



D6.5 Project Newsletter

30/08/2024

ODRAZ

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Participants	All partners		
Comments			
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1	29/08/2024	ODRAZ	Working document ready for internal review
2	30/08/2024	PC	The coordinator submits the deliverable to the EU

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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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Introduction

As part of the SMCNetZero project, a series of Newsletters have been produced by ODRAZ and partners to further promote the project and its mission and give the recipients an insight into the importance of decarbonisation in small and medium-sized cities (SMCs) across Europe but also serve as a source of information and motivation. Each Newsletter was aligned with the project phase the partners were working on or deliverables that were produced in the period covered by the respective Newsletter. Best practices, success stories and promotion of deliverables were included in each of the six Newsletters.

The goal was to promote deliverables, podcasts and blog articles thus help disseminate valuable knowledge and raise awareness of successful decarbonisation initiatives.

Number of delivered Newsletters was in line with the project plan and the recipients were collected in line with GDPR rules.

Below are summaries of each Newsletter with the date of issuing and a link to the actual Newsletter.

Newsletter #1

29 June 2023

The first Newsletter was an introductory one – presenting the aims of the project, project partners and the results of the kick of meeting and the benefits for the SMCs and SMEs that participate.

[SMC NetZero first newsletter! \(mailchi.mp\)](#)

This is our first newsletter, and we believe the project would be of interest to your SMC/SME. If you are interested and would like to receive our newsletter, please subscribe on our webpage.

Join us on our mission to support Small and Medium-sized cities (SMCs) on their journey towards achieving net-zero emissions!

Our new EU co-funded project, **SMC NetZero** aims to provide tailored support to SMCs and empower them to make a meaningful impact.

While larger cities have had access to various programmes and networks to accelerate their transition, SMCs have often been left behind. That's why we've partnered with experts from across Europe to specifically address this issue and provide SMCs with the resources they need to decarbonize.

SMC NetZero is an 18-month Horizon Europe project that focuses on creating and strengthening local innovation ecosystems in SMCs and creating a Satellite Network of innovation actors including public sector representatives from Small and Medium-sized cities (SMCs), SMEs, academia, NGOs and investors across Europe.

Benefits for Small and Medium-sized cities (SMCs):

- 01 RESOURCES** Access to a digital platform for consolidated decarbonization resources and tools
- 02 NETWORKING** Share your experiences, challenges, and successes in your decarbonization journey with other SMCs in the project
- 03 SHOWCASING CITY'S ACHIEVEMENTS** Showcasing your city's achievements and gain exposure and visibility through your success stories
- 04 KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICES** Access to knowledge and best practices from other SMCs
- 05 PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES** Partnership opportunities with NetZero initiatives and other SMCs in the project

Meet the SMCNetZero Consortium!



ODRAZ - Sustainable Community Development encourage and implement changes leading towards sustainability, operating at various levels, from local to national and international. It cooperates with civil society organisations, public, professional and business organisations, networks and experts.



At **DOLL** we are creating an innovative playground and transparency in new complex markets by offering demonstration and test of the latest solutions in intelligent outdoor lighting and Smart City-services.



Southern Regional Assembly of Ireland represents 10 local authorities with a population of 1.6 million inhabitants and has a role in linking local and national policy goals through regional, spatial, and economic planning.



Smart City Cluster is a private, non-profit, multi-sector association that promotes public-private collaboration joining the efforts of companies, technology and research centres and institutional partners to boost and energize the business of Smart Cities, through innovation and cooperation among its about 200 members.



The **BABLE Smart Cities** has expertise in supporting transitions in urban environments across sectors and challenge areas through expert advice and services and has a platform and community network of more than 2000 members representing over 170 cities and 800 companies, all sharing and exchanging best practices, solutions, and products on smart city projects.



BLOXHUB is the Nordic hub for sustainable urbanisation founded on the belief that the challenges of global urbanisation and climate change require partnerships and new ways of collaboration.



