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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
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On the mid-term assessment of the EU Missions' progress, achievements and impact

{SWD(2026) 275 final}

1. INTRODUCTION

The five EU Missions were launched in 2021 as a new initiative under Horizon Europe 2021-2027 ⁽¹⁾. They address pressing societal challenges – climate change, soil and waters health, and cancer – by going beyond traditional instruments and placing research and innovation (R&I) in a new role. EU Missions focus on systemic transformation, requiring inclusivity, co-design, scaling up, deployment and societal involvement in generating solutions for major challenges driven by EU policy considerations.

For 2021-2027, the Missions' budget is EUR 4.837 billion, with their 2024-2027 budget making up 11% of the total allocated to Pillar II of Horizon Europe. Between the launch of the EU Missions in 2021 and 2025, the EU contributed EUR 3.337 billion to EU Missions' calls via Horizon Europe funding. With this, individual R&I projects remain at the core of the Missions ⁽²⁾, but they are integrated into a systemic approach around dedicated calls for proposals to achieve each Mission's goals. This allows the Missions to produce societal impact and long-term transformation in line with their objectives.

In the draft Regulation establishing Horizon Europe for 2028-2034 ⁽³⁾ the European Commission proposed that funding for the EU Missions be awarded on the basis of work programmes covering the period up to the 2030 budgetary year, in line with their legal basis and reflecting their added value in the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

The five EU Missions aim to achieve the following objectives **by 2030**:

- Climate Adaptation: support at least 150 European regions, local authorities and communities to become climate resilient.
- Cancer: improve the lives of more than 3 million people through prevention, early detection, treatment and care for not only those affected by cancer, but also their families.
- Ocean and Waters: restore the health of our ocean and waters by protecting and restoring aquatic ecosystems, reducing pollution and making the blue economy carbon-neutral and circular.
- Cities: support at least 100 cities in achieving climate neutrality, while enabling replication across Europe.
- Soil: establish 100 Living Labs to lead the transition towards healthy soils.

The Missions are expected to achieve their goals and enable meaningful change by improving coordination between policy areas and governance levels, encouraging the participation of the general public and stakeholders, attracting investments from outside Horizon Europe and producing R&I that can be shared, scaled up and have real-life applications.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2021) 609 final

⁽²⁾ As of 28 November 2025, EU Missions have a portfolio of 306 projects funded by Horizon Europe.

⁽³⁾ COM(2025) 543 final

2. THE 2026 ASSESSMENT OF EU MISSIONS

This report and the accompanying Staff Working Document present the key insights from an assessment of EU Missions carried out in 2025 and 2026 ⁽⁴⁾, assessing the progress of the five EU Missions towards their objectives and examining how the mission-oriented policy approach supports their ability to produce change. This exercise follows up on the European Commission’s commitment, set out in the 2023 Communication “EU Missions two years on: assessment of progress and way forward” ⁽⁵⁾, to “producing a further assessment report on the implementation of EU Missions”.

3. THE EU MISSIONS’ PROGRESS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

3.1. The EU Missions’ progress towards their goals and high-value achievements

All the EU Missions have made substantial progress towards their goals. The **Climate Adaptation Mission** has already exceeded its target by supporting 292 regional and local authorities in their climate adaptation efforts, well above its goal of 150. Tailored technical and financial assistance has equipped these authorities to better understand climate risks, plan adaptation measures, mobilise investment and strengthen their capacity to deliver climate resilience. Based on activities supported between 2021 and 2024, it is estimated that the **Cancer Mission** will be able to improve the lives of 2.3 million people by 2030, out of its objective of 3 million. The **Mission Soil** is expected to exceed its target of 100 Living Labs covering all main soil-climate zones, degradation processes and land uses across the EU: it has already established 45 Living Labs involving more than 500 real sites (such as farms) across Europe, and the selection process for another 60-70 is ongoing. The **Ocean and Waters Mission** has advanced the EU’s 2030 biodiversity, zero-pollution, and climate-neutral blue economy goals, delivering 121 solutions, tested in 349 real-world demonstration sites, engaging 86 regions in replication, and mobilising over 1 000 Charter Actions from stakeholders. The **Cities Mission** is performing strongly, with 107 cities producing Climate City Contracts, comprising political commitments, climate neutral action plans and investment plans that together identify emissions reduction of 199.68 MtCO₂e ⁽⁶⁾, roughly equivalent to the combined annual emissions of Austria, Romania and Slovakia. This constitutes an unprecedented commitment and mobilisation around a climate neutrality framework, with the Mission approach extending beyond the original cohort through national platforms and city-to-city replication activities.

