



European Green Capital Award 2024 Guidance Note

December 2021

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1 INTRODUCTION

This **Guidance Note should be read in conjunction with the Application Form** for the European Green Capital Award 2024. The Application Form can be downloaded in English from the [registration portal](#), after submitting the required information. The full application shall be written in one of the official languages of the European Union. However, submission of the Application Form in English is encouraged for the smooth and timely running of the assessment of the applications.

The **Mayoral Declaration** (Annex 5 to the Rules of Contest governing the European Green Capital Award 2024 competition) is available in English and must be completed, dated, signed, stamped, scanned and submitted in English. The signatory should be authorised by national law to legally represent the city.

The **Declaration on Honour** (Annex 10 to the Rules of Contest governing the European Green Capital Award 2024 competition) is available in English and must be completed, dated, signed, scanned and submitted in English.

1.1 EXPLANATORY NOTE ON INDICATORS

This note provides information on how to interpret the indicators and types of information cities must provide when applying. Applications must comply with the formal requirements set out in the Rules of Contest governing the European Green Capital 2024 Award competition. Applicants will only be assessed on the content of the application form. Incomplete application forms will not be assessed i.e. applications with missing indicators or missing sections within an indicator which are not justified by the applicant.

The Award Application Form has four sections per indicator (please note that these sections differ for Indicator 12: Governance as outlined in Section 2.12 of this document):

- A. Present Situation** - focus on describing the present situation (include data, numerical information, figures, graphics etc.), including relevant infrastructure and systems, the state of play with respect to environmental performance and information on governance arrangements and responsibilities;
- B. Past Performance** - focus on the measures implemented and associated trends for the last five to ten years;
- C. Future Plans** - focus on realistic and achievable plans, the objectives that these contain and the measures that will be used to achieve these;
- D. References** - for clarification purposes only.

For further guidance on these four sections please refer to Section 2.

Each section of the application form must be completed and shall adhere to the stated word limit given at the end of each individual section. Any words above the specified limit **will not be taken into account** and may leave application responses incomplete.

Each section can include graphs, tables, diagrams and photographs. Please see guidelines with regards word count and limitations in **Section 1.2.1**.

References should be included in the references section. Footnotes shall only be used where a city wants to make reference to other sections of its application form.

Sections A, B, and C are considered on an equal basis (i.e. are equally weighted) as part of the technical assessment and ranking will be based on the information provided in these sections. Section D - References; will be used solely for clarification/verification of data purposes. Experts are not required to read additional information.

Good Practices will be solely used for information purposes and will not be considered as part of the technical ranking but must be completed. Good practices submitted may be used by the Secretariat to produce Good Practices Factsheets for use on the European Green Capital website.

The 'City Introduction and Context' section is for information purposes only.

Information to be included:

Include clear plans and objectives in the context of European legislation and in delivering the European Green Deal. Detail, where possible, the city's compliance/non-compliance with EU Directives and legislation and inform about how you work on achieving the targets mentioned in the Zero Pollution Action Plan¹ (e.g. significantly total waste generation and by 50% residual municipal waste), the Circular Economy Action Plan² and in the Biodiversity Strategy³ and the Soil Strategy⁴. Targets in the other areas of climate change or mobility are also relevant, e.g. the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy⁵ (90% transport emission cut by 2050)

It should be clearly noted if figures provided are for the city itself or incorporate a larger area/region.

Applicants should highlight integrated approaches to environmental management. The experts who will evaluate the application are only required to assess their primary and peer-review indicators.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/zero-pollution-action-plan_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/eu-soil-strategy-2030_en

⁵ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/mobility-strategy_en

Where cross linkages between indicators/initiatives exist, they should be referred to in the different relevant indicator sections in the application form or by way of footnotes.

Where possible, please identify active community groups/stakeholders within the city in the relevant indicator and also highlight how the city has engaged with these groups in the course of its policy development.

Data sources

Cities can self-check available data about their cities via the city air quality viewer:

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/air/urban-air-quality/european-city-air-quality-viewer>

and the EEA database on environmental indicators at

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/>

and other urban/city related data sets, for example the Joint Research Centre's urban data platform -

<https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en>

and Eurostat data sets - <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/cities/data/database>

and the latest EEA reports on '**Urban sustainability in Europe - Avenues for change**' and '**Urban Sustainability in Europe - Learning from Nexus Analysis**', published 10 December 2021

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/cities-play-pivotal-roles-in-1>

Further Guidance

In advance of preparing an application, it is recommended that applicants look at the following:

Past EGCA winning city applications, highlighting what made a high-ranking technical application.

- [Past EGCA Winning City Applications](#)

Historical Technical Assessment Report's will allow applicants to see what reoccurring themes are mentioned by experts in their feedback and allow the applicant to address these particular concerns.

- [Historical Technical Assessment Reports](#)

Past Applicant Workshop materials are available online for review, which should answer most of the questions that applicants may have and provide even further guidance as to what is expected from a winning city application.

- [Past Applicant Workshop Materials](#)

If there are any queries on the application form, please do not hesitate to contact the European Green Capital Award Secretariat who can field procedural questions or refer technical questions to the expert panel on behalf of a city.

Please note that cities cannot liaise directly with the expert panel.

The Secretariat can be contacted via email at info@europeangreencapital.eu or by telephone at +32 (0) 2 548 12 89 for any queries.

1.2 FORMAT OF THE APPLICATION

Applicants are required to submit their response within the application form in the areas indicated by grey text in square brackets [EXAMPLE]. Original text in the application form should not be deleted. The format of the template of the application form must be adhered to.

All documents must be submitted in a PDF document format and uploaded through the application portal.

The Rules of Contest governing the European Green Capital Award 2024 competition, and in particular Section 3 therein, stipulate that all candidates shall complete the common application form for **each of the 12 environmental indicators**. Applications that do not follow the requirements set out in Section 3 at pre-selection stage shall be eliminated from the competition and will not be examined further.

Applicants are required to fill out **all** sections of the application form. Applications which are not fully answered shall not be examined further. In the event that a question cannot be answered, reasons must be given in the corresponding section of the application form.

The experts' assessment will include qualitative evaluations, and a peer review of each application. Applicant cities compete against each other for the title of European Green Capital 2024. Therefore, it is strongly advised that applicants submit high quality content.

1.2.1 Word Count and Limitations

The original text of the application form and text within 'Table 1: Benchmarking Data' of each indicator **will not** be included in the word count.

All word limits must be strictly adhered to. Any words above the specified limit will not be taken into account and may leave applicant's responses incomplete. Applicants must complete the 'Word Count Check' provided at the end of each indicator to verify that their word count is within the acceptable limits. This word count includes a check of:

- Words in graphics/images/tables;
- Words in the body of text;
- Total number of words (words in graphics/images/tables and words in the body of text).

Graphics/Images/Tables Word Limits:

Text within the body of graphics/images/tables must be submitted in an editable format (for purposes of the word count and translation, where applicable).

Text included in the captions and heading (titles) of graphics/images/tables **will not** be included in the word count. These shall not exceed more than 20 words.

Screenshots of websites/leaflets/posters which illustrate an item but are not intended to be read **will not** be counted towards the indicator word count, but **will be included** in the count of permitted graphics/images/tables per indicator area.

Information essential to understanding a graphic/image/table (i.e. headings/titles/legends/text in columns/place names/numbers) **will not** be included in the word count, as these are relevant and essential to understand the information within. All other text included in graphics/images/tables **will** be included in the word count.

Please see below for sample tables (Tables 1.1 - 1.3) and sample graphics (Figures 1.1 - 1.4).

Table 1.1 - Sample of Table Format to be used in the EGCA Application Form

Building Type	Potential area for roof gardens or Urban agriculture		Additional areas for extensive green roofs or habitats for biodiversity	
	No. of roofs	Total m ²	No. of roofs	Total m ²
Industrial buildings	21	21	21	21
Office and retail	32	32	32	32
Schools	43	43	43	43
Hospitals and care homes	54	54	54	54
Residential buildings	65	65	65	65
Mixed use buildings	76	76	76	76
Other buildings	87	87	87	87
Total	378	378	378	378

Table 1.2 - Sample of acceptable Table where there would be no addition to the Word Count

Main Identified [1] Climate Change Hazards and Challenges in Lahti	Action, Project Name	Partners	Lahti City Consortium Staff Allocation	Year	Estimated Cost (€) and Funding Source	Monitoring and Performance Evaluation Scheme
City Floods	City centre vulnerability assessment	Lahti School of Applied Sciences (LUAS), City of Lahti	1	2014	10 000 LUAS, student thesis	Assessment, did not contain monitoring
Eutrophication	Large-scale investment and R&D project <i>Hybrid Solutions for Urban Storm Water</i>	City of Lahti, University of Helsinki, Smart & Clean Foundation, LADEC, City of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa	2	2017-2020	Circa 2 M€ Finnish Government 2017-2018. Applications will be sent to several other funding sources	Monitoring (quantity and quality of storm water) is part of the project
Heat Waves and Health Risks	District cooling system analysed for new residential areas	City of Lahti, Lahti Energy, private companies	1	2012-	Planning costs, 10 000 €	No investments made.
	Good network of street trees (<i>Tilia vulgaris</i>) Circa 3 000 trees in the centre of Lahti and 10 000 overall (Fig. B4)	City of Lahti, private companies	1	1900-	Maintenance 150 000 €/a.	Maintenance is monitored

All information provided in this table is essential in order to understand the information featured in the table, and would not be included in the wordcount (Lahti Application 2021)

Table 1.3 - Sample of Table with Excessive Text

1. Circle based
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Residual waste from households shall be reduced by a minimum of 30% per capita by 2025, compared to 2015-level. Food waste from households shall be reduced by 30% by 2025. A minimum of 60 % of food waste from households shall be collected and recycled by 2025. A minimum of 60 % of plastic waste from households shall be recycled by 2025. The municipal waste-to-energy plants shall have an energy recovery rate of minimum 95% by 2025. Oslo shall be one of the cities with the most cost efficient waste management systems in Norway, by 2025.
7. Health, environment and climate
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>All hazardous waste and electric and electronic waste</u>, shall be collected and treated safely. The waste management in Oslo shall be climate neutral by 2025. The number of illegal dumpsites shall be halved by 2025, compared to 2017-level. A minimum of 50% of the household waste shall be collected by underground and automatic waste systems by 2030.
5. The City of Oslo
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Residual waste from the City shall be reduced by a minimum of 30% by 2025, compared to 2015-level. There shall be recycling bins in all larger parks and public spaces by 2025. Residual waste from enterprises shall be reduced to a maximum of 30% by 2025. By 2020 a minimum of 70% (by weight) of construction and demolition waste shall be prepared for re-use, recycled or undergo other material recovery. Regional solutions for waste management shall be established by 2025.
6. Inhabitants
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> By 2025, 95% of the inhabitants will have confidence that the waste resources are properly utilized. By 2025, 80% of the inhabitants shall experience that it is easy to sort waste and recycle in Oslo. By 2025, 90% of the inhabitants shall know about facilities where they can deliver materials and items for reuse.

This is an example of a table which would be considered to have a high word count, and this text would all be counted in the Indicator Word count (Oslo Application 2019).

A picture is worth a thousand words! It is highly recommended to make efficient use of the graphic/image/table allowance in order to optimise the application. The clever use of graphics/images/tables including infographics can reduce the amount of text required to describe a particular aspect of the application.

Using before and after pictures to illustrate the implementation or effect of specific projects can be very useful and a good way to visually highlight the change resulting from a project.

