

Intelligent Cities Challenge

'Observer City' Status

Introduction

- The [Intelligent Cities Challenge](#) (ICC) is a European Commission initiative that supports European cities in transitioning their local economies to green and digital models through Local Green Deals. So far, the ICC facilitated 182 Local Green Deals between participating cities and local businesses. For more information, refer to the Local Green Deals Blueprint available in [English](#) and [Ukrainian](#).
- The current edition of the ICC (July 2023 – May 2025) provides policy advice and support to 70 core cities across the EU in their journey towards a green and digital transition. Given the EU enlargement context, international commitments to climate change and net zero targets, and a growing interest from non-EU countries in learning from Europe's approach to twin transition, the European Commission decided to provide the cities of non-EU states with tools on their way to decarbonisation. Therefore, an 'Observer City' status of the ICC is introduced.

To be eligible, a city (applicant) must:

- Be situated in the non-EU country participating in the Single Market Programme, namely in the Competitiveness of SMEs/COSME strand at the moment of application to the ICC: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_smp_en.pdf
- Have over 50,000 inhabitants. Smaller cities (e.g. 30,000 inhabitants) may be considered in case they demonstrate exceptional commitment and capacity to implement the Local Green Deals approach
- Be a local public government entity responsible for or involved in the funding and/or implementation of a policy or programme of a city related to green or digital transformation, smart / intelligent cities, sustainable urban development or related topics
- Apply as a stand-alone applicant (consortia of cities are not eligible)
- Be motivated to partake in green and digital transition and learn about the Local Green Deals tool in at least one of the following sectors: Construction & built environment; Energy & renewables; Mobility & transport
- Selected cities are expected to remain engaged in the ICC till May 2025. The working language of the ICC is English

To apply for the 'Observer City' status to the ICC, a city (applicant) must:

- [Fill in the Expression of Interest form](#). The form should be duly completed in English and respect the character limits
- Provide a letter of intent signed by the local leadership (e.g. mayor or deputy mayor) – mandatory
- Provide a letter of intent signed by a business representative or business intermediary – optional
- Provide CVs of two city representatives in English
- By **February 23, 2024**, submit the application form, letter(s) and CVs by email to grow-intelligent-cities@ec.europa.eu, in cc: helpdesk_icc@technopolis-group.com, subject line: Observer City Application
Name of the city, Name of the country
- If selected, you will receive an email clarifying further steps and instructions

As an Observer City, you WILL:

Appoint two people – the representatives of local authorities – who will:

- Participate in online meetings (local green deals training sessions, city labs and implementation labs, sectoral meetings, thematic workshops, etc.) and learn from the experience of core cities
- Have access to the workspace which includes internal training materials, templates and other materials, information on funding opportunities, recordings of the events, etc.
- Participate in two in-person events (out of which one is an in-person city lab).
- Participate in the final online meeting with other observer cities to share your progress and experience

City representatives should be able to dedicate 1-2 days a month to the ICC.

As an Observer City, you WILL NOT:

- Receive mentoring support from Mentor Cities tailored/adjusted to your city specifically
- Receive advisory services or materials on green transition tailored/adjusted to your city specifically
- Host expert missions (visits of EU-funded experts to the city and meetings with ecosystem stakeholders)
- Participate in the in-person field trips funded by the ICC (unless there are spots left)
- Submit the final report

As an Observer City, you MAY but NOT OBLIGED to:

- Sign Local Green Deals with local businesses that commit to green transition
- Host and organise at your own expense local workshops and working sessions, field trips, experience exchange sessions, stakeholders' consultations on the issues related to twin transition and Local Green Deals
- Draft local green deal strategy
- Ensure the participation of the local leadership in the final ICC Mayors' meeting as part of the city lab

Being part of the Intelligent Cities Challenge, you will benefit from:

- Enhanced understanding of green and digital transition, current trends and solutions
- Better knowledge of the Local Green Deals tool and how city authorities and local businesses can implement it in practice
- Access to the network of more than 200 European cities
- Insight into good cases and best practices of twin transition in the EU cities