The EU Missions were intentionally launched with very ambitious objectives, reflecting the scale and urgency of the challenges they address. These objectives are all bold and far-reaching but differ significantly in scope and measurability. Hence, quantitative progress

⁽⁴⁾ Most of the data underpinning the assessment has been collected in 2025. Precise cutoff dates for specific data sources are indicated throughout the Staff Working Document accompanying this report.

⁽⁵⁾ COM(2023) 457 final

⁽⁶⁾ Todeschi, V., Ulpiani, G., Veters, N., Galioto, C., Banja, M. et al., Climate-neutral and Smart Cities Mission: 2025 assessment - Monitoring the overall progress and impact of the Cities Mission, European Commission, Ispra, 2026, JRC146414

towards their targets is a limited measure of the EU Missions' success. In addition to their headline 2030 goals, all EU Missions have been highly effective at producing tangible impact tackling societal challenges. This is demonstrated by the following high-value achievements:

- The **Climate Adaptation Mission** has mobilised one of the **largest climate resilience coalitions ever assembled at EU level, working directly with more than 600 regions and local authorities**. This includes 333 authorities that have made a political commitment to the Mission, 292 authorities receiving technical assistance, and 297 authorities engaged in demonstration projects. Beyond this broad mobilisation, the Mission is helping regional and local authorities embed adaptation into governance structures, develop climate-risk assessments and adaptation strategies, improve coordination across levels of government, and test innovative resilience solutions adapted to local realities. The **Mission currently supports 185 regions and local authorities that demonstrate nearly 1 000 innovative adaptation solutions in real-life condition** ⁽⁷⁾, while a further 112 territories are preparing the ground for future replication and scaling. Through co-design with the general public, researchers and local stakeholders, these activities are helping translate adaptation objectives into concrete action on the ground.
- For the **Cancer Mission**, all Member States and three Horizon Europe Associated Countries have joined the initiative coordinating the establishment of the **Network of National Cancer Mission Hubs**. This signals an unprecedented political commitment to transform cancer prevention and care. **19 hubs** ⁽⁸⁾ are expected to be set up by the end of 2026 and almost half are already in operation. These hubs replicate the Cancer Mission's approach at national, regional and local level, breaking down barriers, bringing together researchers, clinicians, policymakers, patient organisations, funders and industry representatives to accelerate innovation, helping to improve equitable access to prevention and care across Europe.
- The **Ocean and Waters Mission** has developed a growing portfolio of 121 solutions for the restoration of the ocean and waters, tested across 349 demonstration sites and replicated these in 86 regions across Europe and beyond. The Mission has attracted more than 1 000 pledges under its Mission Charter from public and private actors around the world ⁽⁹⁾. It has also completed the design of the core infrastructure of the **European Digital Twin Ocean**, which is now accessible to all. The Digital Twin Ocean is expected to be fully operational by 2030 as a public service, providing continually updated information about the behaviour of marine species, marine circulation patterns, bio-geochemical processes, economic activities and more.

⁽⁷⁾ There are 41 demonstration projects, demonstrating on average 22 climate adaptation solutions.

⁽⁸⁾ Hubs are already operational in Poland, Germany, France, Greece, Malta, Netherlands, Bulgaria and Sweden. They will be operational soon in Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Ireland, Belgium, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Israel, Croatia and Finland.