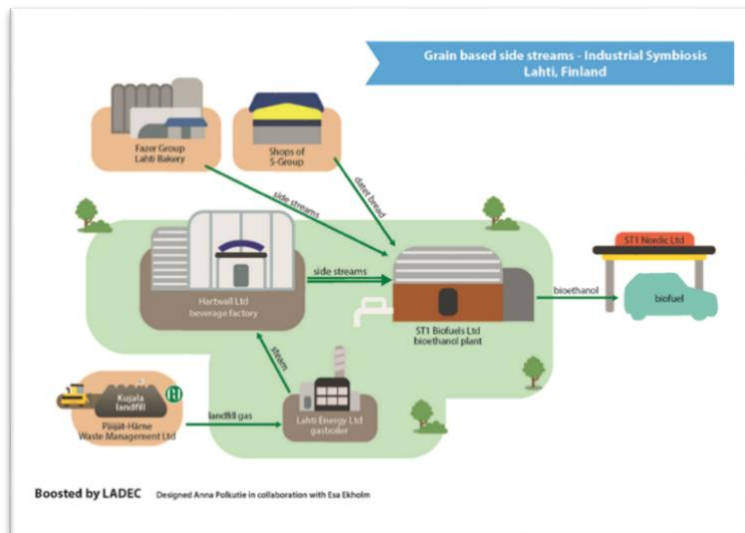
Figure 1.1 - Example 1

Graphic/Image where there is no addition to Word Count (Lahti 2021)



Figure 1.2 Example 2

Graphic/Image where there is no addition to Word Count (Lahti 2021)



Figures 1.1 & 1.2 illustrate two sample ‘Graphics/Images’ where all text is necessary to understand the information within. The labels of each ‘place’ and ‘process’ are necessary to understand the diagram.

Figure 1.3 – Example 3

A text based infographic where there is no addition to Word Count. (Lahti 2021)





Figure 1.4 - Example 4 – A text based infographic where there is no addition to Word Count (Lahti 2021)

Figures 1.3 & 1.4 illustrate text based ‘Graphics/Images’ where the information consists of concise descriptions of projects, titles or relationships where all text is necessary to understand the information within, and would not be included in the word count.

There is a limit of fifteen graphics/images/tables per indicator. However, Indicator 1: Air Quality requests five additional charts and Indicator 6: Sustainable Land Use & Soil requests three additional maps. These additional maps/charts are not included in the word count. A maximum of three graphics/images/tables per Good Practice are allowed in the Good Practice section.

All limits for numbers of graphics/images/tables must be adhered to. Images which consist of multiple jpegs combining to form one image/subject may be accepted if they are addressing a common theme. If the grouped images are not deemed to address a common theme, these will be considered as separate individual images which may result in exceedances of the limit. Please see **Figure 1.5** below of an instance in which multiple jpegs are accepted as one image (taken from the City of Lisbon’s winning application for the 2020 Award).



Figure 4 – Some of the cycling infrastructure built during 2017 on main city axis

Figure 1.5 - Grouped Images on a Theme that may be counted as a single image

1.2.2 Captioning and Aligning Graphics/Images/Tables

In order to ensure that the application is transmitted in a legible format, graphics/images/tables should be inserted using the wrap text functions ‘In Line with Text’, ‘Square’ or ‘Top and Bottom’ and captioned using the caption function. Using other functions may cause graphics/images/tables to interfere with the format of the application form and not appear on the template, leaving submissions incomplete. Applicants are advised to test that the format of their application is retained after upload to the application portal.

How to Caption Graphics/Images/Tables:

1. After inserting a graphic/image/table, right click on the inserted item to show the pop-up menu displayed below:

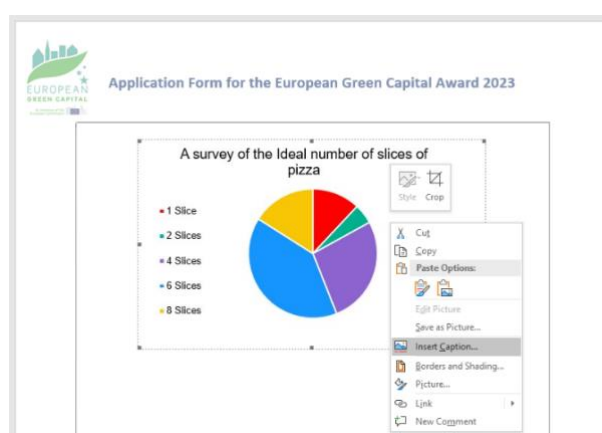


Figure 1.6 - Caption Drop-down Menu

2. Clicking on the ‘Insert Caption’ button will bring up the pop-up box below:

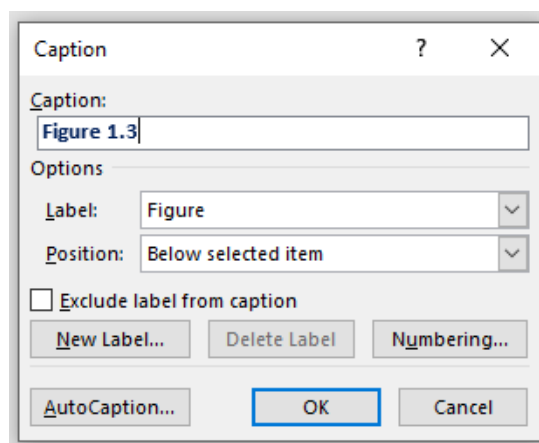


Figure 1.7 - Caption Description Pop-up Menu

3. In this window, the ‘Caption’ can be filled in appropriately and the caption (figure or table) number assigned.

Correct Image/Graphic/Table Alignment:

1. To prevent inserted items from moving around or blocking text (as below) please use the wrap text function:



Figure 1.8 - Example of Incorrect Image Placement - Overlapping Text

2. To ensure correct placement of an image, select an option within the 'Wrap text' menu in the Format toolbar (as below). Do not use any options from the 'Position' menu as the images are not held in place and may move:

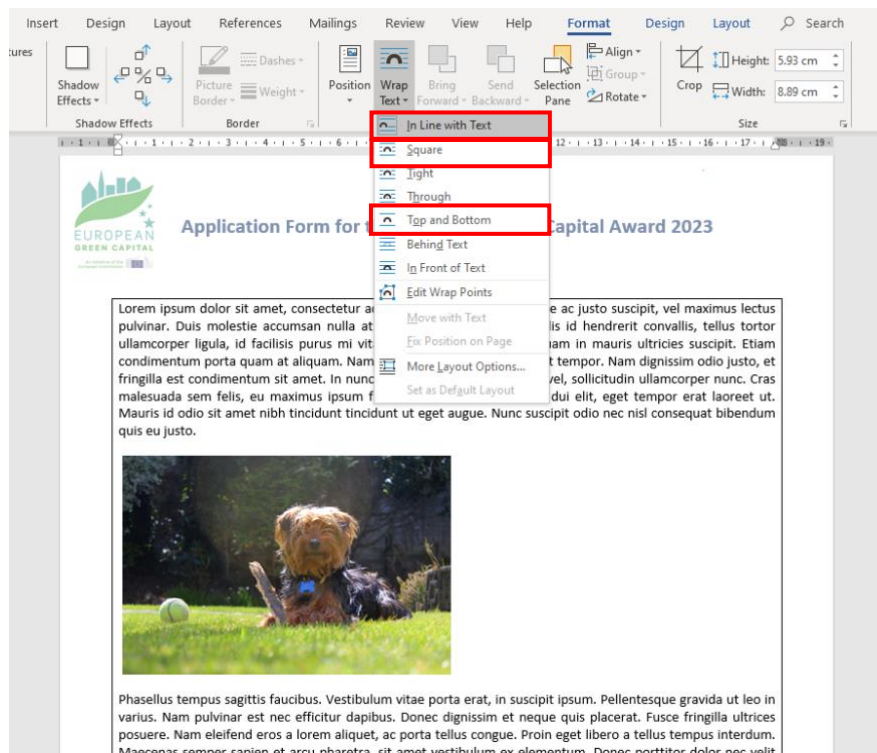


Figure 1.9 - Example of Correct Text Wrapping

1.3 SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

In order to submit a complete application form, the following must be adhered to:

The **Mayoral Declaration** (Annex 5 of the Rules of Contest) must be signed by the Mayor or highest ranking City Representative⁶ and stamped with the official city seal, scanned and uploaded to the portal. Please ensure the Mayoral Declaration document is labelled correctly e.g. City Name_Mayoral Declaration_EGCA 2024.

The **Declaration on Honour** on exclusion criteria and selection criteria (Annex 10 of the Rules of Contest) must also be completed, dated, signed, scanned, submitted in English, and uploaded to the portal. Please ensure the Declaration on Honour document is labelled correctly e.g. City Name_Declaration on Honour_EGCA 2024

Both Declarations must be submitted with the **fully completed application form**. It is not necessary to send the original documents by post.

An application form will be considered invalid if it is not accompanied by a completed, signed and stamped Mayoral Declaration, and completed and signed Declaration on Honour.

In addition to the Mayoral Declaration, and Declaration on Honour as set out above, fifteen (15) individual files will be uploaded in total: one (1) City Introduction and Context, twelve (12) Indicators, one (1) Good Practices and one (1) Draft Planning. The completed official EGCA application form must be submitted on the [Application Portal](#). Each file must be a **PDF document** and labelled correctly e.g. City Introduction and Context_Lahti, Indicator 1_Lahti, Indicator 2_Lahti, ... etc. and Good Practices_Lahti. Be aware that there is a **10MB limit for each uploaded file**. If your document exceeds the 10MB limit, please try to compress your PDF.

Please follow the instructions as detailed on the website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/applying-for-the-award/>

All queries should be directed to the Secretariat: info@europeangreencapital.eu

The deadline for receipt of applications is at **23:59 CET (GMT +1) on 25 March 2022**.

Please note, that no technical support will be available past 18:00 CET (GMT +1) on the closing date.

Please make sure that the application form is complete (as detailed above) by the time of submission.

⁶ Signatory must be authorised by national law to legally represent the city

1.4 TRANSLATION

The technical assessment process is conducted in English. The full application shall be written in one of the official languages of the European Union. However, submission of the application form in English is encouraged for the smooth and timely running of the assessment of the applications.

If an application is submitted in a city's native language, the word count will be examined based on the original application, i.e. before it is translated into English. The word count shall be strictly adhered to regardless of the language in which the application is submitted.

It should be noted that the European Green Capital Award is conducted in the English language. It is advised that a native English speaker is consulted during the application process and/or before the application is submitted.

It shall be noted that the jury meetings are held in English. Cities selected as finalists for the award and invited to the jury meeting shall present in English.

The winning city shall accept its award in English. Communication with the winning city shall be conducted in English.

2 APPLICATION FORM AND INDICATORS

The EGCA 2024 Application Form contains 14 separate sections:

- City Introduction and Context;
- Indicator 1: Zero pollution: Air Quality;
- Indicator 2: Zero pollution: Noise;
- Indicator 3: Zero pollution: Water;
- Indicator 4: Sustainable Land Use & Soil (zero pollution);
- Indicator 5: Waste and Circular Economy;
- Indicator 6: Nature and Biodiversity;
- Indicator 7: Green Growth and Eco-innovation;
- Indicator 8: Climate Change: Mitigation;
- Indicator 9: Climate Change: Adaptation;
- Indicator 10: Sustainable Urban Mobility;
- Indicator 11: Energy Performance;
- Indicator 12: Governance;
- Good Practices.

