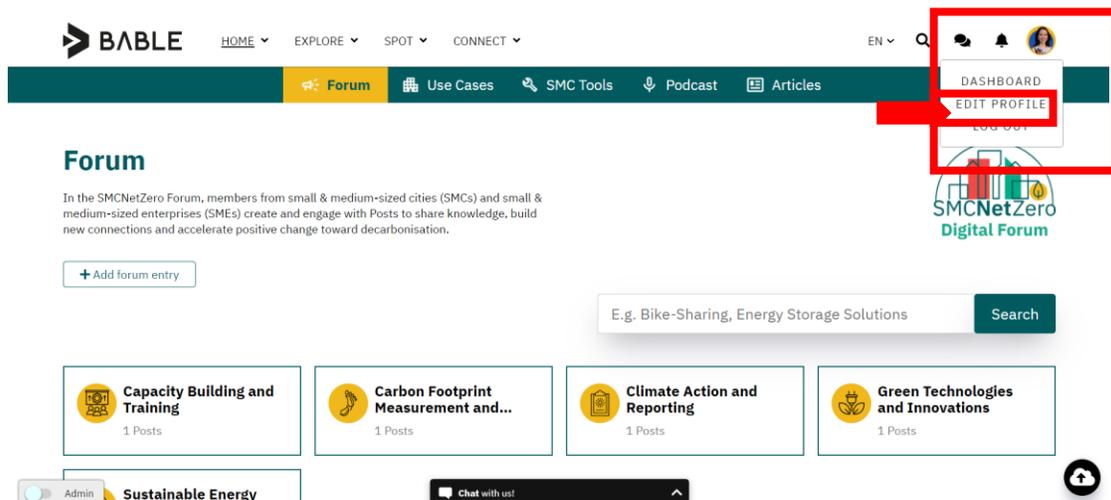


Figure 10: Editing your user profile for the SMCNetZero Digital Forum – screenshot 1 of 3

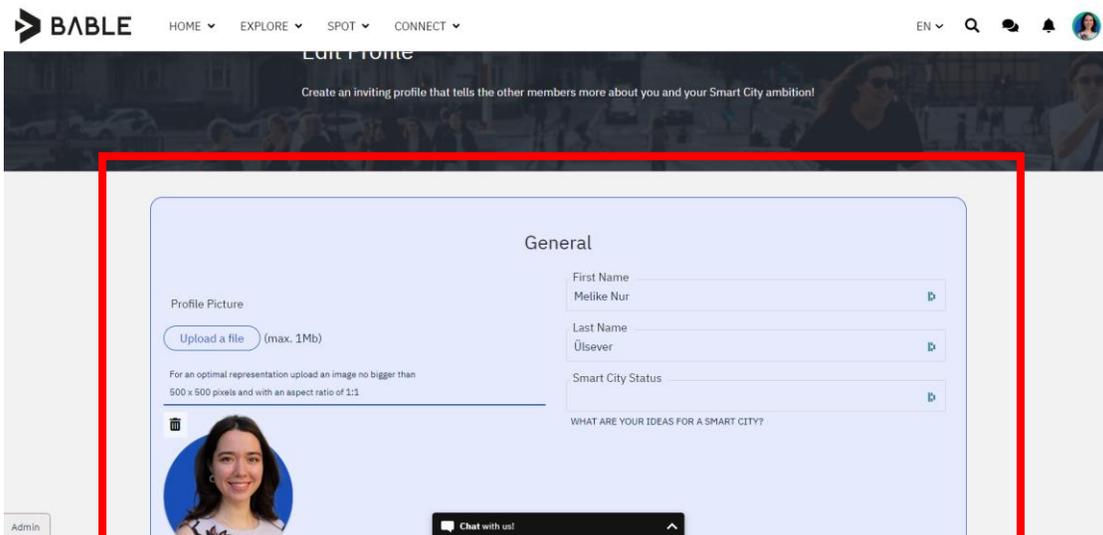


Figure 11: Editing your user profile for the SMCNetZero Digital Forum – screenshot 2 of 3