⁽⁹⁾ [Mission Ocean and Waters - Maritime Forum](#)

- Under the **Cities Mission**, **107 cities have committed to a reduction of 76% of their current greenhouse gas emissions** ⁽¹⁰⁾, equivalent to approximately 6.6% of EU-27 emissions in 2024. Through Climate City Contracts, the Mission has introduced a new framework for urban climate governance and investment planning, now recognised in the EU Policy Agenda for Cities as one of the references for integrated urban strategies and investment pipelines. It has also generated new knowledge, methodologies and tools to help cities tackle complex climate-neutrality challenges. In parallel, the Climate City Capital Hub is improving access to finance through advisory and investment support for a EUR 3.24 billion project pipeline. This includes support for 9 city investment funds, a replicable sustainable bond framework and more than 47 investor engagements. The European Investment Bank is further supporting at least EUR 10 billion of investment in Mission Cities through project-preparation advisory services and dedicated lending for urban decarbonisation and climate-resilience projects. Finally, the Mission approach is increasingly anchored at national level through dedicated platforms and programmes that extend its benefits to additional cities.
- The **Mission Soil** has significantly increased political attention to soil health by presenting evidence for the first time that 62% of soils are in an unhealthy condition ⁽¹¹⁾. In addition, the Mission has **enabled the development of methodologies to measure soil health and has built a monitoring system** to track progress with 19 indicators at continental scale, supporting the implementation of the Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive ⁽¹²⁾ and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The table included in the annex summarises the EU Missions' progress towards their respective goals and presents a more complete overview of their high-value achievements.

3.2. Progress since the 2023 Communication and assessment

The 2023 Communication “EU Missions two years on: assessment of progress and way forward” found that, less than two years into implementation, the EU Missions had proven their potential, individually and collectively. However, they needed to improve their governance, enhance citizen and stakeholder awareness and engagement, and secure more and better co-investment beyond Horizon Europe, including from the private sector.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Todeschi, V., Ulpiani, G., Vettors, N., Galioto, C., Banja, M. et al., Climate-neutral and Smart Cities Mission: 2025 assessment - Monitoring the overall progress and impact of the Cities Mission, European Commission, Ispra, 2026, JRC146414

⁽¹¹⁾ [Soil Mission – Implementation Plan](#)

⁽¹²⁾ Directive (EU) 2025/2360

Following the 2023 assessment, the European Commission implemented a series of corrective actions to address the areas for improvement identified in the Communication. Examples include the decision to hold regular meetings of Mission Managers to improve horizontal steering, the strengthening of the EU Missions' monitoring and evaluation system, the introduction of four prizes linked to EU Missions⁽¹³⁾, or the further development of EU Missions support structures at the national level⁽¹⁴⁾. We now observe a functioning governance system, especially at the EU level, and strong engagement of stakeholder communities, including those that are not traditionally involved in R&I.

While increasing co-investment levels still requires attention, this is an expected consequence of the fact that EU Missions had been setting up the support structures they needed until relatively recently. As the EU Missions increasingly move from experimentation and coordination in a preparatory stage towards a phase of deployment, scaling-up and replication of solutions, their ability to trigger complementary funding from outside Horizon Europe is expected to grow.

4. THE VALUE OF THE EU MISSIONS' MODEL

EU Missions are an agile and effective model to deliver progress towards societal challenges.

The Missions are creating ecosystems that act as a launchpad that accelerates the testing, adaptation and deployment of solutions, and that ultimately fosters systemic change. These ecosystems reduce perceived risks for individual actors and strengthen ownership, making it easier to try new approaches and invest in change.

4.1. Dynamic environments where knowledge is co-created rather than simply passed on

The Missions generate both new knowledge and concrete solutions to support the achievement of their objectives. This includes academic outputs with 156 peer-reviewed publications produced between 2021 and 2025⁽¹⁵⁾, as well as a wide range of tangible results, such as monitoring systems, diagnostic tools, restoration infrastructures, governance frameworks, and financing models that facilitate investment and uptake.