Each indicator must be completed under the following sections as set out in the application form (please note that the content of Section A, B and C of Indicator 12: Governance differs from this format as outlined in Section 2.12 of this document):

- A. Present situation.** Describe the present situation, e.g. the relevant infrastructure and systems that are in place and the relevant state of play with respect to environmental performance. This section should also cover governance arrangements and responsibilities. Also, include information on any relevant disadvantages or constraints resulting from historical, geographical and/or socio-economic factors which may have influenced this indicator. Quantitative information/data should be provided to support the description, including at the minimum, the specific data requested for each indicator;
- B. Past performance.** The aim of this section is to make clear how the present situation described in Section A has been achieved. This should describe the strategies, plans and measures that have been implemented over the last five to ten years. Comment on which measures have been most effective. Where available, quantitative information/data should be provided from previous (5-10) years in order to show recent trends;
- C. Future plans.** Describe the future short and long-term objectives and the proposed approach to achieve these, including any additional strategies and plans. Include the measures adopted, but not yet implemented, and details for future measures already adopted. Emphasise to what extent plans are supported by political commitments, budget allocations, and monitoring and performance evaluation schemes;
- D. References.** List supporting documentation, adding links where possible. Further detail may be requested during the pre-selection phase. Documentation should not be forwarded at this stage.

The City Introduction and Context and Good Practices sections are provided for information purposes and do not form part of the overall assessment or ranking.

Detailed guidance on each of the sections of the application form is provided herein.

CITY INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Use this section to provide an overview of the city and context for the twelve indicators. It will act as background information for the experts and will set the scene for the application as a whole in the context of historical, geographic, socio-economic and political constraints, contentious infrastructure/environmental projects and initiatives. This provides the Expert Panel with a clear insight into the factors influencing the city's development and environmental quality. Applicants should include any major local constraints, contentious infrastructure/environmental projects and initiatives.

Although it does not form part of the twelve indicators and will not contribute towards ranking, this section must be completed to present a full application for assessment.

The Secretariat will carry out a detailed background check on applicants' compliance with European legislation and governance.

If the city is involved in a legal procedure under any European directive, or has been cited by the European Court of Justice, information on progress towards compliance should be provided.

It is important to use this section fully as, although it is not included in the assessment and ranking of the application, it can help to elucidate any issues in the city which may impact on a particular environmental indicator. This will help the Expert to understand the reasons why certain decisions have been made in the city and will support the evaluation of the application.

It is beneficial to cross-reference to points made in the City Introduction and Context section where relevant to a particular Indicator section as this may help to make more effective use of the word limits.

Please include five graphics, images or tables to support the response to this section. An additional two maps are requested:

- Map 1 should show the layout of urban areas, geographical and other features across the city;
- Map 2 should show the city in the context of the wider surrounding area.

A guide on how to establish your Köppen Geiger climate classification has been created by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and is available on our website⁷.

2.1 ZERO POLLUTION - AIR QUALITY

The selected indicators are described in Directive 2008/50/EC of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe.

The target and limit values in this directive are set to protect human health and the environment. Member States and their competent authorities should take action in order to comply with the limit and target values. These include the following:

- The limit value for the annual mean of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) is 40 µg/m³;
- The limit value for particulate matter PM₁₀ (daily mean) is 50 µg/m³ and should not be exceeded more than 35 times during a year;
- The limit value for the annual mean of PM₁₀ is 40 µg/m³;
- The limit value⁸ for particulate matter PM_{2.5} is 25 µg/m³; and
- The hourly limit value for NO₂ is 200 µg/m³ and should not be exceeded more than 18 times during a year.

For presented air quality data specify the type of sampling point (e.g. traffic, urban background, regional background).

For the annual concentrations of NO₂, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ provide a quantitative assessment of the contribution from local sources and from long-range transport for these pollutants as a percentage. For example, of the annual mean of NO₂ at traffic measurement stations about 75% originates from local sources and 25% from long-range transport. The contribution from long-range transport should ideally be determined as originating from outside the administrative boundaries of the city. The purpose of this assessment is to estimate how much of observed concentrations can be managed by the city government.

For the following data, please use charts to illustrate where possible (see Figure 2.1 below for example):

1. Trend (10 years at least) of annual average NO₂ for each monitoring site;
2. Trend (10 years at least) of annual average PM₁₀ for each monitoring site;
3. Trend (10 years at least) of annual average PM_{2.5}, for each monitoring site;
4. Trend (10 years at least) of number of daily limit exceedances of PM₁₀ per year; and

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/europeangreencapital/How_to_determine_your_Koppen-Geiger_climate_classification.pdf

⁸ Target value to be met as of 01.01.2010; limit value to be met as of 01.01.2015

5. Trend (10 years at least) of number of hourly limit exceedances of NO₂ per year.

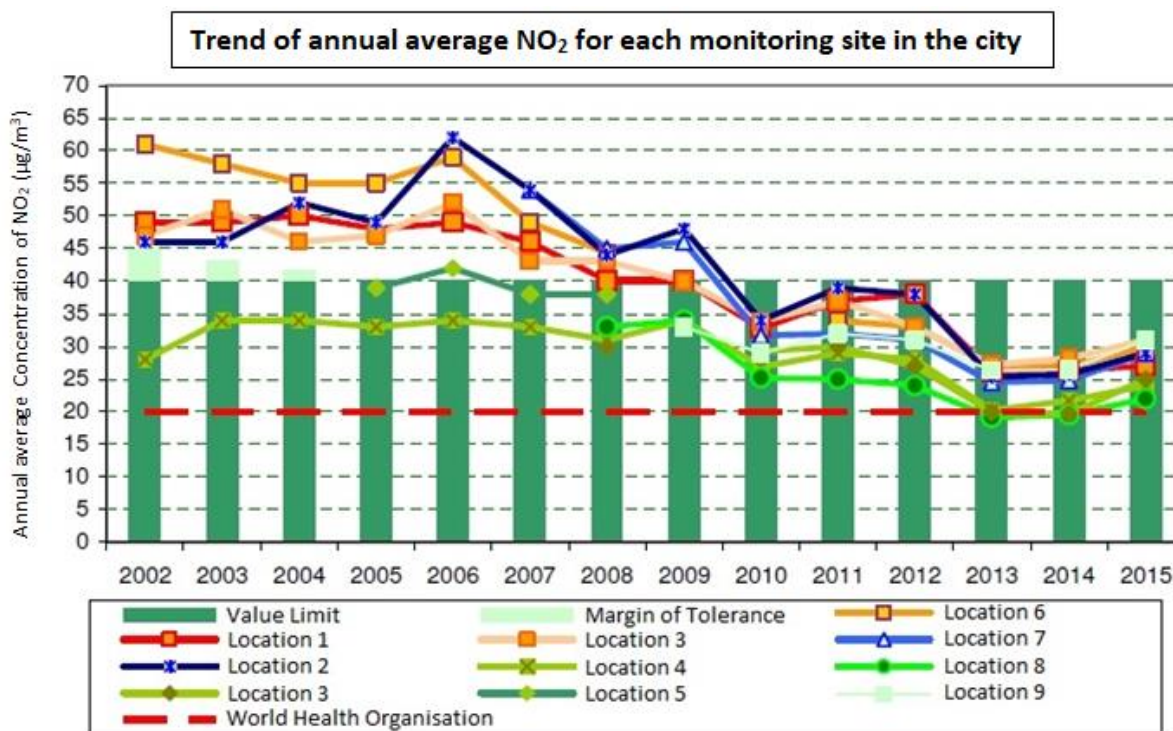


Figure 2.1 - Example Chart Format for Presenting Air Quality Trends

If available, provide information on the spatial variation in air pollutant concentrations (maps) during the past five to ten years.

Provide information on air quality plans and measures implemented over the last five to ten years to improve the urban air quality and to increase awareness of air pollution.

- Comment on the effectiveness of implemented measures in terms of pollutants emission abatement;
- Explain how the implemented measures have influenced the present situation; and
- Refer to stakeholder involvement and communication with the population, including whether and how citizen science initiatives were deployed or taken up.

Describe whether air quality objectives and measures taken go beyond what is required by the Ambient Air Quality Directives, and how this is achieved.

Describe whether and how air quality planning and measures are integrated with other plans and measures in the city, such as Sustainable Energy and Climate Plans (SECAPs) under the Covenant of Mayors and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs), and whether and how synergies have been achieved between objectives and measures on air quality and those in other areas.

Describe the short and long-term objectives for air quality and the proposed approach for their achievement, including in relation to the air quality-related targets of the Zero Pollution Action Plan

for 2030⁹ and the updated WHO Air Quality Guidelines of 2021. Emphasise to what extent plans are consolidated by commitments, budget allocations, monitoring and describe their expected impact in terms of future pollutant concentrations in ambient air.

⁹ COM(2021)400)

2.2 ZERO POLLUTION - NOISE

The quality of the acoustic environment is an important element of the urban environment and a challenging issue that city administrations have to manage. It impacts on the health and the quality of life of the citizens. It also increases (or decreases) the value of the real estate and the attractiveness of the city itself. Ambient sound levels that are beyond comfort levels are referred to as environmental noise pollution. This can be caused by many different sources, mainly road, railway and aircraft traffic, but as well night life, construction works and industry. Excess levels of noise can cause increased stress levels and cardiovascular diseases, disrupting sleep. As well, they can damage hearing and cause annoyance.

Noise is an environmental stressor affecting public health, recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) among the top environmental risks to health. According to the WHO research, it is estimated that one in five Europeans are regularly exposed to noise levels exceeding 50 decibels (dB(A)) at night, far above WHO limits. In addition, the European Environmental Agency (EEA) report '*Environmental noise in Europe - 2020¹⁰*' underlines that an estimated 113 million people are affected by long-term day-evening-night traffic noise levels of at least 55 dB(A). In most European countries, more than 50% of inhabitants within urban areas are exposed to road noise levels of 55 dB or higher during the day-evening-night period. Based on the EEA report, noise exposure causes 12,000 premature deaths and contributes to 48,000 new cases of ischemic heart disease (caused by a narrowing of heart arteries) per year across Europe. It is also estimated that 22 million people suffer chronic high annoyance and 6.5 million people suffer chronic high sleep disturbance.

Road traffic is the source of noise with the greatest population exposure in Europe, according to the report, followed by railways, airports and industry. Larger cities are noisier. Cities housing more than 250,000 people generally have a larger share of the population exposed to levels above the legal guidelines.

The report also says that noise considerations should be incorporated into planning and building new infrastructure and that, moreover, quiet areas should be protected. Finally, the document also states that wildlife may also be seriously affected by noise, according to a mounting body of evidence.

The Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC) is one of the main instruments to identify noise pollution levels and to trigger the necessary action both at Member State and at EU level. It relates to the assessment and management of environmental noise. Its principle aim is to 'define a common approach' intended to avoid, prevent or reduce, on a prioritised basis, the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to the exposure to environmental noise. The Directive refers to noise that people are exposed to continuously and not to noise created by persons themselves, their neighbours, their workplaces or while in transit. Its aim is to provide a basis for developing EU measures to reduce noise emitted by major sources, in particular, road and rail vehicles and infrastructures, aircraft, outdoor and industrial equipment and mobile machinery. The underlying principles of the Directive include:

¹⁰ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/environmental-noise-in-europe>

- Periodic monitoring environmental noise pollution through the development of 'strategic noise maps' for major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations, using harmonised noise indicators L_{den} and L_n ;
- Informing and consulting the public about noise exposure, its effects, and the measures considered to address, manage and reduce noise;
- Addressing local noise issues by developing action plans to reduce noise and mitigate its effects where necessary and maintain, and improve, environmental acoustic quality in areas where it is good; and
- Developing a long-term EU strategy; this includes providing objectives to reduce the number of people affected by noise in the longer term, and providing a framework for developing existing community policy on noise reduction from sources.

EU regulations on noise management have been based on internal market objectives such as setting harmonised noise limits for motor vehicles, household appliances and other noise-generating products. These laws have encouraged the development of innovations that can help limit noise pollution, such as low noise tyres and more silent road surfaces, as well as noise barriers and soundproofing. A study¹¹ published in 2021 showed that the most effective way to mitigate the noise issue is by employing a holistic approach that encompasses different measures and legislative instruments.