UrbanDNA is a specialist partnership with trusted globally-experienced staff that works with progressive cities and their industry partners. In collaboration, to deliver better solutions faster to common urban challenges.

Are you an **SMC** or **SME** looking to take action on decarbonization?

Join our community and stay up-to-date on the latest resources and tools to help you achieve net-zero emissions.

SMCNetZero

[@smcnetzero](#) [https://smcnetzero.eu](#)

Everyone wins!

Newsletter #2

24 October 2023

The second newsletter had the focus on the delivered Market analysis report. Besides some facts and figures, the readers were given a short overview of the main results. The newsletter was also used to promote the first podcast, oncoming workshop and share a good practice example, Varaždin's (Croatia) Electromobility & Solar Initiative.

[SMCNetZero Issue #2 \(mailchi.mp\)](#)

Challenges when develop NetZero activities:

- Insufficient staff capacity and skills.
- Limited access to funding.
- Inadequate visibility.
- Absence of a robust innovation framework.
- Shortage of human resources.
- Scarce financial resources.
- Lack of viable business models.
- Complex procurement processes.

Opportunities for Advancing NetZero activities:

- Expansive market openings for SMEs.
- Enhanced urban appeal and livability.
- Streamlined mobility solutions.
- Access to advanced technology for improved citizen engagement.

Find the full Market analysis report [HERE](#).



Nikita Shetty, the UK and Ireland Lead at BABLE Smart Cities, Graham Colclough, Partner at UrbanDNA, UK and Rebecca Walsh, EU Projects Officer for the Southern Regional Assembly in Ireland gave their own view of the SMCNetZero project, the decarbonization of small and medium-sized cities, the challenges and upcoming activities in the first podcast.

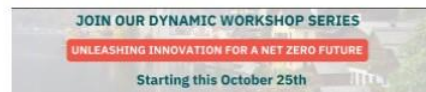
Listen to our first podcast episode [HERE](#).



Engage in our upcoming activities - the dates for the workshops are set!

Join our upcoming NetZero Workshop Series, a dynamic session focusing on pivotal elements in achieving a Net Zero future: Energy Efficiency, Mobility and transport, and Environmental Sustainability.

This workshop series welcomes professionals, academics, policymakers, and all passionate contributors to a Net Zero future. You can participate in one, two, or all three workshops. Participation is free, but spots are limited. Secure your spot by signing up now!



Has this Newsletter opened your NetZero appetite?

[Follow our blog post for more detailed information!](#)

Journey to Net Zero: Varaždin's Electromobility & Solar Initiative

Newsletter #3

1 December 2023

Third newsletter was sent out after the knowledge resource hub for SMCs and SMEs, the Digital Forum had been launched. Besides promoting this project milestone it introduced the new podcast and low emission zones in school environments in Spain's Rivas Vaciamadrid to the readers.

[SMCNetZero Issue #3 \(mailchi.mp\)](#)

After finishing the market analysis report (Find the full Market analysis report [here!](#)) a series of NetZero workshops focusing on Energy Efficiency, Mobility and transport, and Environmental Sustainability have been held. The second podcast has been published and the first meters of our roadmap to climate neutrality have been paved – our knowledge resource hub for SMCs and SMEs -the Digital Forum - has been launched!

Read more about the activities below!



Digital Forum is now live!

While some cities already live in the climate friendly future, Small and Medium Sized Cities (SMCs) are often been left behind and underrepresented in European innovation ecosystem. To help them, our Digital Forum has been launched. The SMCNetZero Digital Forum is a dynamic online platform designed to support SMCs and SMEs in their decarbonisation efforts by enabling knowledge-sharing, facilitating networking and offering resources for sustainable initiatives - a space for like-minded SMCs to connect and increase their capacity toward decarbonisation. The SMCNetZero Digital Forum features best practices from SMCs and SMEs across Europe, insightful articles on green, digital, and social transitions, solution-oriented podcasts, and practical digital tools like a Funding Finder.

The full version can be accessed with a free account on the BABLE smart cities platform.

You can find more information about joining the forum [HERE](#).