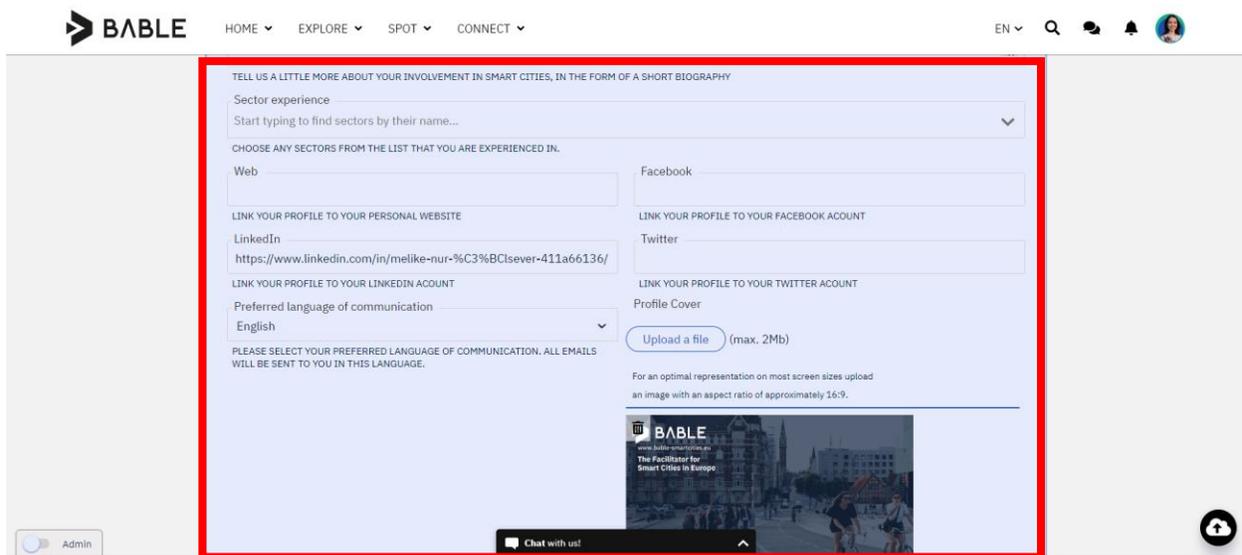


Figure 12: Editing your user profile for the SMCNetZero Digital Forum – screenshot 3 of 3

## How to create your City or Company Page to link to the Digital Forum

If you are a representative of an SMC or a SME interested in establishing your dedicated page for your city or company within the Digital Forum, to then be highlighted as part of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum community, the process to create your page is quite simple. Once you've created your personal account on the platform, start by scrolling down on the platform's home page until you reach the "Who is with us" section. Here, you'll find a collection of city and company pages that form part of the SMCNetZero community. Within this "Who is with us" section, you'll spot a button to establish your own city or company page within the platform. Click on the button to set the process of creating your page.