The city must provide clear evidence of its commitment and involvement in the improvement of its acoustic quality. This includes actions undertaken or planned, and information on the municipal policies regarding the reduction of noise and the improvement of the acoustic environment as well as the management of areas with good acoustic quality in the municipal territory in its application. Details must be given on urban noise data, on noise abatement actions both already adopted and envisaged for the future, and on urban soundscape management considering the protection of existing zones with good acoustic quality and the definition, delimitation and preservation of quiet or sound improved areas.

The application must detail the municipal strategies for the management of the acoustical environment, the involvement of stakeholders and of the local population and report on informational, educational and awareness raising campaigns performed and planned regarding sound and noise issues. Information on the costs undertaken and on the budgets for future measures shall be provided. Information addressing the measures adopted to guarantee and monitor the implementation of action plans is also very valuable.

Regarding the present situation, noise data should be provided, at least on the share of population exposed to total noise values of L_{den} (day-evening-night indicator) above 55 dB(A) and above 65 dB(A) and to total noise values of L_n (night indicator) above 45 dB(A) and 55 dB(A). In addition, figures for noise exposure to individual noise sources (e.g. road, rail, air, industry, and leisure/entertainment) can also be provided for a better picture of the present situation.

1 ¹¹ [Assessment of potential health benefits of noise abatement measures in the EU \(PHENOMENA project\)](#)

Where available, information/data for the previous (5-10) years should be included to show trends. Information on existing or planned quiet areas, or sound improved areas, should also be included. Recommendations and advice concerning quiet areas shall be found in the '*Good practice guide on quiet areas*' - EEA Technical Report No 4/2014.

In this regard, the reporting of noise data according to the Environmental Noise Directive has been streamlined. Data collected from national competent authorities will be harmonised in all Member States and presented in a more understandable way. The accessibility and readability of such information will increase significantly. An online data repository hosted and managed by the EEA allows local administrators (and any other citizen) to access their city's noise data derived from the requirements of the Directive¹².

The description of the measures implemented over the last five to ten years to improve the urban sound quality and to increase awareness to noise should highlight whether these measures are part of an overall and long-term noise action plan. The applicant should:

- Report on noise maps, acoustic zoning and on action plans;
- Comment on which measures have been most effective;
- Explain how the implemented measures have influenced the present situation; and
- Refer to stakeholder involvement, specifically in the adoption of the plans, participation and communication with the population, and plans to preserve areas where the acoustic environment is good.

The short and long-term objectives for the quality of the acoustic environment and the proposed approach for their achievement must be described in detail together with assigned budgets, and put in the context of the noise-related targets of the Zero Pollution Action Plan for 2030. The applicant should:

- Emphasise to what extent plans are adopted, consolidated by commitments, budget allocations, and monitoring and performance evaluation schemes;
- Indicate the target foreseen reduction in the share of population exposed to noise values of L_{den} above 55 dB(A) and above 65 dB(A) and in the share of population exposed to noise values of L_n above 45 dB(A) and 55 dB(A), mention other targets; and
- Refer to stakeholder involvement, consultations, and actions to manage and preserve urban and open country quiet areas, and actions concerning sound improved areas (holistic/qualitative approaches to the acoustic environment, e.g. by soundscape design approaches).

¹² The EEA also provides interactive maps with data on noise exposures at <https://noise.eea.europa.eu/>

2.3 ZERO POLLUTION - WATER

The Fitness Check of EU water law¹³ established that the legislation is still largely fit for purpose. However, implementation efforts of Member States, investment in water and integrating water policy objectives in other policies (agriculture, transport, industry, and also spatial planning) should be improved. All actors should do their part: the European Commission, Member States, water industry, agriculture, regional governments and also cities. As regards cities, relevant indicators include:

- The status of water bodies identified under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and which are relevant at city level;
- For households, units should be litres/capita/day;
- For industry, agriculture, small business and tourism, water demand values should be reported for each sector both as total amount of used water (in cubic meter/year) and as share of total water consumption in the city (%);
- For the industry sector, please include water demand for cooling in energy production;
- If the city is a tourist destination, detail the variation in water demand during the tourist season;
- Provide trends of water demand per sector during the last 5-10 years;
- Explain what sector-specific technical measures have been put in place to improve water efficiency (e.g. water saving devices, network rehabilitation, water recycling/reuse), what incentives have been chosen (e.g. pricing, taxes, subsidies, metering, product eco-labelling, building rating), and what institutional and regulatory changes accompanied the implementation of measures (e.g. were they mandatory or voluntary) to reach the current situation;
- Give details of technical, nature-based, economic and institutional measures planned to improve water management (from both demand and supply side) for each sector, including possible use of alternative water sources; and
- Give details of measures aimed at preventing/reducing impacts of floods and droughts and at improving the status of water bodies within the city, e.g. restrictions implemented.

Applicants should provide relevant information in the context of current EU Water legislation, mainly the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and related legislation (Groundwater, Environmental Quality Standards), the Floods Directive, the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD), the Drinking Water Directive (DWD), the Bathing Water Directive (BWD) and requirements that result from this legislation.

- Population equivalent (PE), collecting systems, primary, secondary and more stringent treatments are defined in the UWWTD;
- The population not connected to waste water collecting systems might be served by individual and other appropriate systems. Examples: on-site systems (e.g. septic tanks, constructed

¹³ Available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/fitness_check_of_the_eu_water_legislation/index_en.htm

wetlands), which achieve different treatment levels. Another option is that the waste water is stored in water-tight cesspools and transported to an urban waste water treatment plant (UWWTP) by truck. In the case of on-site systems, estimate the treatment level achieved (i.e. primary, secondary, and more stringent treatment levels). In the case of transport to UWWTPs, please provide information on the treatment performance of the plants;

- UWWTPs: if data on incoming and discharged loads is not measured, please say why;
- Provide a short explanation in the case of missing information for specific indicators (1-6) in 4A; and
- Describe innovative actions and emphasise initiatives that go beyond the legal requirements.

2.4 SUSTAINABLE LAND USE & SOIL

The technical assessment of this indicator has three focal points:

- A. Improving the living environment using green infrastructure and green urban areas;
- B. Limiting, mitigating or compensating the effects of urban sprawl. This includes, but is not solely defined as, soil sealing. Mitigating options may preferably be nature based solutions;
- C. Enhancing urban gardening, with a strong focus on urban food production.

It is key to be able to determine the trend on these values, so both baseline values of e.g. 10 years ago and most recent data should be provided, so that a trend can be established.

Green urban areas and green infrastructure¹⁴ (Communication on Green Infrastructure (COM (2013) 249)) can be more beneficial to society than merely serving aesthetics and recreation. Green infrastructure can be defined as a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of benefits to citizens in the urban environment. It incorporates green spaces, such as parks, sports facilities and gardens, and also considers green rooftops, vertical gardens, areas allocated for urban farming, high-quality business parks and public spaces, biodiversity-rich communal gardens, green belts and metropolitan park systems and sustainable urban drainage systems.

Public green areas (as per the table in Section 6A) are defined as:

- Public parks or gardens/forests, for the exclusive use of pedestrians and cyclists, except green traffic islands or dividers, graveyards (unless the local authority recognises their recreational function or natural, historical or cultural importance);
- Green open-air sports facilities accessible to the public free of charge; private green areas (agricultural areas, private parks, forests) accessible to the public free of charge.

The benefits of green urban areas or green infrastructure are very diverse, such as: improving the living environment by providing adaptation to the effects of extreme weather (heat, storm water), purification of air and water or noise reduction. In addition, green areas provide benefits for public health by offering space for physical activity, peaceful places or stress reduction or social interaction. The design of green urban areas depends on what needs the areas are required to meet.

Green areas play an important role in creating a healthy and sustainable living environment for citizens. The distribution of green urban areas across the city and the accessibility of green to all groups in the city is therefore essential. The level of participation in planning processes dealing with the design, construction and maintenance is also of importance, since it is closely related to the way the green areas are used and valued by the residents.

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/docs/green_infrastructure_broc.pdf

A good application on this indicator describes what benefits of green areas are adding to the liveability of the city and makes clear that the green urban areas really meet the needs of the citizens. The quality of green and blue areas can be indicated in many ways (ranging from e.g. satisfaction of users, maintenance status, to accessibility or nature/recreation index). The indicator used for measuring and monitoring the quality of green and blue areas should be described.

In the context of **Sustainable Land Use & Soil**, urban sprawl and the spread of low-density settlements are the main threats to sustainable territorial development. Urban sprawl causes an ongoing process of **soil sealing**, thus reducing the soils ability to control water surplus or shortage and playing a role in food production. Soil sealing is the permanent covering of an area of land and its soil by impermeable artificial material (e.g. asphalt and concrete), for example through buildings and roads. Green sites, including those parts of settlement areas not covered by an impervious surface, like gardens or sites covered by permeable surfaces should be excluded from the sealed surface area. If this information is not available, please estimate what part of the residential areas are sealed and what part are permeable surfaces, and use this factor in the calculations.

Urban design inspired by a sustainable land use concept is contributing to good living conditions for city dwellers and at the same time reducing the environmental impact of the urban fabric. This is usually best achieved through strategic urban planning following a more integrated approach to land management. Measures like short distances to services and facilities reduce the transport demand and promote walking and cycling; multi-apartment houses save energy for heating, cooling, reduce infrastructural needs and investments in green infrastructure meet the demand for spaces for recreational activities.

Information should be provided on new developments and where they are located. It is important to provide the relative proportion of green fields, natural and semi-natural areas, and brownfield sites, where the construction of new buildings and/or commercial and industrial areas have taken place. The applicant should detail what these new developments mean to the densification in the inner-city or urban cores.

When defining 'Inner City' and 'Overall City' for the EGCA application, cities should follow the guidelines laid out by the European Commission (Cities in Europe; The new OECD-EC definition – RF 01/2012)¹⁵ whereby the inner city is equivalent to 'high density clusters'.

The 7th European Environment Action Programme (Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013) is promoting integrated approaches to planning, building and managing cities and urban settlements in a sustainable way, in which long-term environmental considerations are fully taken into account alongside economic, social and territorial challenges. The Programme underlines that environmental considerations including water protection and biodiversity conservation should be integrated into planning decisions relating to land use so that

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/information/publications/regional-focus/2012/cities-in-europe-the-new-oecd-ec-definition

they are made more sustainable, with a view to making progress towards the objective of ‘no net land take’ by 2050.

The Soil Sealing Guidelines on best practice to limit, mitigate or compensate soil sealing¹⁶ (SWD (2012) 101 final/2) contains examples of policies, legislation, funding schemes, local planning tools, information campaigns and many other best practices implemented throughout the EU. Additionally, the EU brochure on soil sealing, ‘Hard Surfaces, Hidden Costs’ (2013), is a useful reference.

The recent Soil Strategy for 2030¹⁷ gives a set of measures that cities can develop, like the application of a land take hierarchy. This hierarchy prioritizes constructing in or rehabilitating already previously built-up areas above land use in natural or agricultural areas.

Reusing brownfields may be a sensible way to avoid or slow down the urban sprawl. Brownfield sites are derelict and underused or even abandoned former industrial or commercial sites, which may have real or perceived (soil) contamination problems. Bringing them to beneficial use, thus saving precious green field sites, normally requires co-ordinated intervention on the part of owners, local authorities and citizens living in the neighbourhood.

The interest in **urban farming** is becoming increasingly important and many cities or groups of cities already made a coupling of urban farming to an urban food policy. Although this indicator is not focusing on the urban food policies, some references to inspirational documents are presented in the footnote¹⁸. It is to be advised that - if cities have an urban food policy coupled to urban agriculture that this is mentioned in the application form.

