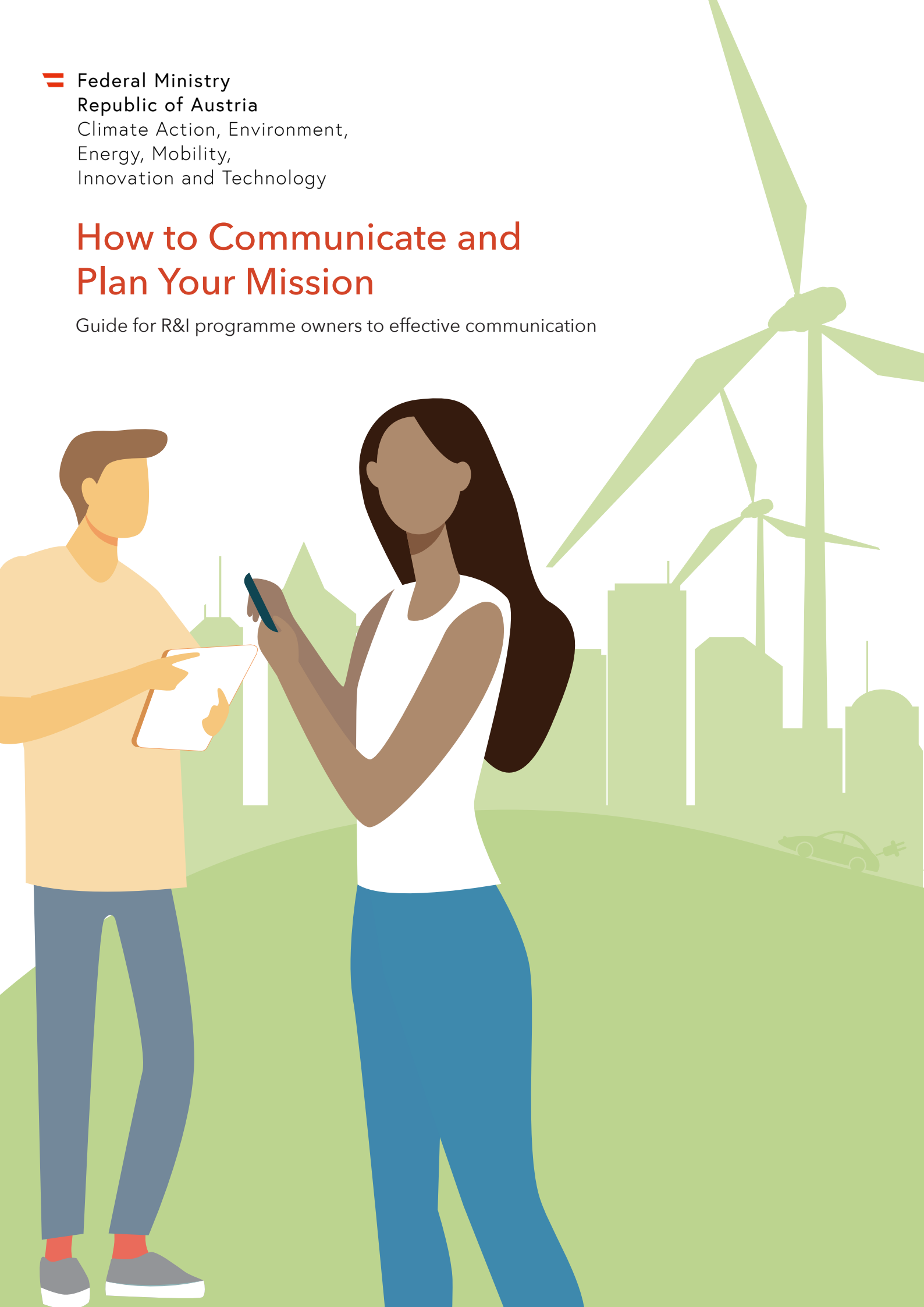
Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Climate Action, Environment,
Energy, Mobility,
Innovation and Technology

How to Communicate and Plan Your Mission

Guide for R&I programme owners to effective communication



CITY of Tomorrow

This Brochure is based on the results of a study contracted by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK), conducted 2020-2021 by the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI). Full study available at https://nachhaltigwirtschaften.at/de/sdz/publikationen/schriftenreihe-2021-23-programm-kommunikation-forschungsfoerderung.php [in German]

For feedback and questions, we are looking forward to your message to missions@zsi.at.