These outputs are the result of a distinct approach to R&I. Missions foster transdisciplinary collaboration by bringing together scientific knowledge, applied expertise and user-driven perspectives, while mobilising large and diverse stakeholder communities. These communities include public authorities, R&I actors, industry, practitioners, civil society

⁽¹³⁾ See cross-cutting activities under the Horizon Europe Missions Work Programme 2026-2027.

⁽¹⁴⁾ E.g. see HORIZON-MISS-2024-CLIMA-01-02, HORIZON-MISS-2024-CIT-02-01 under Horizon Europe Missions Work Programme 2023-2025, HORIZON-MISS-2025-02-CANCER-06, HORIZON-MISS-2025-03-OCEAN-07, HORIZON-MISS-2025-05-SOIL-08, "Specific Grant Agreement to the FPA to reinforce the operations of the Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission Platform" under Horizon Europe Missions Work Programme 2025, and HORIZON-MISS-2026-01-CLIMA-01 under Horizon Europe Missions Work Programme 2026-2027.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Data extracted on 28 November 2025, pertaining to 306 Mission projects.

and the general public, thereby expanding the range of available capacities and accelerating the uptake of solutions.

Central to this approach are mechanisms for knowledge co-creation. Through these mechanisms, stakeholders and the general public jointly develop, test and refine solutions, while sharing data, tools and know-how. This ensures that solutions are scientifically sound, relevant, legitimate and aligned with real needs.

4.2. A place-based approach that goes beyond individual projects

The EU Missions are not limited to individual projects. They coordinate actions at portfolio level by connecting multiple actions, actors and instruments around a shared objective, and aligning research, innovation, policy and investment efforts towards them.

This approach is firmly anchored at local and regional level, recognising that transformation begins with communities. Through place-based activities such as living labs, lighthouses and pilot projects, Missions enable solutions to be developed, tested and adapted in real-life contexts. This grounding ensures that actions address real needs, while helping local actors to take ownership of those activities and supporting replication in other places.

To support this work, multilevel governance structures have been put in place to improve consistency across policy areas and facilitate alignment between EU-level objectives and local implementation. By doing this, the Missions bring together policy, innovation and practice in a dynamic way, making the solutions more relevant and encouraging their uptake.

4.3. Moving solutions beyond pilot settings

The EU Missions have rolled out a diverse range of intervention instruments, combining funding, advisory support and facilitation. These include cascade funding, pilot and twinning grants, and complementary funding sources via European Investment Bank facilities, InvestEU, or BlueInvest.

Together, these instruments support the testing, deployment and uptake of solutions across multiple projects, while early guidance on financing and procurement strengthens the ability of local and regional actors to move from innovation to implementation.

The EU Missions have been operating under the rules and constraints of Horizon Europe – which are built around traditional project-based R&I and are not entirely suitable for the full scope of the Missions' activities and objectives. To be deployed on a large scale, these solutions require a more extensive toolbox than what is available under the Framework Programme. In particular, better access to funding and financing at different levels will be needed to ensure the deployment, scaling-up and long-term uptake of solutions after the project phase.

5. EU MISSIONS AND THEIR BROADER POLICY CONTEXT

The EU Missions are contributing to broader EU policy initiatives and are becoming integral components of their delivery.

The upcoming European Integrated Framework for Climate Resilience⁽¹⁶⁾ seeks to establish a comprehensive policy framework to reduce climate risks and vulnerabilities across the EU. The Climate Adaptation Mission is already directly contributing to the ongoing discussions leading up to the initiative by sharing success stories from the wide range of decision-relevant tools, solutions and structures directly supported by the Mission.

The Cancer Mission and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (EBCP)⁽¹⁷⁾ are strategically aligned, sharing a wide-ranging and multifaceted approach to improving cancer outcomes across Europe. The two initiatives strengthen each other, united by common governance structures, cross-cutting priorities, and flagship actions that could maximise impact by 2030. The Mission drives forward R&I for the EBCP and ensures national and regional uptake through its National Cancer Mission Hubs and citizen engagement activities.