A good application contains information about the extent of urban farming and/or gardening, the organisation of urban farming and the impact on both environmental and social aspects of urban farms of any scale. Where urban farming or urban gardening is closely linked to nature and biodiversity activities, for example through Green Infrastructure, cities should describe this relationship in terms of planned or achieved synergies (e.g. conservation of pollinators) and stakeholder involvement.

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/pdf/soil_sealing_guidelines_en.pdf

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/eu-soil-strategy-2030_en

¹⁸ For some background information and inspirational reports on urban agriculture see: <http://www.ideabooks.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Urban-Agriculture-Europe.pdf>; more information about urban food policy can be found on (e.g.): <http://urbact.eu/food> (<http://urbact.eu/file/15229/download?token=i4Va6LY2>)

2.5 WASTE AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) (WFD) as amended in May 2018¹⁹ sets out the regulatory structure to protect the environment and human health by preventing or reducing the generation of waste, by reducing overall impacts of resource use and improving the efficiency of such use. The WFD is a key policy tool in support of the transition to a circular economy. The Directive includes key definitions such as waste, municipal waste, recycling, recovery etc. In responding to the questions on this indicator applicants are required to use the relevant definitions as set out in the Directive when describing their waste system.



Figure 2.2 - The Waste Hierarchy

The Directive describes basic waste management principles such as the waste hierarchy, separate collection of waste to ensure high quality recycling, extended producer responsibility and the polluter pays principle. It also includes recycling & preparation for reuse targets for municipal waste: the recycling targets for municipal waste will gradually move up from 50% in 2020 to 65% in 2035.

At the same time, Member States will have to reduce the landfilling of municipal waste to a maximum of 10% in 2035. Moreover, the revised WFD introduces a ban on the landfilling and incineration of all waste that has been collected separately for recycling purposes.

The Directive requires that Member States adopt waste management plans and waste prevention programmes and there is thus an opportunity for an applicant city to describe the waste management plans and prevention programmes in place.

Member States must transpose these provisions into their national legislation and policies by 05 July 2020 as well as review and adapt their waste management and waste prevention programmes by the same date. Key elements of the revised waste legislation include:

¹⁹ Available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/framework/framework_directive.htm

Table 2.1 - Recycling Targets for Municipal Waste²⁰

By 2020	By 2025	By 2030	By 2035
50%	55%	60%	65%

Stricter rules for calculating recycling rates will help to better monitor real progress towards the circular economy.

As part of the 2015 Circular Economy Package, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive was also revised, and new recycling targets were set:

Table 2.2 - New Recycling Targets for Packaging Waste

Waste Type	By 2025	By 2030
All packaging	65%	70%
Plastic	50%	55%
Wood	25%	30%
Ferrous metals	70%	80%
Aluminium	50%	60%
Glass	70%	75%
Paper and cardboard	75%	85%

Separate collection

In addition to the separate collection obligation which already existed for paper and cardboard, glass, metals and plastic, new provisions now mandate separate collection for biowaste, hazardous household waste and textiles and should boost the quality of the secondary raw materials and their uptake. **Hazardous household waste will have to be collected separately by 2022, biowaste by 2023 and textiles by 2025.**

Incentives

The new legislation foresees more use of effective economic instruments and other measures in support of the waste hierarchy. The use of economic instruments like Pay-as-you-throw systems,

²⁰ Please note that - as opposed to the existing 2020 targets referred to above – the new targets covered ***all*** municipal waste as defined in Article 3 of the revised Directive. ***When providing figures on the performance of waste management in the city please make sure to provide details in terms of municipal waste.***

landfill and incineration taxes and Extended Producer Responsibility²¹ (EPR) has proved a necessary condition and an efficient way to promote waste prevention and increase recycling. They give the right economic incentive to the economic actors (producers, consumers, citizens, waste management operators) in line with the Polluter Pays Principle and it provides financial means for the set-up of efficient and convenient waste collection and treatment operations.

Prevention

The new legislation²² will place a particular focus on waste prevention and introduce important objectives such as reducing by 50% food waste in the EU and halting marine litter with the aim to achieve the UN sustainable development goals²³ in these areas. On 11 March 2022, the Commission published its proposal for a new Circular Economy Action Plan²⁴ under the European Green Deal. Measures will be introduced for waste prevention and reduction, increasing recycled content, minimising waste exports outside the EU. An EU model for separate collection and labelling of products will be launched.

The information provided should include references to how waste management is considered and managed in the wider context of the circular economy (particularly in responding to Section 3C). Waste prevention strategies or plans in place including possible specific measures to reduce food waste, plastic waste and other waste materials including green public procurement and purchase of EU Ecolabel goods and services should be mentioned too;

3A. Present Situation

In response to this section the applicant should aim to provide comprehensive details on the current waste management practices in the city tackling each of the bulleted items. Food and plastic wastes are specifically referenced in the question and should be addressed in the response. It is recommended that data tables and charts are used to complement the answer.

Cities are encouraged to use waste data in the form of tables and charts to support the responses. Any data submitted should be clear and complement the qualitative response.

3B. Past Performance

In response to this section the applicant should focus on describing how the programme of waste management, its implementation and development of infrastructure (collection and treatment) has

²¹ Meaning a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of a product's life cycle

²² <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2008/98/2018-07-05>

²³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/fs_20_437

progressed in the city over the past five to ten years. Each bulleted item is to be addressed and it is recommended that data tables and charts are used to complement the response.

3C. Future Plans

In response to this section the applicant should focus on describing the future plans, objectives and targets the city is aiming to achieve whilst emphasising the commitment to and continual assessment of the delivery programme.

In responding the applicant should also make reference to the circular economy and the steps the city intends to take in the move away from linear economic models. Each bulleted item is to be addressed and it is recommended that data tables and charts are used to complement the response. The new EU Circular Economy Action Plan²⁵, EU Strategy for Plastics in the Circular Economy and EU Monitoring Framework for the Circular Economy are key reference documents for responding to this question.

General Notes:

- Answer all parts of the indicator questions. If city data is not available, please provide a brief explanation and use regional or national data, where available. If no data is available, please state this and indicate the reason why;
- Waste data should be provided using the definitions set out in Article 3 of the **revised** Waste Framework Directive. In particular, please ensure to provide data for **all municipal waste** (and not just household waste) and **all packaging waste**. Where such data is not available for the city please explain why not and provide the most relevant data that is available.
- Reference to ‘measures’ must include compliance with the EU Waste Framework Directive in terms of the preparation and implementation of ‘waste management plans’ and waste prevention programmes on either a municipal or regional basis as well as the specific use of economic instruments. Where specific packaging waste data is not available for the city or only available at a national level then measures to promote the prevention, reuse and recycling of packaging waste should be outlined;
- When providing details of separately collected wastes, include the types of waste collected and types of collection systems (e.g. drop off points, civic amenity, kerbside, other initiatives);
- The meaning of the ‘polluter pays’ principle is as described in Article 14 of the WFD;
- Refer Article 8 and 8a for information Extended Producer Responsibility; and
- When describing measures for treatment of residual waste, information should be provided on any energy recovery measures such as Waste to Energy facilities and, where applicable, the relative efficiency of the recovery measures (e.g. combined heat & power).

²⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1583933814386&uri=COM:2020:98:FIN>

2.6 NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

The technical assessment for Indicator 5 is designed to explore how much information each city holds for its natural spaces and biodiversity, how well it monitors and manages these assets and how it engages its citizens and stakeholders in improving their local biodiversity. A good application will include maps of habitats and sites, examples of habitat and species monitoring programmes, details of strategies, plans and projects for the management of ecological networks, ecosystem services, key sites and priority species. It will show how the city collects its biodiversity data, protects habitats and species and involves its people in biodiversity education, decision making and practical actions. The city should describe what it is currently doing, has done in the past and what plans it has for the future.

Applicant cities will be aware of the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, which sets an ambition to protect more nature and restore ecosystems, restore at least 25,000km of rivers to free-flowing state, plant 3 billion trees, halt and reverse the decline of pollinators, reduce the use and harmfulness of pesticides, and establish protected area status for at least 30% of Europe's land and seas. Please also inform about your efforts and timeline to become a pesticide free town and join action networks, e.g. PAN Pesticide Action Network or others. The links between biodiversity action and climate change mitigation and adaptation should also be clearly recognised and understood by the city.

To demonstrate that nature and biodiversity are protected there should be a description of the status of species (including their trends) and the status of protected habitats and other open spaces, both green and blue. A summary of city policies and the range of measures taken to protect, enhance and buffer biodiversity in the city should be given. These should include measures to create biodiverse and accessible urban forests, parks, school-grounds and gardens; urban farms; green roofs and walls; tree-lined streets; urban meadows; and urban hedges. They should also help improve connectivity of the urban green and blue network. It is expected that the city will have an urban greening / nature plan and action plan to promote local biodiversity which will contain these details. Plans will include objectives, measures taken and planned, and an explanation of how actions will be funded to achieve the city's aims. Plans should be clearly linked to other planning processes of the city to ensure the aims and objectives can be achieved.

Enhancing biodiversity may take the form of protection from harm and disturbance, increasing the size of natural areas or improving the quality of them from a nature and biodiversity perspective. Conservation actions taken in compliance with the EU Nature Directives for the Natura 2000 sites and their protected habitats and species should be noted, and it should be mentioned whether they are part of comprehensive management plans. Policies and plans for other nature conservation sites, and the condition of those sites, should be included; these may include sites of national or local city level importance. Those degraded eco-systems in and around the city (not necessarily protected areas) that have potential for restoration, should also be highlighted in accordance with the Nature Restoration Plan of the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy.

The city should take account of how its nature and biodiversity interacts and connects to that of the surrounding 'peri-urban' land, and with the wider regional and national green infrastructure. Measures to protect and establish 'green corridors' for species, to help avoid fragmentation at the regional scale. Other measures may include improving the connectivity between nature sites to permit

migration, foraging and breeding. Special actions may be taken to favour particular species and habitats. Management of both green and blue spaces that employs ecological methods and safeguards species from ecotoxicological products should be noted.

Particular attention should be paid to any action plans, projects or activities that support the conservation of wild pollinating insects, contributing to the EU Pollinators initiative. These can include actions addressing key threats to pollinators (loss of habitats, chemical and light pollution, invasive alien species) monitoring of pollinator species, citizens initiatives (including citizen science), and other awareness raising and educational activities.

Article 12 of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive 128/2009 and other legislation concerning water quality is also relevant. Appropriate action on invasive species should also be in line with EC Regulation 1143/2014 on invasive non-native species. Measures taken to protect native biodiversity and ecosystem services from these species, as well as to minimise and mitigate the human health or economic impacts that they can have should be discussed.

Please outline activities which educate people about the values of nature and raise public awareness of the city's biodiversity including reference to the Natura 2000 network of sites, and any other locally and nationally protected areas. Also, describe opportunities provided for citizens to make decisions about and engage with natural spaces. Research into local issues including climate change impacts may be another contributing factor to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

The assessment of applications will take into account the context of the city and the pressures it faces, the current status of biodiversity and the achievements of past protection and conservation work, the monitoring of wildlife and its management, as well as what use is made of monitoring information. Applicant cities should provide evidence of commitment to agreed plans and funding from a range of sources to back the city's aspirations for its nature and biodiversity. It is important that good maps are included to show locations of sites, their context and connectivity.

2.7 GREEN GROWTH AND ECO-INNOVATION

Policy Background

The **European Green Deal** is Europe's growth strategy that will transform the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, where

- there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050;
- economic growth is decoupled from resource use, and
- no person and no place is left behind.

The plan outlines investments needed and financing tools available. It explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition.