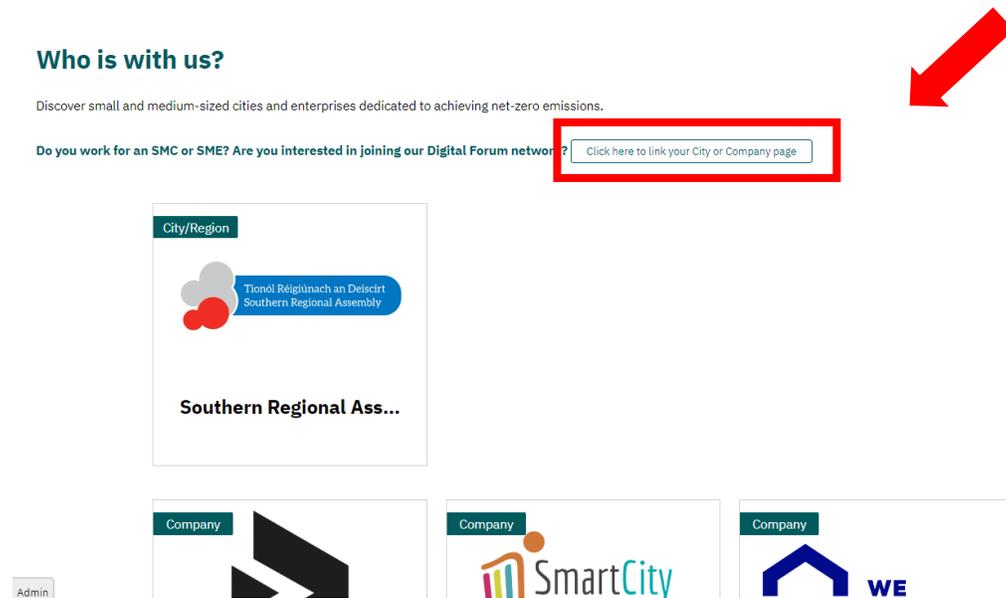


Figure 13: Requesting to have your city or company page linked to the SMCNetZero Digital Forum

This action will guide you to an email automation. All you need to do is send us an email expressing your interest in having your page. Upon receiving your request, SMCNetZero team will take care of the rest. Our team will manually create your page, link it to your account (for further review and editing, if needed) and ensure you're seamlessly integrated into the platform. This will enable you to share your success stories, forum posts, and engage with the community effectively.

## Forum section of the Digital Forum

The Forum section is intended to be the heart of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum. In the “[FORUM](#)” section, users can actively create and engage with posts to share knowledge, build new connections and accelerate positive change toward decarbonisation, particularly around specified themes determined as priority areas through the project’s market analysis activities:

- Sustainable Energy Solutions for SMCs/SMEs
- Green Technologies and Innovations
- Carbon Footprint Measurement and Reduction
- Capacity Building and Training
- Climate Action and Reporting

In the Forum interface, users can add new posts, access a search engine for specific queries and view an overview of forum posts. Additionally, users are provided with designated buttons corresponding to the established priority topics referenced above.

These buttons allow users to efficiently sort, and access posts related to each respective category.

To create and share posts, users need to click the “+ Add forum entry” button. This action will prompt a new window with functionalities for post creation. Within this area, users are required to complete specific fields:

- 1 Provide a concise and self-explanatory title for their Forum post.
- 2 Select the relevant pre-defined sectors pertaining to the post.
- 3 Tag the pre-defined topics that the post is associated with.
- 4 Fill in the content of their posts. Users have the option to utilize various tools to highlight specific sections of the text. Additionally, users can tag other platform members by using “@” or refer to other pages (cities/regions, companies, networks/projects) by using “#”.
- 5 It is also possible to upload images and videos to the post. In the bottom right corner, users find the “add media” button.
- 6 Once all the necessary information is provided and the post is ready, users should click the “post now” button. This action will make the post available on the platform.