What Lessons Can transfer from Larger Cities to SMCs? - check out our second podcast!

Although Small and Medium Sized Cities (SMCs), need a different approach than our capitals, there are valuable lessons that can be transferred from larger cities to SMCs. Our second podcast focused on Vienna and the challenges and opportunities for Small and Medium-sized Cities in the context of decarbonisation. The best podcast guest for that topic was Maria Vassilakou, Urban Strategist and Founder at Vienna Solutions and member of the EU Horizon Mission experts board on Smart & Climate-Neutral Cities. She also served as Vienna's Vice Mayor responsible for Urban Planning, Traffic & Transport, Climate Protection, Energy and Public Participation from November 2010 to July 2019.

Our podcasts can be accessed [HERE!](#)



Has this Newsletter opened your NetZero appetite?

Follow our [SMCNetZero LinkedIn](#) for the next instalment of our Blog Series coming next week, bringing you concrete steps to overcome barriers and incorporate energy efficiency into your journey to net zero.



Newsletter #4

1 March 2024

The March issue of the Newsletter was focused on promotion of the online workshops and capacity building programme in Copenhagen. Further promotion of the released reports (50 SMC Best Practices for Decarbonisation, Buyers' Guide of Solutions: Mobility Islands) and SMCNetZero blog was also part of the Newsletter.

[SMCNetZero Issue #4 \(mailchi.mp\)](#)

Our Every city is, one way or another, on the journey to NetZero. No need to struggle, the approach of the SMC NetZero project is

Crisp, clear, simple! And includes a **free Capacity building programme in Copenhagen**.

More than **twice as many European city residents live in smaller cities than in large ones**. So, if we want to speed up the delivery of our climate goals – and recent weather patterns give us reasons to do so – **smaller cities are central to success**.

Yet, **smaller cities are all too often overlooked**. Lacking the skills and capacity, struggling with accessing funds, receiving limited interest from the supply market... But our mission to support small and medium-sized cities (SMCs) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to achieve net-zero emissions is well on the move! To unleash the enormous potential the SMCs have, we have developed **free capacity building programme** and issued a list of documents and a roadmap to NetZero

[Read more about the activities below!](#)



Capacity building programme – exclusive offer!

Whether you are just beginning your net-zero journey or looking for ways to accelerate your progress, our Planning, Enabling and Local Adaptation modules can support you. And we made an exclusive offer - we are pleased to offer a limited number of scholarships for the second module to support you with travel and accommodation expenses in Copenhagen.

Strategic Planning Stage

5th March / Online

The first module will be primarily for Policy makers, Policy advisors, heads of mobility/transport, managers of environment/sustainability, heads of urban planning, heads of finance, or others related to these roles.



Enabling Stage

10th April, 12.00-17.00 (CET) - 11th April, 9.00-15.15 (CET) / Copenhagen

The participant who attended the first module is expected to attend this second module, along with a second individual who works in the tactical/operational area of the organization. This second person will be designated as the Net-zero Champion and will play a crucial role in ensuring that the insights, tools, and methodologies learned during the modules are shared and implemented in the relevant departments. Therefore, the Net-zero Champion's participation is vital to achieve successful implementation.

Local Adaptation Stage

25th April (time TBA) / Online

This third module will be together with the cities from the same country, possibly in the local language where necessary. Here, the Net-zero Champion will participate, and more city employees can be invited to discuss local priorities and implementation focus.

More information is available at the [link](#).

Still not sure if your city should be part of the SMC NetZero Capacity building programme?

You started the journey to NetZero, but, is the approach joined up across city hall departments? Is it adequately supported by the broader city stakeholder group? Is it suitably funded? If one asked the various stakeholders would they articulate a common journey with its various steps?

[The Market analysis report](#) showed most of the SMCs have a negative answer on these questions.