Eco-innovation and green technologies are key to Europe's future and at the heart of the European Union's policies. An eco-innovation is *"any innovation that makes progress towards the goal of sustainable development by reducing impacts on the environment, increasing resilience to environmental pressures or using natural resources more efficiently and responsibly"*. The Eco-Innovation Action Plan (EcoAP) is therefore an important element of the European policy framework.

In recent years, many of the EcoAP goals have come together in the concept of the **circular economy**. Eco-innovation is key to delivering many aspects of the circular economy: industrial symbiosis or ecologies, cradle-to-cradle design and new, innovative business models.

In local communities, the municipal government can build awareness and stimulate, demand or require measures in the field of all economic activities.

Guidance regarding the application form

Applicants should discuss plans, programmes and policies in the context of promoting green growth and eco-innovation in the city. The focus should highlight innovative approaches of how technological and non-technological eco-innovations are supported or directly implemented by the applicant city.

Include data and information on how sustainable eco-innovation has developed over time. For example, show how the share of the city budget dedicated to support environmental R&D developed during the last five to ten years (also as a percentage of total budget), how the number of jobs in green and circular economy sectors changed over time and how the city is implementing the public procurement of innovation. (Section 7A). The self-assessment checklist #1 covers the Municipal green influence on economic activities.

Green Growth and Eco-Innovation

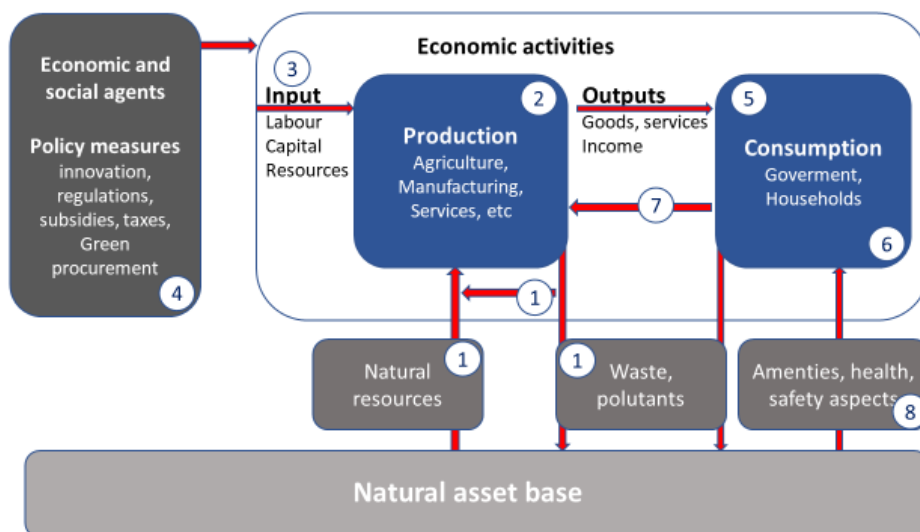


Figure 2.3 - Municipal Green Influence on Economic Activities

The numbers in Figure 2.3 refer to the references in Section 7A of the application form. A detailed description of the numbers is below.

	Components	Description of municipal Green influence
1	Reuse, reduce Natural Resources	Innovations that address material/resource use, (substitution, minimisation of material use, closing loops, etc.) and reduce environmental impacts, i.e. measures to improve resource efficiency; Describe the status of the green & digital transformation, such as which processes are turned into electronic, e-services, paperless office management, etc.
2	Awareness raising, industrial symbiosis, Research & Development (R&D), eco-innovation	Awareness raising and training to encourage the development and up-take of environmentally friendly technologies, particularly through training in industrial and business settings; new business models (sharing schemes), including actions inspired by circular economy thinking;
3	Green skills, green jobs	Efforts to promote green skills or green jobs
4	Develop policy measures	Efforts to promote Green Public Procurement (GPP) including the purchase of EU Ecolabel goods and services and other green policy measures
5	Implement policy measures	Social innovation/stakeholder participation, including for example community programmes, that shows entrepreneurship

		and new ways of organisation that promote sustainable development and protect the environment locally and globally
6	Develop urban tissue/infrastructure	Efforts to drive innovation that address societal and particularly environmental challenges through creating the right enabling conditions, like putting in place advanced infrastructure (IT or more traditional) or investing in and partnering with innovators, platforms, clusters and hubs;
7	Share system, cradle to cradle, reuse; and	What efforts does the municipality make to stimulate sharing, reuse and repair different categories of goods; and
8	Increase quality, eco-innovation	Describe how competitive sustainability and eco-innovation improve the liveability of the city in the area of various aspects such as health and safety.

Applicants should also consider policies aiming to create jobs in green and circular economy sectors, such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste recycling and end market development, green chemistry, organic farming and green construction etc. This should include activities and jobs in the municipal administration that are legally obliged and that go beyond the standards set by environmental legislation. The self-assessment checklist #2 provides an indicative breakdown to compute the aggregated number of jobs created in green economic sectors over the last 5 years.

Provide information about the timelines of future plans (Section 7C). Discuss whether the city takes active steps in promoting the application and diffusion of eco-innovation by the different city departments and also by industries within the city boundary.

Include information on budgets for future plans and strategies, note if these are secured or prospective.

Useful References:

Glossary of Key Green Growth, Eco-innovation and Green Procurement Management Terms in keeping with European Commission Definitions:

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/europes-environment-aoa/chapter3.xhtml>

Circular economy:

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf

<http://www.oecd.org/regional/the-circular-economy-in-cities-and-regions-10ac6ae4-en.htm>

https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/sustainable-development-goals_en

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/our-work/activities/circular-economy-in-cities>

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/our-work/activities/food>

<https://www.circularcityfundingguide.eu/>

<https://acrplus.org/en/>

<https://www.eib.org/en/publications/the-eib-in-the-circular-economy-guide>

Green Economy:

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/europes-environment-aoa/chapter3.xhtml>

<http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy>

Green Procurement:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/toolkit_en.htm

Innovation benchmarks:

Eco-Innovation Index http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoap/index_en.htm

Regional Innovation Scoreboard

https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/innovation/regional_en

2.8 CLIMATE CHANGE: MITIGATION

The EU has set targets for reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions progressively up to 2050, set out in the 2020 climate and energy package, the 2030 climate and energy framework, the European Green Deal, and the 2050 long-term Strategy. These targets are defined to put the EU on the way to achieve the transformation towards a low-carbon economy as detailed in the 2050 low-carbon roadmap and the long-term strategy for a climate resilient, low-carbon strategy as detailed in the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, 2050 low-carbon roadmap and the long-term strategy for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate-neutral economy by 2050²⁶.

The targets for 2020 include the reduction in GHG emissions of at least 20% below 1990 levels, 20% of EU energy consumption to come from renewable resources, and 20% reduction in primary energy use, to be achieved principally by improving energy efficiency. With the key objective of limiting the rise in global temperature to well below 2°C, the targets for 2030 include: a 55% cut in GHG emissions compared to 1990 levels, at least 32.5% energy savings compared with a business-as-usual scenario and at least a 32% share of renewable energy consumption. Legally binding targets have been set for each Member State.

Please consider the following as part of Section 8:

A - The Present Situation - level of quality and quantitative data and numerical analysis, baseline inventory (CO₂, GHG) methodological approach, relevant infrastructure and systems, state of play with environmental performance, integrated approaches to environmental management, and governance arrangements.

B - The Past Performance - strategies, plans, measures, and trends implemented over the last five to ten years (justifying decisions on actions), quantitative data, innovation and mechanisms used, private sector engagement, and monitoring arrangements.

C - Future Plans - realistic and achievable plans with clear objectives (short and long-term), highlighting clear measures in place (not implemented) and those already adopted, clear budget allocations and performance indicators identified.

Whether or not national governments have established legal requirements or targets for local authorities on climate change, applicant cities will be expected to show that they are able to establish a CO₂ (and possibly other GHGs) emissions baseline inventory (which is considered a basic requirement for this indicator) for a specific year using an EU²⁷ or internationally recognised methodology

²⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy-and-energy-union/2050-long-term-strategy>

²⁷ Such as the Joint Research Centre (European Commission)'s Guidebook 'How to develop a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP)' - Part 2: Baseline Emission Inventory (BEI) and Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (RVA), http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC112986/jrc112986_kj-nb-29412-en-n.pdf. Part 1 focuses on 'The SECAP process, step-by-step towards low-carbon and climate-resilient cities by 2030', http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC112986/jrc112986_kj-na-29412-

(providing specific references), identify the main sources of emissions, set achievable territorial targets aligned with EU objectives, take action to reduce emissions (justifying the decisions on the implemented policies and measures), and continuously measure and monitor their progress towards agreed targets year by year.

When reporting on the specific indicators in Section 8A:

- Note that explanatory leaflets on their preparation are available within the Reference Framework for Sustainable European Cities²⁸;
- The methodological approach used should be explained. Make clear whether or not it addresses both direct emissions (from sources within the city boundary) and indirect emissions (from goods and services provided outside the city but consumed inside the city). Mention the main sources of data and the sectors covered by each indicator, distinguishing between national and local information sources;
- The measure for carbon content in electricity (tonnes CO₂ per MWh) should be based on consumption and should not include production. All the efforts of the city to reduce this parameter should be explained; and
- Where possible, applicants should use 2005 (or as close as possible) as the baseline year for reporting on progress.

Cities have a key role in the mitigation of climate change. If the city has an integrated approach to mitigation of climate change, this section can be used to highlight, in particular, any smart ('win-win') measures undertaken or planned which help both to reduce emissions and improve resilience. The Clean Energy for All Europeans legislative package opens up new rights for cities, companies and citizens collectively or individually to generate, consume, store, sell and share energy in ways that were not possible in several jurisdictions. Frontrunner cities should be at the forefront in exploiting these new options particularly in the retail energy market (self-consumption, demand response, citizens' energy communities, aggregation, smart technologies, energy efficiency measures etc.) as part of the green and digital transformation.

The role of cities has been reinforced also in the preparation of the EU's long-term strategy to meet its Paris Agreement goals by (the Member States) setting up national multilevel dialogues and involving the Covenant of Mayors in national energy and climate planning. Since April 2021, the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy has renewed its commitments policy, to align with the European Green Deal. The new commitment system provides more flexibility to cities, allowing them to commit to an objective at least as ambitious as that of their Member States, and encouraging them to go beyond, if possible until climate neutrality.

[en-n.pdf](#). Part 3 focuses on '[Policies, key actions, good practices for mitigation and adaptation to climate change and Financing SECAP\(s\)](#)', http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC112986/jrc112986_kj-nc-29412-en-n.pdf.

²⁸ <http://www.rfsc.eu/>

Green Infrastructure (GI) solutions such as nature based solutions can form part of an overall climate strategy to help cities mitigate the adverse effects of climate change (For example see the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change or the EU Strategy on Green Infrastructure).

GI will also be a necessary adjunct to reducing the carbon footprint of transport and energy provision, mitigating the negative effects of land uptake and fragmentation, disaster risk mitigation and boosting opportunities to better integrate land use, ecosystem and biodiversity concerns into policy and planning.

2.9 CLIMATE CHANGE: ADAPTATION

European cities provide vital services for their inhabitants and people living beyond the city boundary, however they face serious climate change challenges that threaten the delivery of these services. Although climate change mitigation action can limit climate change impacts, it cannot completely avoid them. Temperature, sea level and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like heat waves, floods, torrential rain, storms and droughts are becoming more common and having greater impacts across Europe. The dense urban fabric, high building mass and soil sealing provoke specific urban climate effects such as the urban heat island effect and urban drainage floods (pluvial floods) that can worsen existing climate impacts like heatwaves and extreme rainfall events. Therefore, cities need both climate change mitigation and adaptation action.