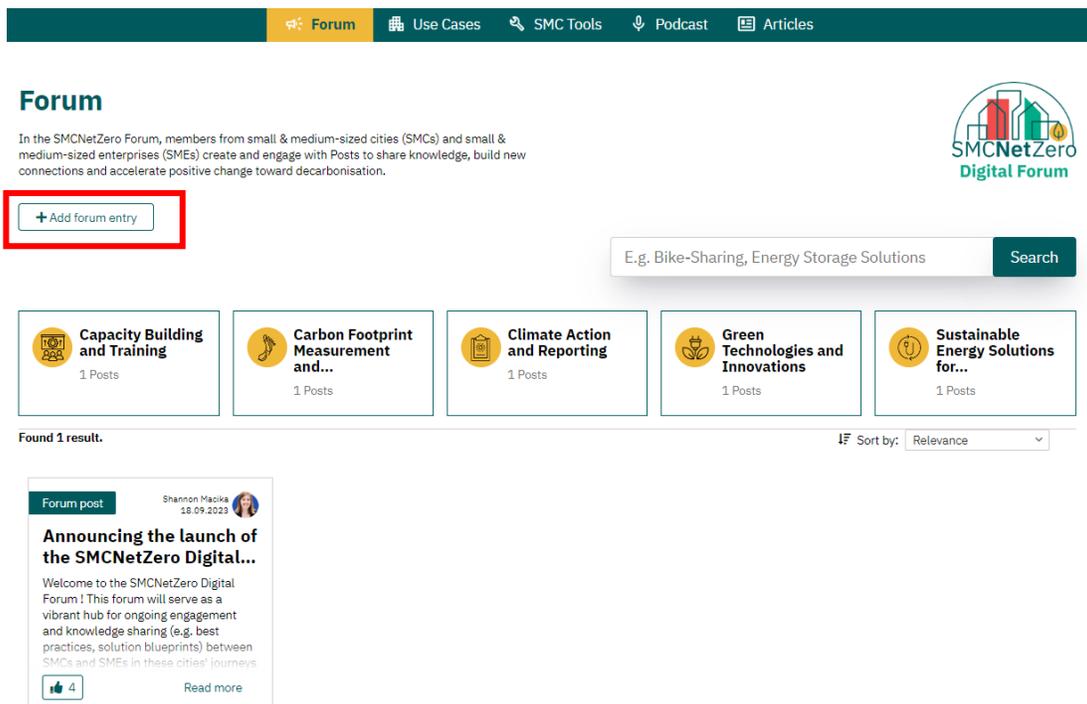


Figure 14: Adding a new post in the Forum section of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum

Create a post as BABLE ✕

---

⚠ Please fill in all the information in English or switch to another language: English Why is this important? ℹ ✕

Type of post SMCNetZero forum post ▼ Title\* E.g. Smart City Contest 2021

WHAT KIND OF POST ARE YOU ABOUT TO CREATE? CHOOSE ONE OF THE OPTIONS DEPENDING ON THE GOAL YOU HAVE. THE TITLE OF YOUR POST

Sectors ▼ Topic ▼

PLEASE CHOOSE RELEVANT SECTORS FROM THE LIST PLEASE CHOOSE ONE OR MULTIPLE TOPICS FROM THE LIST

**Post content\***

← → B I U ↵ ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰ Size ▼

WRITE THE CONTENT OF YOUR POST HERE. USE THE DIFFERENT TOOLS TO HIGHLIGHT SOME SECTIONS OF THE TEXT. YOU CAN ALSO TAG OTHER PLATFORM MEMBERS BY USING AN @ OR OTHER PAGES (CITIES/REGIONS, COMPANIES, NETWORKS/PROJECTS) BY USING A #

Close Add media Post now

Figure 15: Creating a post in the SMCNetZero Digital Forum and the option to add media (photos and video)

## Use Cases section of the Digital Forum

In the “[USE CASES](#)” section, users encounter an interface featuring a button to create new use cases, a search engine for specific queries, filters to categorise Use Case views and an overview of Net Zero use cases uploaded to the platform.

SMCNetZero Use Cases – either fully implemented or still ongoing – are real-world, best practice reference projects from small & medium-sized cities (SMCs) and small & medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), sharing insights and learnings from the SMCs making significant progress toward decarbonisation. Each Use Case contains specific information needed for replication and to inspire transformative actions.

To create and share a use case, users must click the "+ Add New Use Case" button. This action prompts a new window presenting a four-step form, collecting information

that will be vital to other Digital Forum users who read the user case and are interested in replication and scalability:

**Step 1:** Users are asked to fill in general information about the use case, including its name, location, year of implementation, actors involved and other pertinent details.

**Step 2:** Users are asked to provide a comprehensive description of the use case, encompassing a summary, challenges faced, goals set, solutions applied and more.

**Step 3:** Users are asked to fill in financial aspects of the use case, covering the project’s funding sources, revenue streams and related financial details.

**Step 4:** Users are asked to share insights and results pertaining to the Use Case, filling in fields for impacts, lessons learned and future steps. Additionally, users have the option to include relevant media (images and videos).

The form can be saved at any point and users can invite colleagues (other platform members) to collaborate on it. After completing the four steps, users will be able to review all the information provided. If all appears satisfactory, users can submit the use case for review. The BABLE Smart Cities team will then assess the submitted information and if necessary, contact the user to collaborate on refining the content before publishing. Once approved, the Use Case will be shared with the community.