That is why SMCNetZero project has outlined a NetZero Roadmap, together with various suggested tools that can be used to support a city through its journey; highlight its own successes; strengthen or fill in identified gaps; or indeed revisit earlier steps due to circumstance change (e.g. new political leadership). The current draft is shown below. It frames the upcoming 3-stage (Planning – Enabling & Deep Dive – Localisation) NetZero capacity building seminars that the project is running in March and April.

Newsletter #5

29 May 2024

The fifth Newsletter was used to further promote the SMCNetZero project as a City decarbonisation toolkit – newly released report, the Decarbonisation toolkit of 5 tools which make a difference for SMCs to become climate neutral, succes story of Križevci as the podcast topic, reminder to join the digital forum and new blogspot (Alhendin (Granada province, Spain) and Kranj (Slovenia)). A brief report of the Capacity building programme was also a part of the Newsletter.

[SMCNetZero Issue #5 \(mailchi.mp\)](mailto:smcnetzero@ec.europa.eu)



Newly released report - Decarbonisation toolkit of 5 tools

After the market analysis, catalogues of best practices for decarbonisation or innovation ecosystems – SMCNetZero has a new report: **Decarbonisation toolkit of 5 tools.**

This document specifically focuses on the Decarbonisation Toolbox, it's fit into the overall SMCNetZero Digital Forum and specific details regarding each tool currently included in the Toolbox, including how and why the tools are relevant to the Digital Forum's intended users.

The Decarbonisation Toolbox is dedicated to supporting SMCs in their decarbonisation efforts. These tools, including a Funding Finder, an AI Chatbot and also 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.

You can find all available information distributed in this and other reports by clicking the [link](#).



GET FORUM ACCESS!

NETWORK WITH COLLEAGUES

EXPLORE ARTICLES ADDRESSING KEY CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY SMCs

ACCESS DECARBONISATION TOOL KITS

BEST PRACTICE REFERENCE PROJECTS FROM SMCs & SMEs

New podcast: Križevci - Energy Independence and Citizen Engagement

Learn more about the Križevci's journey towards energy independence and sustainability, focusing on the city's green agenda, citizen engagement in renewable energy projects, and innovative initiatives to enhance the quality of urban life.

The guest of [fifth podcast episode](#) was Mario Rajn, Mayor of the City of Križevci, Croatia.

Other podcasts covering wide range of topics, from replicability to smart waste systems, public transportation initiatives to social tech projects can be found [here](#).



Newsletter #6

31 August 2024

The sixth Newsletter was also the closing one, giving an overview of the deliverables and reports but also informing the recipients about the Digital forum continuing to be an interactive place for knowledge sharing, thus making a difference for the SMCNetZero project – a project that will despite it's end, continue to help SMCs on their journey to climate neutrality.

<https://mailchi.mp/e5a4b3370dd6/smcnetzero-issue-6>

[View this email in your browser](#)
Not yet registered? Sign up to join the SMC NetZero community [here](#).



30 August 2024 - Issue #6

Though it is hard, we shall part!
But the Digital forum and gathered knowledge is here to stay

The SMCNetZero project has, over the past 18 months, brought together Small and Medium-sized cities (SMCs) and their Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SME) partners to improve their innovation potential and capabilities to successfully address the challenges for SMCs on their journey towards achieving net-zero emissions. The project has involved 7 partners representing a variety of regions right across Europe. The project addressed 5 objectives in the NetZero field: **dissemination** of information and knowledge, establishment of **collaboration of diverse stakeholders**, **engaging innovation leaders**, providing **knowledge building activities** and **facilitating implementation and scale-up** of innovation projects.

This final Newsletter will give you an overview of the Project results and documentation that will continue to help SMCs to reach their NetZero goals and provide a better surrounding for their citizens – whether through sustainable mobility and more pleasant public spaces, better waste management or energy efficient housing.



- 01 DIGITAL PLATFORM** Decarbonization made accessible: Empowering success through consolidated resources and expertise
- 02 SHOWCASE** Showcase your enterprise's achievements and gain exposure and visibility through your success stories.
- 03 NETWORK** Fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among SMEs and SMCs through network and co-creation opportunities for sharing best practices and ideas.
- 04 COLLABORATION** Joining our events to connect with Small and Medium-sized City which needs the right solutions and support their decarbonization journey.
- 05 KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICES** Staying informed and ahead: Accessing knowledge and best practices from SMEs and SMCs to remain up-to-date with decarbonization trends.