ZSI

Engaging with your stakeholders is key to effectively set up and implement a mission-oriented research and innovation (R&I) policy. This brochure suggests a 3-step approach for developing tool sets for programme communication by using the example of policy on energy-efficient, sustainable and climate-adaptive urban living.

3 Steps for planning your communication approach in a mission

A mission's support measures must be designed to help engaging the essential stakeholders at the time needed and in appropriate manner to create results effectively – while remaining in reasonable dimensions for communication expenditures. As an easy but strategic approach to design your set of tools, we suggest to take the following three steps:

1. Define your mission.
2. Understand the level you are operating at.
3. Find the best way to engage.

Knowing the character of a mission is the first step to pick the right mission-management.

Step 1: Define your mission

Traditionally, R&I funding programmes are evaluated within their framework and for their sector-specific orientation, but hardly in a broader societal context. Missions are special in their ambition and focus as they aim at a clearly defined impact that can be reached only in inter- or transdisciplinary manner. This is why stakeholder engagement is crucial for mission success. In a most simple description[1], a mission carries three central features:

1. **Intentionality**: The mission works towards a clearly defined goal. A successful mission solves a problem or helps meeting needs.
2. **Directionality**: The mission is a cooperative endeavour with clearly defined goals and a time frame. The goals are ambitious and therefore inherently involve risk.
3. **Reflexivity**: In its cooperative nature, the mission involves a diversity of actors and instruments, and it must maintain reflexive relations with both, transparently monitoring progress.

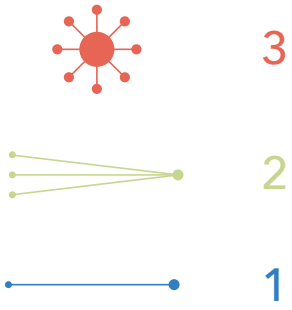
There are different requirements for engaging with stakeholders depending on the different approaches to missions. Technology-based **"accelerator missions"**[2] focus on speeding up technological development and innovation. **"Transformer missions"** on the other hand aim for systemic change including technological innovation as one, but not the only aspect. Both types of mission are ambitious regarding their goals, but do not necessarily demand the same type and extent of stakeholder engagement.

Step 2: Understand the level you are operating at

Programmes and policies operate at different levels. The level of operation demands different ways of stakeholder engagement. Your R&I mission can be 1) restricted to an individual programme, it can be 2) an overarching strategy consisting of a set of programmes and initiatives, it can be 3) an ideological framing for streamlining R&I-related and further processes in general, or be 4) a set of principles for all kinds of societal processes.

1 For other or more detailed operationalised definitions one may visit e.g.: https://community.oecd.org/community/cstp/mission-oriented-policies

2 As defined by Wittmann, F., Hufnagl, M., Lindner, R., Roth, F., Karlsruhe, J. E., & Isi, F. (2020). Developing a Typology for Mission-Orie l Innovation Policies.



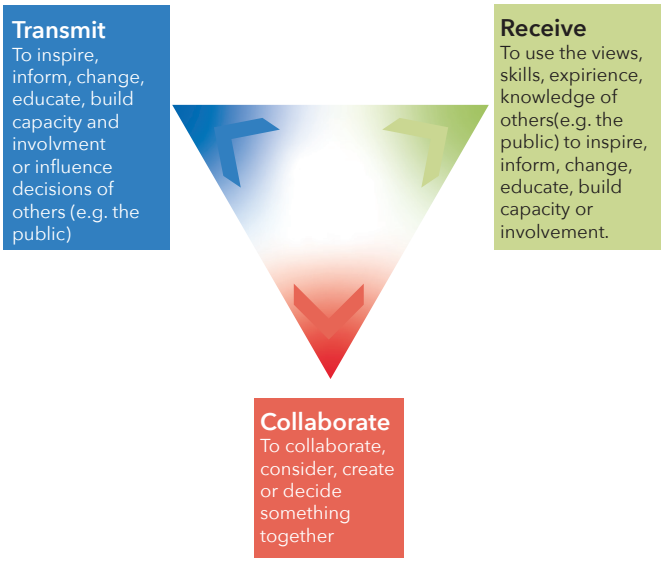
The basis layer Level 1 of the model is a singular R&I funding programme with specific goals and a dedicated budget. A mission at that level must be solved within the framework of the single programme. It must be assured that the rules of the programme allow and enable the engagement of all stakeholder groups involved in the mission. Level 2 suggests a combination of several programmes and initiatives to streamline efforts towards a common goal.