In February 2021²⁹, the European Commission adopted its new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change. The new strategy sets out how the European Union can adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change and become climate resilient by 2050. The Strategy has four principle objectives: to make adaptation smarter, swifter and more systemic, and to step up international action on adaptation to climate change.

European Commission adopted its new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change on 24 February 2021³⁰. The new strategy sets out how the European Union can adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change and become climate resilient by 2050. The Strategy has four principle objectives: to make adaptation smarter, swifter and more systemic, and to step up international action on adaptation to climate change.

Climate change impacts can differ from city to city and require an adaptation approach with measures tailored to the local and regional circumstances. As a systemic challenge, climate change impacts interact strongly with socio-economic factors such as demographic factors or urban design, which can lessen or worsen impacts. Therefore, adaptation requires a comprehensive and integrated approach.

Evaluators will, in particular, look at the level of awareness among decision-makers, citizens and other stakeholders and commitment for action. A comprehensive approach covering all possible climate impacts and interrelated socio-economic factors is seen as key to effective adaptation. Cities should, depending on their state in the adaptation process, present:

- The level of awareness among its stakeholders, the commitment to take action at local level and engagement in European/international initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, Urban Agenda for the EU, URBACT etc.;
- Their approach to assess climate change vulnerability and risk;
- Their vision, main objectives and strategy to adapt to climate change;
- The selection, prioritisation, planning and implementation of measures;

²⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/adaptation-climate-change/eu-adaptation-strategy>

³⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/adaptation-climate-change/eu-adaptation-strategy>

- The role of green and blue infrastructure measures;
- The approach to mainstream and interlinked measures with other policy areas such as climate change mitigation, disaster risk reduction, water management, biodiversity, health etc. and the use of win-win solutions;
- Governance of adaptation including participatory approaches;
- The monitoring approach to evaluate progress in implementation of adaptation measures and the effectiveness in terms of reduced risks and vulnerabilities.

As climate change adaptation is a relatively new policy area most action in cities is often at an early stage and is in the process of being built up. In this regard, it is important to describe the past starting conditions, the evolution of action since this starting point and achievements to date. Additionally, describe the short and long-term future plans to become more climate-resilient and show how the need for adaptation can be used as an opportunity to make cities even more attractive and liveable. Include time scales, level of commitments, budget and staff allocations.

Useful References:

EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change adopted in February 2021:

https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/adaptation/what_en

Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy:

<http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/en/>

Urban Adaptation Support Tool:

<https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/knowledge/tools/urban-ast/step-0-0>

Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy reporting guidelines:

https://www.eumayors.eu/index.php?option=com_attachments&task=download&id=815

Joint Research Centre (European Commission)'s Guidebook 'How to develop a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP)' - Parts 1-3:

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/338a9918-f132-11e8-9982-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> (and 'Related publications' link)

Urban adaptation to climate change in Europe 2020 – How cities and towns respond to climate change

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/urban-adaptation-in-europe>

2.10 SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY

The responsibility for urban mobility policies is shared with local, regional and national authorities. There are key European strategies that should be taken into account by applicant cities.

Following on from the European Commission's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and its Action Plan of 82 initiatives³¹, the new Urban Mobility Framework published in December 2021 addresses some of the mobility challenges stemming from the intense economic activity in cities – congestion, emissions, noise.

It sets out European guidance on how cities can cut emissions and improve mobility, including via Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP). The main focus is on public transport, walking and cycling. It also prioritises zero-emission solutions for urban fleets, including taxis and ride-hailing services, last mile urban deliveries, and the construction and modernisation of multimodal hubs, as well as new digital solutions and services.

Funding options are mapped out for local and regional authorities to implement these priorities. In 2022, the Commission will propose a Recommendation to EU Member States for the development of national programmes to support regions and cities in the development and roll-out of effective sustainable urban mobility plans; it will also include an upgraded SUMP concept favouring active, collective and public transport and shared mobility.

In the section on the Present Situation (10A), cities are encouraged to provide information (for both local passenger transport and urban freight transport) on:

- **Transport infrastructure**, i.e. that in place for public transport (e.g. rail, trams, trolley buses, buses and any water-based transport), cyclists (e.g. cycle lanes, bicycle parks, etc.) and pedestrians (i.e. the extent of pedestrianisation);
- **Vehicle numbers**, i.e. for different public transport types;
- **Mobility flows**, for all modes, both within the city and to and from the surrounding region;
- **Infrastructure management tools**, including, for example, the use of ITS to optimise infrastructure use and to prioritise public transport, cycling and walking;
- **Existing modal shares** in the city for both local passenger and urban freight transport;
- **Shared mobility schemes**, including public bicycle sharing schemes, car clubs, carpooling;
- **Use of alternative-fuel vehicles**, both in the city generally, and by the city authorities (including public transport operators) in particular. Information on the number of vehicles and the relevant infrastructure should be provided for gas (if the city has plans or programmes for biogas please make reference to these), biofuels, electricity and hydrogen, including the extent to which these fuels are renewable and sustainable;
- **Any relevant disadvantages or constraints of relevance to transport**, including those resulting from historical, geographical and/or socio-economic factors;

³¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0789>

- **Governance arrangements and responsibilities**, including how the city works with any private (bus, rail and freight) transport operators. If a city has no responsibility over an area, it will be important to demonstrate engagement and co-operation with those organisations that have the responsibility;
- **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP)** - confirm if there is one in place (or under revision) for the city;
- **Urban vehicle access regulations (UVAR)** are there schemes such as low-emission zones or congestion charging in place;
- **Involvement of stakeholders**, in development of strategies, plans and measures.

In Section 10A three indicators must be provided:

- A. 'Proportion (%) of population living within 300 metres of an hourly (or more frequent) public transport service'. If the indicator cannot be provided from existing GIS or other data, please provide a best estimate. The data and calculation method for all figures should be described;
- B. For all journeys under 5 km, proportion of these journeys undertaken by: i) car, ii) public transport, iii) bicycle, iv) by foot, v) Multimodal (active/shared mobility + public transport), and vi) other. Provide the modal split (%) of all journeys of under 5 km that start and/or end in the city:
 - Journeys made by car should include those journeys made as a passenger, as well as a driver;
 - For public transport, please include journeys by any type of public transport present in the city (e.g. buses, trams, trolleybuses, light rail and other rail services) even if these are privately-operated;
 - If 'other' forms of transport are used, please state what is covered by the figure presented for 'other';

If it is not possible to supply the modal split for journeys of less than 5 km, please provide the 'Modal split (%) of all journeys that start and/or end in the city';

- C. 'Proportion of buses operating in the city that are low emission (at least Euro VI) and/or alternatively fuelled (electric, hydrogen, LNG, etc.)'; provide (or estimate) the share of buses in the urban transport fleet (owned by the city or region, or by private operators operating in the city or region) that have certified low emissions that meet at least the EURO VI emissions standards (or equivalent), including buses with zero tailpipe emissions.

Section 10B (Past Performance) should focus on the plans, strategies and measures that have been put in place to deliver the current situation. It should describe the strategies and plans that have been implemented over the last five to ten years (including any SUMP or equivalent) to ensure that the development of transport in the city has been undertaken in an integrated manner. Be explicit about the main principles underlying the development of the plan to demonstrate that it is consistent with a SUMP. Refer to the way in which the city authorities involved stakeholders in the development of these plans, and in the development and implementation of relevant measures. Include any available results from the implementation of the SUMP (or equivalent).

All modes of transport - for both passenger and freight - should be covered. The description should include both the integration between the different modes of transport and also the integration of transport and land use planning in order to avoid unnecessary travel, to limit urban sprawl and to stimulate the use of public transport, cycling and walking. It will be important to demonstrate that

attention is being paid to the needs of public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians throughout the whole city, not just in city centre.

The section on 'Past Performance' should also include an overview of relevant measures that have been implemented, both to support the increased use of public transport, cycling and walking, and to discourage the use of the car and to make the remaining car use more efficient. It will also be important to set out the measures that have been implemented to improve the environmental performance of freight within the city, including diverting trucks from the city centre and distributing goods (including food) within the city in a more efficient manner and using alternatively-fuelled vehicle or cargo bicycles. Measures to promote the use of alternatively-fuelled vehicles using sustainable fuels and energy sources should also be mentioned, as should the introduction and promotion of alternative mobility schemes, such as car sharing, carpooling and bicycle rental schemes. Any Urban vehicle access regulation (UVAR) schemes should be mentioned, as should any measures that promote shared mobility. If there are any spatial planning approaches which have led to more environmentally friendly transport models, these should be outlined here.

Section 10C (Future Plans) should focus on the city's future plans, including relevant objectives, and the measures that are being, or will be, put in place to deliver these. Objectives should demonstrate the city's ambition in terms of delivering sustainable transport. Section 10C should cover similar issues to Section 10B (Past Performance), and demonstrate the city's continued commitment to implementing measures to develop its transport system in a sustainable direction with the full engagement of citizens and other stakeholders.

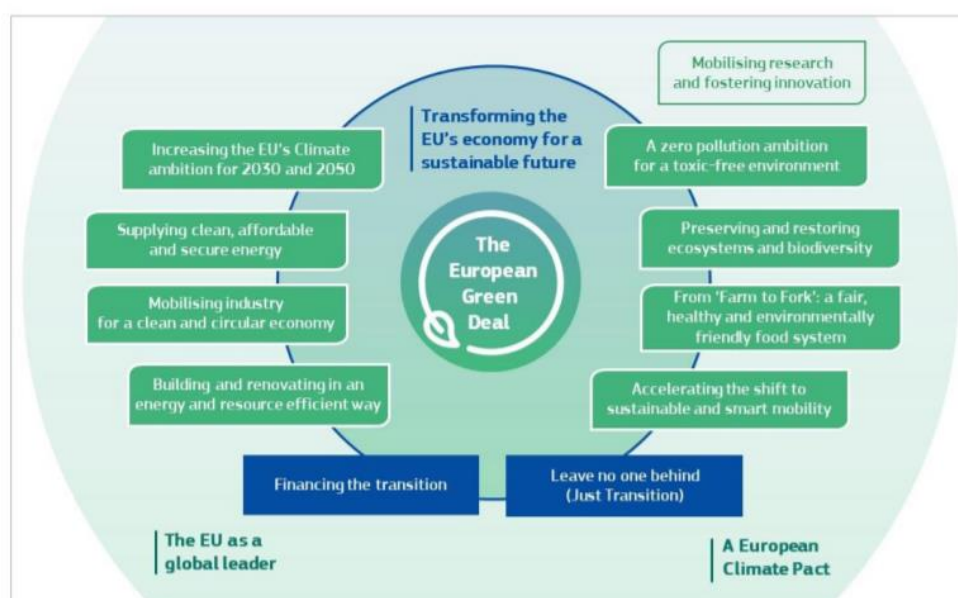
There are a number of best practice examples and hands-on examples available:

- **Eltis – the urban mobility observatory**, with its very many examples/searchable per category;
- European Green Mobility **award winners and finalists** best practice examples as listed website under 'Mobility Awards' <https://mobilityweek.eu/home/>;
- the **Best Practice Guide** from past years of the European Mobility Week Awards <https://mobilityweek.eu/campaign-resources-for-2021/previous-years/>; and
- the CIVITAS Awards ('past awards' section): <https://civitas.eu/awards>
- The CitiMeasure project <https://eurocities.eu/projects/citimeasure/> can be used to monitor air quality, but also urban mobility trends

2.11 ENERGY PERFORMANCE

The EU has updated its energy policy framework in a way that will facilitate the clean energy transition and make it fit for the 21st century. The European Green Deal, adopted in December 2019, is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.