Cities are actively addressing the critical challenge of meeting Net Zero Targets in response to the growing impacts of Climate Change. Most of them face financial constraints and problems with the acceptance of the solutions by their citizens. **Small and medium-sized cities (SMCs)** face particular, scale-related challenges of their own – lacking skills and capacity, struggling with accessing funds, receiving limited interest from the supply market since being seen as too risky or less financially attractive to the investor community and private sector. Turning the city's action plans and NetZero roadmaps into tangible, large-scale projects remains a challenge for many.

The project deliverables were drafted with the focus on all stakeholders, cities, SMEs and business development bodies, emphasizing a collaborative approach to share expertise, experiences and resources to assist cities to build a **roadmap to decarbonisation** no matter at what stage they are at on their net zero journey. The success of this approach is that the emphasis is on developing **models that can be applied and replicated** based on what the cities have in common functionally over and above what differentiates them physically – and that was the **essence of SMCNetZero project**.

We hope we made NetZero efforts reachable in a crisp, clear and simple way!

*To all partners and participants, a **big thank you** and **see you** on our **Digital forum!***

SMC NetZero is an 18-month project that focuses on creating and strengthening local innovation ecosystems in SMCs and creating a Satellite Network of innovation actors including public sector representatives from Small and Medium-sized cities (SMCs), SMEs, academia, NGOs and investors across Europe.

GET FORUM ACCESS!



Newsletters Impact

Time Period Tracked: May 31, 2023 – August 28, 2024

SMCNetZero Issue#1

Date: May 31, 2023/June 28, 2023
Total Recipients: 356
Successful Deliveries: 319
Bounces: 37 (10.4%)
Recipients Who Opened: 100 (31.3%)
Total Opens: 189
Recipients Who Clicked: 17 (5.3%)
Total Clicks: 30

Newsletter was sent out in the respective languages to promote and raise interest for project activities.

SMCNetZero Issue#2

Date: October 24, 2023
Total Recipients: 74
Successful Deliveries: 72
Recipients Who Opened: 38 (52.8%)
Total Opens: 102
Recipients Who Clicked: 6 (8.3%)
Total Clicks: 52

Starting point of tracking actual interest of recipients in following SMCNetZero activities project – Newsletter was sent out to subscribed recipients.

SMCNetZero Issue #3

Date: December 1, 2024
Total Recipients: 73
Successful Deliveries: 71

Bounces: 2 (2.7%)
Recipients Who Opened: 42 (59.2%)
Total Opens: 143
Recipients Who Clicked: 6 (8.5%)
Total Clicks: 52

SMCNetZero Issue #4

Date: March 1, 2024
Total Recipients: 408
Successful Deliveries: 387
Bounces: 21 (5.1%)
Recipients Who Opened: 132 (34.1%)
Total Opens: 338
Recipients Who Clicked: 13 (3.4%)
Total Clicks: 141

SMCNetZero Issue #5

Date: May 30, 2024
Total Recipients: 408
Successful Deliveries: 383
Bounces: 25 (6.1%)
Recipients Who Opened: 111 (29.0%)
Total Opens: 214
Recipients Who Clicked: 8 (2.1%)
Total Clicks: 60

No of subscribers 28. 8. 24. - **407**

Conclusion

The SMCNetZero Newsletter series has fulfilled the intentions: promotion of the project and giving overview of the project deliverables and milestones. Containing links to the podcasts, blog articles, reports and reminding the readers to join the digital forum, the series helped to disseminate valuable knowledge, best practices, and success stories from various urban innovation initiatives.

The last Newsletter gave an overview of all deliverables, making valuable documentation that will remain available for city representatives ensuring the gathered knowledge through this project remains though the project came to an end.