

## **Kraków's Climate City Contract from a European Perspective**

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**On 16 June 2025, Mayor Aleksander Miszalski met with Philippe Froissard, European Commission's Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG Research & Innovation), to discuss the challenges and commitments arising from the Climate City Contract signed by Kraków in September 2024.**

Since 2022, Kraków has been part of the EU initiative “100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030”. The aim of this Mission is to support a group of European cities in their systemic transformation towards climate neutrality and to position them as innovation hubs. Participating cities commit to achieving climate neutrality by adopting innovative technical, organizational, business, and social solutions.

Each city outlines its transformation plan in a Climate City Contract, signed by the Mayor and key local stakeholders. These contracts are reviewed by experts and evaluated by the European Commission. Cities whose contracts receive a positive assessment are awarded the Mission Label, along with support to help them implement the plan.

Kraków received its Mission Label in May 2025, joining an elite group of cities with a real opportunity to benefit from European Commission support. This success was made possible through cooperation with other Polish cities in the Mission—Warsaw, Łódź, Wrocław, and Rzeszów—formalized in a joint agreement. One outcome of this partnership is the pilot project NEEST – NetZero Emission and Environmentally Sustainable Territories, led by Kraków. Securing funding for NEEST was only possible thanks to participation in the EU Cities Mission.

During the meeting, Mr. Froissard emphasized the importance of turning the Contract's commitments into concrete action—especially involving the private sector in pro-climate efforts. He cited Spain as an example, where large automotive companies became signatories to Mission contracts, and recommended including chambers of commerce as partners. As a creative idea, he mentioned involving the Champions League to engage football fans and promote friendly competition between cities in climate action—an idea that strongly appealed to Mayor Miszalski, a football enthusiast and supporter of inter-city rivalry as a motivating concept.

Philippe Froissard also outlined new support tools available to Mission Label cities. In June 2024, the European Commission launched the Climate City Capital Hub—a financing platform offering tools to help cities navigate the complex landscape of climate funding. These include a knowledge repository, an interactive guide to funding sources, and tools for assessing the economic viability and impact of climate projects. In addition, the European Investment Bank has allocated €2 billion specifically for Mission Label cities to support investments in clean energy, energy-efficient buildings, heating systems, renewable energy, sustainable mobility, urban renewal, and water and social infrastructure.

“We’ve already started implementing the commitments from our Climate Contract,” said Mayor Miszalski. He highlighted that Kraków’s City Council recently adopted a resolution to introduce a Clean



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Transport Zone, which will come into effect in January 2026 and cover the area within the city's fourth ring road—a large portion of Kraków. Importantly, the new regulations will not apply to vehicles currently owned by Kraków residents who pay taxes in the city—a compromise designed to address concerns from critics of the new rules.

Both Philippe Froissard and Mayor Misalski agreed on the importance of aligning local strategies with national policy. The European Commission is working to establish National Networks involving a broad range of cities—including those outside the official Mission—so they too can benefit from EU mechanisms. Harmonizing legal frameworks is also necessary to ensure that any competition among cities is fair and transparent, with common standards for monitoring and evaluation.

These challenges—and the lessons learned from Climate City Contracts—will be central topics at the Cities Forum, now underway in Kraków. Both Philippe Froissard and Mayor Misalski will take part in the discussions, which will focus on the urban dimension of EU cohesion policy and the development of the New Urban Agenda.