Both the European Ocean Pact⁽¹⁸⁾ and the European Water Resilience Strategy⁽¹⁹⁾ provide continuity to the objectives of the Ocean and Waters Mission, while extending their scope to additional goals linked to international action, security and resilience. In this context, the Ocean and Waters Mission contributes directly to both initiatives, including through the upcoming Ocean and Water R&I Strategy and the OceanEye initiative.

The Cities Mission is a proven, scalable platform that is uniquely positioned to serve as the backbone of the EU Agenda for Cities⁽²⁰⁾. With 107 operational Climate City Contracts targeting the reduction of almost 200 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent and a consolidated view of the investment demand associated with climate-neutral urban transitions, the Mission offers the EU Agenda for Cities an operational infrastructure for immediate impact and long-term transformation in EU policy action on climate change.

The Soil Strategy⁽²¹⁾ explicitly relies on the Mission Soil to expand the knowledge base, for testing, demonstrating and deploying solutions for soil health or enhancing modelling capacities. Moreover, the Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive identifies the Mission as a key implementation tool, as it will contribute to the future EU soil health data portal, support monitoring, education and citizen engagement through living labs, and help with capacity-building in the Member States by addressing data gaps and sharing expertise. The Mission has also been identified in many 2023-2027 CAP Strategic Plans as a relevant

⁽¹⁶⁾ [European Climate Resilience and Risk Management – Integrated Framework](#)

⁽¹⁷⁾ COM(2021) 44 final

⁽¹⁸⁾ COM/2025/281 final, Annex: Ocean-related targets in EU legislation and policy

⁽¹⁹⁾ COM(2025) 280 final, Annex II - The key 2027-2033 intermediate targets

⁽²⁰⁾ COM(2025) 739 final

⁽²¹⁾ COM(2021) 699 final

tool, and will contribute to the design and implementation of the agricultural chapter of the national and regional partnership plans under the 2028-2034 CAP.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The EU Missions have matured significantly since the 2023 assessment, now showing a functioning governance system and strong stakeholder engagement. Their capacity to trigger co-investment from outside Horizon Europe is expected to grow – including with the support of the proposed European Competitiveness Fund and National and Regional Partnership Plans – as they move from experimentation towards a phase of deployment, scaling-up and replication of solutions.

Their overall approach, rooted in the concept of mission-oriented policy, has demonstrated its success and made their achievements possible. An innovation under Horizon Europe 2021-2027, the Missions support activities and drive transformative change in ways that would otherwise not have been possible. The EU Missions are creating ecosystems that accelerate the testing, adaptation and uptake of solutions. These ecosystems can be leveraged by other EU and national initiatives as ready-made enabling environments, becoming an integral delivery tool for broader action within their respective policy domains.

At the mid-point of their implementation, the EU Missions are advancing towards their 2030 goals, and they are expected to continue delivering impact on societal challenges in the second half of their lifecycle by further building on their ecosystems rooted in cross-cutting governance, engagement and co-creation.

ANNEX

Table 1. Overview of EU Missions' progress towards their headline 2030 goals and high-value achievements.

EU Mission	Status of 2030 goal	High-value achievements
Climate Adaptation <i>Support at least 150 European regions, local authorities and communities to become climate resilient</i>	327 regions, local authorities and communities signed the Adaptation Charter and 292 received tailored technical assistance.	• 185 regions and local authorities are testing and implementing nearly 1000 real-life adaptation solutions through Mission demonstrators, while more than 110 additional territories are preparing the replication and scaling of successful approaches across Europe. • Through tailored technical assistance, peer learning and Mission activities, regions and local authorities strengthened adaptation governance, improved climate-risk planning, and developed locally tailored resilience pathways. • The launch of the 27 National Adaptation Hubs is laying the foundation for a stronger multilevel governance approach to climate resilience, connecting EU, national and regional levels and supporting the scale-up of adaptation solutions across Europe.
Cancer <i>Improve the lives of more than 3 million people through prevention, early detection, treatment and care for not only those affected by cancer, but also their families</i>	Based on activities supported between 2021 and 2024, it is estimated that the Cancer Mission will be able to improve the lives of 2.3 million people by 2030, out of its objective of 3 million. The 3 million target will be achieved as additional projects are funded and more accurate results become available.	• Between 2021 and 2026, the Cancer Mission set up 19 National Cancer Mission Hubs. They are engaging national authorities, stakeholders and citizens in cross-policy dialogues on cancer and accelerating the adoption of Mission project outcomes in health systems. • Between 2021 and 2024, the Mission provided 62 projects with EUR 480 million in funding, resulting in 23 multicountry clinical trials, 40 new tools for prevention, detection and treatment, and over 850 collaborations across research, healthcare and policy. Taking 2025 into account, the overall investment comes to EUR 605 million, supporting 75 projects. • The Mission invests into the creation of two digital platforms, aligned with the future European Health Data Space: (1) UNCAN.eu data platform, supporting researchers and data holders to advance data-driven cancer research and innovation, and (2) European Cancer Patient Digital Centre, supporting patients, survivors and caregivers with services and trusted information.