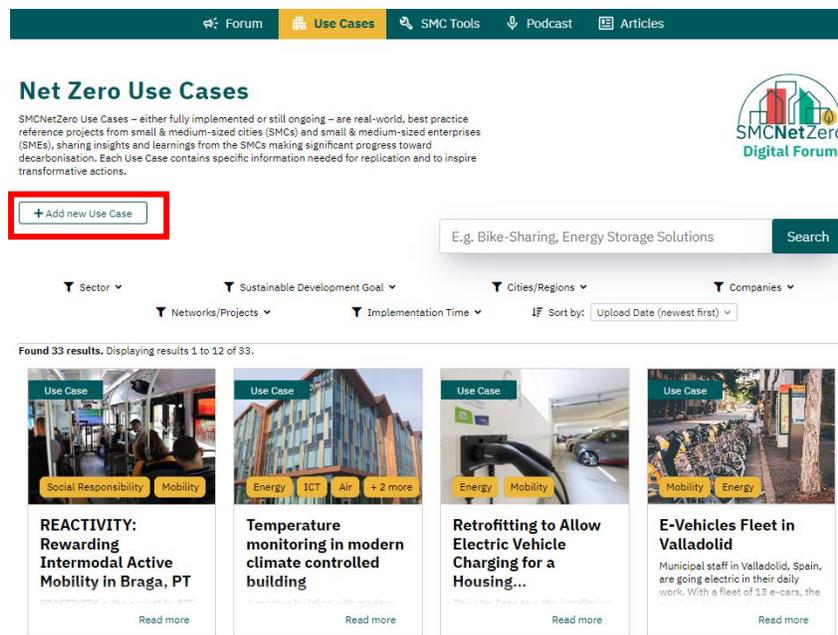


Figure 16: Adding a new Use Case to the SMCNetZero Digital Forum

## SMC Tools section of the Digital Forum

In the "[SMC TOOLS](#)" section, users will find a decarbonisation toolbox dedicated to supporting SMCs in their decarbonisation efforts. These tools, including a Funding Finder as well as tools developed under other EU co-funded projects, provide knowledge and resources that support SMCs and SMEs in making informed decisions and driving meaningful environmental impact. The toolkit is currently still being planned will incorporate a selection of at least four tools, sourced and digitalised or linked to/from pre-existing projects, as identified and prioritised in Work Package 1 (WP1) and through subsequent research and development activities.

In addition, BABLE Smart Cities will develop a Funding Finder tool specific to SMC and SME needs. This tool will play a crucial role in assisting SMCs and SMEs in securing financial backing for their NetZero initiatives. It will accomplish this by enhancing awareness of existing funding opportunities, drawing from an array of databases and funding sources to match users with funding based on their specific needs. These sources will include, but are not limited to, EIT co-fundings, the EU Mission: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities program, Interreg pro-grams and various funding calls through the EU Funding and Tenders Portal.

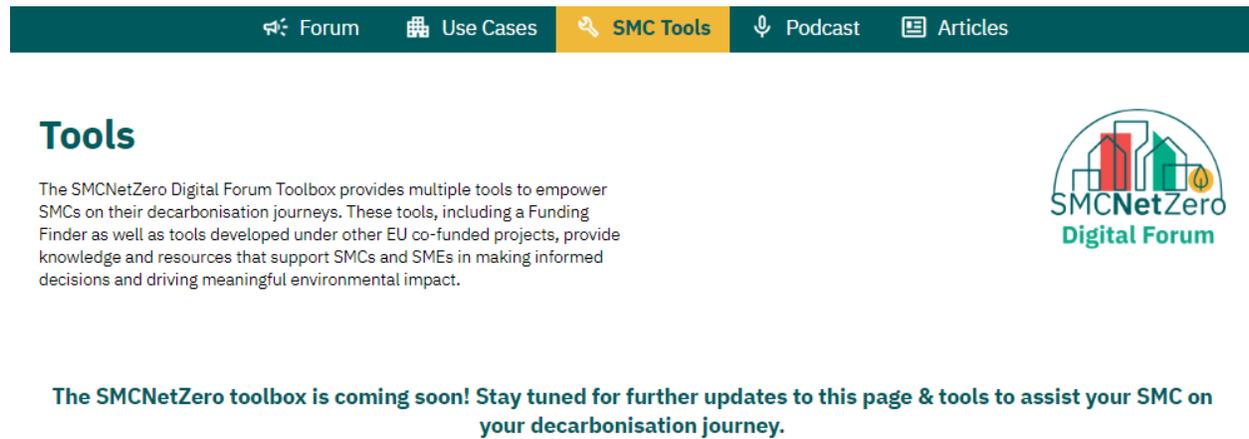


Figure 17: Decarbonisation Toolbox area of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum

## Podcast section of the Digital Forum

In the "[PODCAST](#)" section, users will find an interface with a search engine for specific queries, filters to categorise uploaded podcasts and an overview of the available podcast episodes on the platform.

This section serves as an archive of SMCNetZero podcast episodes, hosted by [“Smart in the City – The BABLE Podcast”](#), featuring leaders from SMCs and SMEs who have demonstrated exceptional innovation in achieving NetZero objectives. These podcasts aim to facilitate knowledge-building, aiding in the identification and resolution of key challenges and showcasing successful strategies for achieving sustainability goals.

**Podcast**

The SMCNetZero Podcast investigates solutions to challenges regarding the green and digital transition of small & medium-sized cities (SMCs), hosted by “Smart in the City – The BABLE Podcast”. The Podcast series is designed for knowledge building, identifying main challenges and highlighting the successes of SMCs in addressing these challenges, serving as a source of inspiration for fellow SMCs working to achieve net zero emissions.

**SMCNetZero Digital Forum**

E.g. Bike-Sharing, Energy Storage Solutions **Search**

Upload Date Sectors Sort by: Upload Date (newest first)

**Found 1 result.**

**Podcast episode** Jeanne Tallon 30.08.2023

**#42 SMCNetZero: "Supporting SMCs in their..."**

In this first episode of our SMCNetZero series, we welcomed back Nikita Shetty, the UK and Ireland Lead at BABLE Smart Cities, but also Graham Colclough, Partner at UrbanDNA, UK and Rebecca Walsh, EU

7 [Read more](#)

Figure 18: Podcast section of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum

### Articles section of the Digital Forum

In the ["ARTICLES"](#) section, users will find a collection of insightful articles encompassing various aspects of the green, digital and social transitions relevant to SMCs. This section serves as a repository of articles addressing critical challenges for SMCs and SMEs and showcases projects and solutions for decarbonization. These articles will serve as valuable sources of inspiration and knowledge.

## Articles

SMCNetZero articles explore and cover topics around the green, digital and social transitions for SMCs, specifically focused on addressing the key challenges encountered by SMCs in these areas. These articles highlight decarbonisation projects and solutions, serving as a source of inspiration and knowledge to accelerate the journeys of fellow SMCs toward net zero.



**Coming soon - the SMCNetZero project will be publishing blog articles to further assist and guide SMCs toward achieving net zero emissions. Check back here as new articles are published.**

*Figure 19: The Articles section of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum will soon be populated with inspiring and informational articles targeted toward SMCs and SMEs*

## Exploring additional Digital Forum features

In conjunction with the specific sections of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum, users can take advantage of the additional features offered by the overarching BABLE Smart Cities platform. The BABLE Smart Cities platform is a robust digital ecosystem designed to facilitate innovative urban initiatives. Noteworthy features on the BABLE platform beyond those available specifically within the SMCNetZero Digital Forum include, but are not limited to:

- **Neutral solution blueprints:** provide a clear roadmap for implementing smart city initiatives based on proven practices and successful Use Cases.
- **Personalised User Dashboard:** offers a user-friendly interface for monitoring and overseeing information, tools and related resources created by and of most interest to the user.
- **Networking:** offers the opportunity to connect not only with members of the SMCNetZero Digital Forum but also with a diverse community of experts, peers and stakeholders engaged in innovation and sustainability initiatives in urban environments.

## 4. Next steps for the Digital Forum

The Digital Forum will continue to be improved, including improvements based on feedback collected both from the projects' partners and from the user testing, as well

as additional assets curated and added from the project partners' networks, capitalising on the overall envisaged "network of networks" approach that the project takes.

