The Cities Mission is a “huge opportunity” for 100 European cities

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One hundred European cities were selected on Thursday by the European Commission to participate in the Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, with the aim of achieving climate neutrality by 2030 through the development of smart solutions. In addition to EUR 360 million of Horizon Europe funding for 2022 and 2023, the cities involved will benefit from tailor-made advice and assistance, as well as opportunities to participate in large innovation actions and pilot projects. The European Committee of the Regions' rapporteur Markku Markkula, Member of Espoo City Council, considers this as a huge opportunity for these cities.

"As these cities are committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, measures are urgently needed. These 100 mission cities are paving the way for others. Already this year and in the course of next year, the EU will provide EUR 360 million to develop new measures. The amount of EU funding is multiplied with private and national financing to develop measures which will lead to a greener, better future,” explains Mr Markkula, whose city Espoo is one of the 100 cities participating in the mission.

The Climate Neutral and Smart Cities mission is one of the five EU missions to tackle pressing societal challenges. Four out of five missions are directly related to the climate or to the cleanliness of soil and water. As rapporteur of the European Committee of the Regions, Mr Markkula has represented EU cities and regions in the negotiations on the implementation of the missions. His opinion was adopted at the plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions this week.

“Putin's war in Ukraine and against democracy and freedom in Europe as a whole has urged us to find solutions quickly and to focus more collective efforts on these pressing challenges. However, this will not happen only with decisions in Brussels or at national level, but requires the involvement of cities and regions”, Mr Markkula stresses.

“One of the key messages of the opinion is that there is a significant need for more investment in R&I. Roughly one third of the technology needed to deliver energy and other solutions by 2030 is currently available. The second third is in the prototype phase, and one third is technology and knowledge that is currently only being explored in universities and research institutes. This information is needed and must be mobilised at local level", he adds.

The Commission will invite the 100 selected cities to develop Climate City Contracts, which will include an overall plan for climate neutrality across all sectors such as energy, buildings, waste management and transport, together with related investment plans. This process will involve citizens, research organisations and the private sector.

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