Ocean and Waters <i>Protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, prevent and eliminate pollution of our ocean, seas and waters, make the sustainable blue economy carbon-neutral and circular</i>	The Mission has made progress on all its 2030 EU targets for biodiversity, pollution and climate neutrality in the blue economy. It has delivered 121 innovative solutions tested in 349 real-world demonstration sites, engaged 86 regions in replication efforts and secured over 1 000 Charter Actions from stakeholders.	• The Mission has anchored a basin-level approach, fostering cooperation at sea and river level through its lighthouses – an approach that the forthcoming European Ocean Act will build on. • Under the Mission, the design of the core infrastructure of the European Digital Twin Ocean – expected to be fully operational by 2030 – was completed and is now accessible to all. • A range of replication instruments and financial advisory services are beginning to turn this foundation into a larger wave of restoration investments and projects outside the initial Mission portfolio.
Cities <i>Deliver at least 100 climate-neutral cities by 2030 and ensure that these cities also act as experimentation and innovation hubs for others to follow, to enable all European cities to become climate-neutral by 2050</i>	107 cities have formally committed to climate neutrality and collectively expect to reduce emissions by around 199.68 MtCO_{2e} by 2030 (approximately 6.6% of EU-27 emissions in 2024). In addition, there has been progress in the cities' ability to act as experimentation hubs via the Pilot Cities, Enabling City Transformation Programmes (105 cities mobilised) and Twinning Learning Programme (181 cities mobilised) initiatives, complemented by national platforms that are scaling the Mission approach beyond the original cohort, already mobilising dozens of additional cities across Europe. This represents a significant contribution to EU climate objectives, while underlining the scale of effort required to achieve climate neutrality by 2030.	• The Mission's Climate City Contracts have introduced a new dynamic governance tool for urban climate governance and investment planning, now recognised in the EU Policy Agenda for Cities as one of the references for integrated urban strategies and investment pipelines. • Pilots, twinning and the Mission Platform have created a European ecosystem where cities test and replicate climate-neutral solutions, positioning Mission cities as innovation hubs that enable other European cities to follow similar paths towards climate neutrality by 2050. • The Mission has mobilised and aligned funding and financing streams around city climate investments, including a EUR 2 billion lending envelope from the European Investment Bank for Mission Label cities, emerging national funding via national platforms and emerging private investment through the Capital Hub.
Soil <i>100 Living Labs and Lighthouses to lead the transition towards healthy soils</i>	45 Living Labs established, and ongoing selection for another 60-70. As all Living Labs will be operating by 2028, the Mission is expected to exceed its 2030 goal.	• The Mission presented evidence for the first time that 62% of soils are in an unhealthy condition, drawing political attention to soil health. • Thanks to the Mission, Europe now has a structured and permanent ecosystem for producing, gathering, preserving and disseminating soil data, knowledge, tools, technologies and practices. • The Mission's Living Labs are essential innovation infrastructure, with more than 500 farms, forests and urban plots in 24 different countries already involved. The Living Labs develop, test and support the adoption of context-specific sustainable soil-management practices.