Additionally, the project work plan includes additional foreseen improvements and additional content, including:

- Onboarding at least 50 best practice decarbonisation Use Cases from SMCs around Europe (by M10 of the project);
- Making available at least 5 decarbonisation tools in the Toolbox area of the Digital Forum, including at least 4 tools sourced from external and already-existing EU-funded projects and initiatives, as well as a Funding Finder tool developed by BABLE (by M12).
- Since the project's inception, there has been an additional opportunity to incorporate the pro bono support of a group of master's students from the EIT InnoEnergy programme as part of their "Project of the Year (PoY)" course. This student group's workplan will include, but is not limited to, exploring ways to improve the utility of the envisaged Decarbonisation Toolbox, such as the inclusion of additional identified tools and/or newly defined tools to address the priority decarbonisation challenges and barriers identified as part of the D1.1 Market Analysis Report. NOTE: The project Data Management Plan (DMP) has been fully considered in working with this student group, as well as with any additional stakeholders external to the project consortium who may be involved for the Digital Forum development and improvement.

Once the best practice Use Cases have been uploaded and the Decarbonisation Toolbox area is live in the Digital Forum, we intend to host another webinar highlighting these areas and encouraging additional activity within the Digital Forum.

# Appendix I: User testing results

The following screenshots detail the user testing activity and accompanying results:

## Sign up

- 50% of the testers succeeded creating an account from SMC NetZero Landing page and getting able to enter to the forum.
- The other half couldn't enter the forum directly from SMC NetZero landing page. Aso we can see in the heat-map image mos users clicked on the Call to Action saying join us, and not on the CTA directing to the forum.

**CONSIDER:** to make the CTA to the forum more visible on the smc net zero landing page, or to put there directly the log in sign up button.



## Creating a post

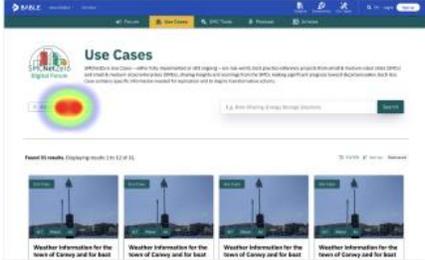
- 60% of the testers succeeded creating a new post in the forum.
- The remaining 40% that didn't succeed seemed not to find the button to create a post, probably because it says "Add Forum Entry".

**CONSIDER:** changing the copy in the button to "Add a new post".



# Add a use case

- 50% of the testers were able to add a new use case successfully.
- The other half abandoned the User testing in Maze and didn't finished any of the other tasks.



100% success

**CONSIDER:** all the users who continued with the user testing from this point on where able to complete this task.

# Listen to podcast/find tools/read news

- All of the testers where able to reach the podcast page successfully.
- All of the testers where able to reach the SMC tools page successfully.
- All of the testers where able to reach the Articles page successfully.



100% success

**CONSIDER:** all the users who continued with the user testing from this point on where able to complete this task.

# Live data facts

PAGE URL	PAGEVIEWS	UNIQUE PAGEVIEWS	BOUNCE RATE	AVG. TIME ON PAGE	EXIT RATE	
<a href="#">smc-net-zero</a>	304	194	38%	00:01:08	25%	38% of users left on the landing page.
<a href="#">/forum.html</a>	63	33	29%	00:02:02	18%	
<a href="#">/sign-up.html?tx_bauthentication_pi1[action]=new&amp;tx_bauthentication_pi...</a>	35	30	40%	00:00:29	27%	40% of users leave before signing up.
<a href="#">/log-in.html?tx_bauthentication_pi2[action]=login&amp;tx_bauthentication_pi2...</a>	32	23	0%	00:01:52	52%	
<a href="#">/use-cases.html</a>	25	17	0%	00:00:28	6%	
<a href="#">forum</a>	18	14	0%	00:00:22	36%	No people leaving after login. Meaning that part of the user flow works good.
<a href="#">/articles.html</a>	14	9	0%	00:01:17	22%	
<a href="#">/smc-tools.html</a>	14	9	0%	00:00:56	11%	