At Level 3 we speak of a mission in the core sense of the literature – a multi-disciplinary effort that involves all kinds of stakeholders. A clear mission institutions and individuals can commit their resources to allows all actors some risk reduction as they can rely on a clear direction that is set, though ambitious.

Further levels, potentially transcending mission-orientation, are imaginable. A Level 4 mission could for example define principles instead of goals. All actors must commit to principles that are designed to steer all activity towards solving certain problems. One example for such a principle is used by the "Cradle-to-Cradle"[3] school of thought – it is assigning all efforts along the principle of being "more useful" (e.g.: recyclable or bio-degradable) instead of "less harmful" (e.g.: increasing energy or emission efficiency leading to expectable re-bound effects).

Step 3: Find the best way to engage

Missions inherently are cooperative endeavours and therefore, effective communication is essential. Learning from approaches with field experience in citizen engagement in research processes, we applied a simple triangular model[4] with three core functions: transmit, receive, and collaborate.



3 https://c2c-ev.de/c2c-school-of-thought
4 As suggested by Colbourne, L. (2010). The Public Engagement Triangle. https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121106091336/http://scienceandsociety.bis.gov.uk/all/files/2010/10/PE-conversational-tool-Final-251010.pdf

Transmit:

Distributing ideas, information and knowledge, including notions like awareness raising, outreach, education, behaviour change, promotion, opinion-forming, dissemination, etc. Activities can reach from well-kept repositories or other (on-line) archives for documentation, or an ambassador model for certain topics or dedicated public campaigns, as found in the cases analysed in our study.

Receive:

Sourcing from ideas, information and knowledge that is outside the programme, include activities like gaining insight, information gathering, extractive, social or market research, etc. Consultation processes are typical for fulfilling that function, but also dedicated activities like contests, hackathons or direct dialogue can serve useful. It has to be kept attention that there are well-designed mechanisms in place that allow processing and documenting the received input in a transparent way. Such mechanisms avoid situations of overburdening floods of input or issues of information and knowledge drain when a central mediating person leaves the funding institution.

Collaborate:

The third function combines the previous two for creating something together. With such a way of cooperating we mean the establishment of common norms and practices between parties that identified a common goal (potentially for different reasons) providing mutual benefit based on joint responsibility[5]. If one party stops collaborating, this will have consequences for all other parties. This function includes aspects like partnership, co-design, conflict resolution, mediation, consensus, co-inquiry, co-governance, shared decision-making, etc.

The levels presented in step 2 demand for different prioritisation of the triangle's functions:

- At **Level 1**, the most central function for a programme is to **transmit** the information effectively.
- At **Level 2**, more coordination between programmes and stakeholders is needed. Therefore, the **receive** function increases importance.
- A full mission at **Level 3** (or higher) needs a reciprocal, enduring conversation process that allows cooperation at all stages. The **collaborate** function needs to become fully exploited to make the mission succeed.

From a certain level of complexity, the cost for centrally organised translation between communicating actors rises exponentially. Depending on the complexity of the mission, we expect such a point of no return to appear at Level 3 latest. From here it is worth the effort to develop principles that allow effective decentral communication processes. We recommend a dedicated architecture for supporting cooperation (e.g.: an on-line platform) that enables the engagement of different stakeholder groups systematically: New stakeholders must be able to join the cooperation on demand easily.