The European Green Deal is an integral part of the Commission's strategy to implement the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals³², including the sustainable energy development goal through supplying clean, affordable and secure energy. It pays a particular importance to the need to ensure a just transition, in which those most vulnerable to its consequences are properly supported



The new policy framework brings regulatory certainty, in particular, through the introduction of the first national energy and climate plans and will encourage essential investments to take place in this important sector.

It empowers European consumers to become fully active players in the energy transition through a range of new rights and protection related to the energy markets and fixes two new targets for the EU for 2030: a binding renewable energy target of at least 32% and an energy efficiency target of at least 32.5% - with a possible upward revision in 2023. For the electricity market, it confirms the 2030 interconnection target of 15%, following on from the 10% target for 2020. These ambitious targets

³² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

will stimulate Europe's industrial competitiveness, boost growth and jobs, reduce energy bills, help tackle energy poverty and improve air quality.

When these policies are fully implemented, they will lead to steeper emission reductions than anticipated for the whole EU - some 55% by 2030 relative to 1990 (compared to the former target of a 40% reduction).

To strive towards a long-term GHG reduction objective, the framework also sets up a robust governance system for the Energy Union, and each Member State is now required to draft integrated national energy and climate plans for 2021 to 2030 outlining how they will achieve their respective targets. Cities are to be involved in this process through multi-level dialogues to be set up by each Member State.

The package also outlines specific measures for the building sector - the largest single energy consumer in Europe, with considerable potential for gains in energy performance. It also sets out 'a just transition' objectives to fight energy poverty and ensure that nobody is left behind in the transition.

The European Climate Law³³ writes into law the goal set out in the European Green Deal for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050. The law also sets the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

Climate neutrality by 2050 means achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions for EU countries as a whole, mainly by cutting emissions, investing in green technologies and protecting the natural environment.

The law aims to ensure that all EU policies contribute to this goal and that all sectors of the economy and society play their part.

The Climate Law includes measures to keep track of progress and adjust actions accordingly, based on existing systems such as the governance process for Member States' National Energy and Climate Plans, regular reports by the European Environment Agency, and the latest scientific evidence on climate change and its impacts. Progress will be reviewed every five years, in line with the global stocktake exercise under the Paris Agreement.

The Climate Law also addresses the necessary steps to get to the 2050 target:

- Based on a comprehensive impact assessment, the Commission will propose a new EU target for 2030 GHG emissions reductions;
- In June 2021, the Commission proposed³⁴ to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 sets Europe on a responsible path to becoming climate neutral by 2050;

³³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1119>

³⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/european-green-deal/2030-climate-target-plan_en

- The Commission proposes the adoption of a 2030-2050 EU-wide trajectory for GHG emission reductions, to measure progress and give predictability to public authorities, businesses and citizens;
- By September 2023, and every five years thereafter, the Commission will assess the consistency of EU and national measures with the climate-neutrality objective and the 2030-2050 trajectory; and
- The Commission will be empowered to issue Recommendations to Member States whose actions are inconsistent with the climate-neutrality objective, and Member States will be obliged to take due account of these Recommendations or to explain their reasoning if they fail to do so;
- Member States will also be required to develop and implement adaptation strategies to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change.

These new targets also played an important part in the Commission's preparations for its long-term vision for a climate neutral Europe by 2050³⁵, published on 28 November 2018.

A further part of the package seeks to establish a modern design for the EU electricity market, adapted to the new realities of the market - more flexible, more market-oriented, better placed to integrate a greater share of renewables.

These new rules also aim to put consumers at the heart of the transition - in terms of giving them more choice, strengthening their rights, and enabling everyone to participate in the transition themselves by producing their own renewable energy, consuming, sharing, storing or feeding it into the grid. Rights to dynamic energy contracts, smart metering and demand response allows consumers to cut their electricity bills against flexibility in their consumption habits. New rules also provide for the possibility for consumers to join forces and implement the shift towards a decentralised, clean and efficient energy system, by forming 'cooperatives' (dubbed 'energy communities') specialised on clean energy production or storage, home renovation, etc. By allowing electricity to move freely to where it is most needed and when it is most needed via undistorted price signals, consumers will also benefit from cross-border competition. This will drive the investments necessary to provide security of supply, whilst decarbonising the European energy system.

Furthermore, the Clean Energy for all Europeans package, introduced several important legislative acts in 2018 and 2019 that are relevant to this indicator:

- Directive EU 2018/844 on Energy Performances in Buildings;
- Directive EU 2018/2001 on Renewable Energy Sources;
- Directive EU 2018/2002 on Energy Efficiency;
- Regulation EU 2018/1999 on the governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action; and
- Directive EU 2019/944 on common rules for the internal market for electricity and amending Directive 2012/27/EU.

³⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/topics/energy-strategy-and-energy-union/2050-long-term-strategy>

Current development or Action Plan refers to city plans or strategies, formulated and adopted over the last five to ten years which are now being implemented, such as Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP) through the Covenant of Mayors (or Sustainable Action Plan for Climate and Energy - SECAP through the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy) and its updated commitments since April 2021³⁶.

The energy mix refers to the share of different energy sources which help meet the energy demand of the city. The dynamics and details of the energy mix over time and future plans for such highlight the intentions of the city in terms of its renewable energy transition. If possible, demonstrate an understanding of the economic, ecological, technical or other (aesthetic, social, infrastructural, cultural) implications of different energy strategies.

Flexible, efficient and well co-ordinated compatible and integrated district heating and electricity systems can be key components in a city's energy mix.

Increasing energy efficiency is a key strategy for achieving a carbon neutral energy system, but it is equally important to lower energy demand and shift it away from moments of grid congestion through campaigns and incentives for citizens, organisations, companies and public institutions.

Refer to the built environment of the city in current development or action plans and the current status of energy performance including buildings, industry, tertiary and transport sectors. In this respect, and in the context of the European Green Deal, the European Commission launched an initiative aimed at accelerating the uptake of home renovation in the EU: the Renovation Wave. It sets out the importance of looking at the full lifecycle performance of buildings, in particular the whole life carbon emissions, to cost efficiently reduce overall carbon emissions. It refers to Level(s), the European Commission framework to assess and report on sustainability performance of buildings over their full lifecycle.

For 2050 the European Commission is upgrading its long-term goals for 80-95% reduction of GHGs to full carbon neutrality in the context of the European Green Deal. This will require large and systematic investments in energy efficiency, energy substitution and new renewable energy and just transition to ensure no citizen, city or region is left behind.

For future and in particular long-term future energy plans, systems visions about transport, industry and food systems may also be included. In addition to the building stock those systems represent three important energy sectors, in particular, for the use of renewable energy, with potentially conflicting and/or supplementing uses in the overall future energy system.

³⁶ As of April 2021, the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy has renewed its commitments policy, to align with the European Green Deal. The new commitment system provides more flexibility to cities, allowing them to commit to an objective at least as ambitious as that of their Member States, and encouraging them to go beyond, if possible until climate neutrality.

2.12 GOVERNANCE

The sections within Indicator 12: Governance are different to the other 11 indicators. This is to reflect the nature of the topic and to provide applicants with a suitable structure to describe their performance. The section headings are:

- A. Plan and Commitments;**
- B. Governance and Management Arrangements;**
- C. Partnerships and Public Involvement;**
- D. References** - for clarification purposes only.

Please see the Application Form for the detail required within each section.

The various dimensions of urban life, environmental, economic, social and cultural, are interwoven and successful urban management requires an integrated approach. Measures for environmental protection and improvement should be combined with those for physical urban renewal, education, economic development and social inclusion. Strong partnerships between citizens, civil society, the local economy and the various parts of government are a pre-requisite for effective action.

This approach is especially important given the seriousness of the challenges that European cities currently face, from demographic change to job creation, social progress, recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic and the impacts of climate change. Effective local responses to these challenges are critical for achieving the smart, sustainable, inclusive society envisaged in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In the response to this indicator, describe the **integrated** approach to the environmental management of the city.

Section 12A requires details on the integrated environmental vision of the city, how this is reflected in the various plans and strategies of the city and how this is implemented in integrated projects. **The key aspect is the cascade** from vision, through strategies and plans, into real projects and an integrated rather than sector specific only approach.

Section 12B looks at **how the city council organises the delivery** of the vision, strategy and projects.

Describe the organisational structure of the city council (administration) and show how the environmental vision/strategies are integrated into the organisation.

Please include an organogram and indicate which department or political body is the driving force behind the environmental vision/strategies.

Budget

Is there a dedicated budget for implementing the environmental vision? If so, please describe it.

Management, Monitoring and Evaluation

What management tools are used to achieve the City environmental objectives and targets? For example, environmental/sustainability impact assessment of policy proposals, cross departmental project structures, etc.

Describe the system of monitoring and reporting the implementation of the City's environmental strategy. What is generally reported to whom, at what frequency? For example, what indicators of the state of the environment are reported to the council each year?

Do no harm

In the development of the Green Deal the EU has promoted the concept of the "Do No Harm Principle". This seeks to ensure that actions do not significant harm to other environmental objectives. Does the City Council apply this principle or something similar to its activities and policies? Please provide details.

Investments

Does the city council have policies and procedures to ensure that financial investments made by the city council or its pensions funds avoid investment in fossil fuels or other environmentally damaging activities? Please provide details.

Leadership by the City Council

Is the city council (administration) leading by example in environmental behavior? Describe the activities regarding corporate environmental policy and initiatives, environmental management systems, green public procurement, council staff skills development etc.

Section 12C considers how the Municipal Administration **works with other stakeholders and involves citizens**. The application should describe how the city council works in partnership with other stakeholders (for example other government bodies, businesses and other non-governmental organisations) to **develop and deliver** the vision, strategy and projects.

The application should also describe how the Municipal Administration **involves citizens**. It should describe the activities and engagement with **the different communities** within the city that contribute to the **development or implementation** of the City's environmental vision, strategy and action plans. In particular, it should describe how the city **involves particular groups of society** e.g. young people, elderly citizens, disabled, deprived citizens, or people from different ethnic groups. Ideally the application should be clear about the goals of these activities, e.g. public awareness raising, policy/plan development, or practical delivery of the environmental vision etc.

Since no city has all the solutions to environmental challenges, the application should demonstrate how the city works with other cities and learns from them. It should describe co-operation at a regional, national, international level on environmental and sustainability issues. Ideally it will describe the role of the city in these partnerships and projects, for example as a lead partner. The application should describe the city's involvement in relevant international networks and how this learning has

been used in the city.

Public support for being a European Green Capital is important and so the application should demonstrate the action taken to **involve or inform citizens** of this bid for example: consultation or participation by citizens or stakeholders in the development of the bid; consultation with stakeholders or citizens; or simply publication or announcement of the bid.

Useful References:

For guidance on integrated environmental management, see the Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities³⁷, (Governance chapter), and the 2007 Integrated Environmental Management, Guidance in relation to the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment report.

A number of practical tools exist to strengthen protection of the urban environment in promoting more integration. One of them is an Integrated Environmental Management System (IEMS); a strong voluntary commitment by the city to act on its environmental problems. A well-developed IEMS helps avoid conflicts by considering competing demands from various policy areas and initiatives (economic well-being, competitiveness, health, environment, spatial planning), and by setting long-term goals. Furthermore, EU guidance on IEMS in urban areas provides best practice examples and experiences.

³⁷ www.rfsc.eu

GOOD PRACTICES

Applicants are requested to provide a minimum of one and maximum of six good practices in this section.

At least one of these must relate to Indicator 12: Governance and should present details of at least one present or future flagship project that demonstrates the City's commitment to an integrated approach to the management of the urban environment.

Up to five additional good practices can be provided to demonstrate how the city is improving its environmental record. These can relate to one or more of each of the twelve indicators. Cities are required to specify to which indicator their good practices relate to.

Good practices should be taken from information already provided within the application form.