Example Missions

This brochure offers two example missions tackling climate and energy challenges:

The first example mission is a technology-driven "accelerator mission" of developing so-called **"Plus-Energy-Districts"** for building energy-efficient and even energy-generating city neighbourhoods by boosting the market-readiness of the necessary technology. The second example mission is designed as a "transformer mission" that tries to streamline all kinds of forces towards the **climate-neutrality of selected cities**.

[5] In that sense, a contracting relationship is not necessarily a collaboration, despite in every social relation cooperative behaviour plays a role.

Plus-Energy-Districts' Mission

The idea of a Plus-Energy-District (PED) is to implement interacting technologies within a building block or a defined neighbourhood that allow energy generation, distribution, transformation, storage and optimised consumption in this defined area. The PED mission in our example aims for **standardised approaches for PEDs in city planning by 2040**. Achieving the mission will render market leadership for Austrian PED technology providers possible in the years after 2030, based on the experience of at least 5 pilots until 2030.
Technologies for efficient usage, system integration, digitalisation of all aspects and regulatory integration create problems yet to be solved to accomplish that mission.

Step 1: Define your mission

1. **Intentionality**: The PEQ mission is anchored in the national R&I programme and has a specific framework.
2. **Directionality**: Standardised approaches for PED by 2040 is an ambitious goal to realise given the many systems and actors involved that need to cooperate.
3. **Reflexivity**: After the realisation of 5 PED systems until 2030 an interim evaluation provides evidence whether the mission is accomplishable that way or whether it needs to be adapted (with indicators like e.g.: a positive energy balance after one year of existence; the feasibility of developing general standards, patents or (international) demand for the new services developed).

As an accelerator mission, the groups involved will tend to consist of technological research and innovation stakeholders, construction and engineering stakeholders and probably local authorities, building service providers. The involvement of a more general public is not crucial for mission success – expertise is key for solving the problem.

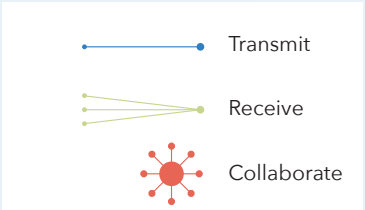
Step 2: Understand the level you are operating at

In its core, such a PED accelerator mission is located at Level 1 of the mission model. This means that the defined goals can be achieved within a single R&I programme. The owner has to assure a smooth and transparent flow of information to its stakeholders. The main activities therefore are situated in the transmit edge of the engagement triangle.

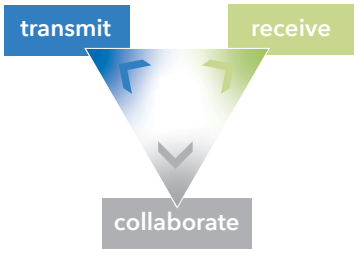
Once synergies from additional funding instruments or programmes are being tapped and a more diverse set of stakeholders becomes involved into the mission, it moves from Level 1 to Level 2. This makes the alignment processes more dynamic and increases the need to receive input from the new actors. New activities must be added by the mission manager, systematically weaving in what has been received by the stakeholders.

Step 3: Find the best way to engage in a PED mission

Every phase of a programme management cycle offers its own communication challenges. During our research we collected ideas for tackling these challenges. In the graph below we share them as an inspiration and food for thought:



At programme Level 1, mostly transmit activities need to be organised by the programme owner (outreach activities, websites, etc. – presented in the blue boxes below). When developing a Level 2 communication a mission requires to increase "receive" possibilities (consultations, surveys, etc. – marked in green boxes) – and to establish dialogue between the two (red arrows).



Identify relevant knowledge repositories and create interlinkages

At Level 2, institutionalising exchange with related initiatives becomes important. This could work through
- regular events like an annual forum;
- on-demand events like problem-based networking offers; or
- a standing committee with representatives of all PED stakeholder groups

This is a core phase for Level 1's transmission tasks, like:
- Transparent documentation of project results;
- presentation of pilots e.g.: at fairs;
- develop short video clips for explaining PED functionalities and inspire more application and further innovation;
- disseminate to and with multipliers and existing initiatives;
- create a "repository of solutions" for PED technology;
- archive of registered lectures and trainings;
- organising a PED symposium

Combine both sources

At Level 1 your goal definition typically sources from previous (internal) experience

At Level 2 stakeholder consultation for call set-up is recommended

Building Alliances

Internal & External coordination

Level 1 outreach: Your call must be found by your future programme participants.

Issues that cannot be solved within the projects may be forwarded (e.g.: to regulatory authorities)

Problem / goal definition → Programme building → Call → Enrolment / implementaion → Processing of results → Solution

Missions might ask for including new or different impact dimensions (e.g.: long-term system effectiveness instead of short-term energy savings)

It is recommended to include (future) users of PEDs into the programme evaluation and for participatory indicator development

At Level 2, the mission manager can assist the programme participants in their "receive" activities. Efforts to consult with important stakeholder groups that may not be able to actively participate in the call (e.g.: building management and service providers)

The role of the programme owner may not end at the results: There is help needed, making costs and benefits of the innovative solutions transparent and to promote implementation. This could be done by developing trainings for implementors and by providing support in standardisation processes, etc.

From engaging in the solution, the mission management can learn important lessons about what works and what doesn't, that feed into evaluation...

Climate-neutral Cities' Mission

A climate-neutral city (CNC) consumes low-carbon energy from sustainable sources, takes efforts to bind CO2 emission (e.g.: through roof or wall greening) and compensates excess CO2 (e.g.: through buying CO2 certificates). The mission in this example wants to achieve CNCs in Austria, with the defined goal of making all cities climate-neutral by 2040. This includes an interim evaluation in 2030, after 5 successful pilot initiatives. This step should ensure viability and scalability, while acknowleding individuality.

For accomplishing this transformer mission, there is a great variety of research to be done. Not only new technical solutions are needed (e.g.: for reducing carbon-dioxide emissions in different urban processes), but also approaches to systemic transformation must be developed, including social innovation, behavioural change, supportive regulation, etc.

Step 1: Define your mission

1. **Intentionality:** The CNC mission supports national climate and energy targets and the related EU's mission[6].
2. **Directionality:** While the targets of climate-neutrality for 5 pilots by 2030 and for all cities by 2040 are clear and measurable, creating broad societal commitment for this transformer mission is key.
3. **Reflexivity:** We recommend a well-planned interim evaluation based on cooperatively developed KPIs.

In its transformative nature, the mission faces "challenges of the commons": while everybody is affected by the problem to some extent, it is hard to pinpoint responsibility for the solution. Therefore, a broad societal commitment to the mission's desired vision must be generated. However, communicating climate-neutrality as an end in itself might not be enough to mobilise all efforts needed to realise the mission. A **common vision** of what the features of a liveable climate-neutral city are must be co-created on a solid participatory base and the realisation of these features must be grounded in principles of sustainability and climate-neutrality.

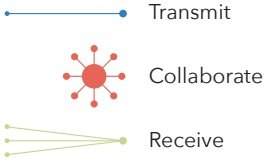
For our mission's communication this means that the stakeholders engaged are expected to be many, diverse and changing and also, that a general public of the people living or working in a city must be engaged with systematically.

Step 2: Understand the level you are operating at

A programme designed for sustainable and energy-efficient buildings will not accomplish the mission of a climate-neutral city alone. There must be at least Level 2 dialogue (transmit <> receive) with other programmes and initiatives. When introduced as an overarching logic for all relevant actors and initiatives, we face the communication challenges of a complete transformer mission. That requires a Level 3 communication architecture designed to enable effective cooperation between stakeholders involved. At a Level 4 the mission establishes durable principles for reaching urban and societal sustainability as a whole.

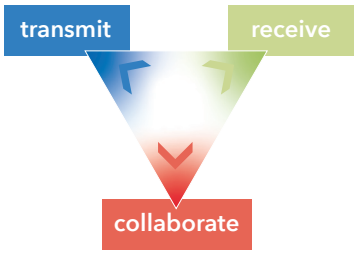
Step 3: Find the best way to engage in a CNC mission

We recommend a scalar approach to transcend from Level 2 to 3 by increasing the receive-function systematically, allowing stakeholders gain more and more influence. With rising complexity, steering communication activities becomes ever more cost-intense and inefficient as communication axes multiply. For a fully-established Level 3 mission, we therefore suggest focusing on collaboration-enabling measures.



6 Horizon Europe, European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe/missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities_en

Such collaboration measures can be centrally organised and introduced at strategic points, or be embedded in a platform architecture that allows decentralised cooperation. Assuming, that our mission still has programme cycles, we added ideas collected during our research, how these challenges can be met at each stage by centrally organised communication. The boxes in blue suggest tasks to transmit information, boxes in green indicate receive possibilities. Both functions are needed together, allowing dialogue between the two streams. However, pursuing a Level 3 mission, we recommend creating a cooperation platform for decentralised communication as described on the next page. Candidate tasks for such a platform are marked with red arrows in the graph.



To co-create a common vision all forces can be streamlined to it is important to install mecha-nisms for consultations from scratch. For doing this, there are possibilities like:
- convening a standing com-mittee with representatives of diff. stakeholder groups;
- establishing a citizen council on-line surveys and consul-tations;
- install processes for further discussing and processing the input to inform different aspects of the programme.

Allow flexibility and adapt to emerging needs in program me design; All decision-ma king processes need to be transparent.

Give the mission or certain topics a "face": Nominate ambassadors as contact persons and representatives of the mission (e.g.: popular celebrities).

Enable
- experience exchange and
- problem-centred workshops

Be in dialogue with syste-mic actors (e.g.: regulatory authorities; transmit <> receive).

In case there are diverging forces or ideas within the mission, it might be neces-sary as a mission owner to serve as a mediator. For doing this, you could
- organise consensus workshops
- surveys or a voting for stakeholder-supported decisions.

EVALUATION

Include new impact dimensions (e.g.: long-term system effective ness instead of short-term CO2 savings)

Include CNC stakeholders into the pro-gramme evaluation and for participatory indicator development.
Avoid communication channels to dry out when the programme changes!

There are many possibilities to raise awareness for new solutions. You could for example…
- offer (on-line) training material for different stakehol ders,
- share short video clips to transmit the central ideas and solutions for a CNC,
- promote new ideas through e.g.: TV and social media presence
- conduct educational initiatives in schools
- provide material and support to related initiatives/mul tipliers and synergise on existing channels

Features of a Cooperation Platform for effective Mission Communication and Engagement

To be in dialogue is needed for Level 1 and 2 (receive <> transmit). However, collaboration at Level 3 is more than dialogue – it is about bilateral responsiveness and joint responsibility. For achieving this, we recommend a cooperation platform based on the following principles:

- It is a central **point of collection and exchange** of problems around climate-neutrality. Ideas and issues can be uttered at any time.
- Based on very **clear principles for cooperation**, individuals from any stakeholder group (even not pre-defined ones and even non-participants to the R&I programme) may contribute.
- All actors have to be **responsive and take responsibility** over their contributions to the network. All members benefit from cooperating but underly the same rules for engagement in return.
- The **purpose** of the platform must be transparent, interesting and relevant for people to engage.
- The CNC mission is understood as the sum of all **emergent practices** that support the mission. In that sense the system is self-organising. It enables a decentral set-up of (democratic) negotiation processes allowing to process ambiguities, and different perspectives to feed into consensual and transparent decision-making.
- The system is **adaptable** and allows fast and direct information and knowledge exchange for sustainable solutions.
- **Common wording, norms and practices** for issues in climate-neutrality will be developed cooperatively (saving translation costs for the programme owner), allowing social learning. It is important to keep a **low threshold** for engaging in the mission, while the ceiling of what people are allowed to bring in is high.

Developing such an architecture is a long process that, however, does not have to be accomplished at once, but can grow over time. While designed for collaboration, all one-way transmit and receive activities can be organised over the platform as well, so step by step it becomes a central point of exchange for all questions around the mission.