Portuguese National Platform
- Funding Model -

Portugal's National Platform emerged as a bottom-up, mayor-led initiative following the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities call in 2022. Although only three Portuguese cities were selected as Mission Cities, a broader coalition of 18 municipalities and two intermunicipal communities decided to maintain momentum and collaborate at national level.

In total, the platform represents around **47 municipalities**, covering approximately 30–40% of Portugal's population and about 30% of national greenhouse gas emissions (mainland Portugal). The initiative was strongly driven by political leadership (notably the Mayor of Braga) and supported by a research centre, which now acts as the Technical Secretariat.

The platform is not a legal entity, but it has a formal governance structure defined in internal regulations:
- General Assembly
- Coordinating Council (executive body)
- Consulting Council (national agencies, research bodies, and selected non-profit organisations)

This structure was deliberately designed so that the platform could evolve into a formal entity in the future if needed.

3 EU Mission Cities
Lisbon, Porto and Guimarães

47 municipalities

Platform Coordination
University of Lisbon

Funding mobilized for city-facing activities

Source and nature of funding
- The platform was launched with **EUR 435,000** in seed funding provided by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action, approved in 2023 and supporting its operation from February 2024 through the end of 2025.
- Funding comes via the Environmental Fund, which includes revenues from ETS and other environmental sources.
- The funding is operational, not project-based: it supports the functioning of the platform rather than direct investments in cities.

The Ministry funding finances the Technical Secretariat, hosted by the research centre of University of Lisbon, and covers:
- Coordination and management of the platform
- Staff costs (partially)
- Governance bodies and reporting
- Capacity-building activities
- Working groups and policy labs
- Representation and policy alignment
- Some in-person meetings and events

Cidades pelo Clima

The platform was launched with **EUR 435,000** in seed funding

Funded by the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Programme under grant agreement no 101203247

Cities do not receive financial transfers. Instead, they benefit from:

- Free access to high-quality expertise and capacity-building
- Participation in thematic working groups (buildings, energy, mobility, carbon removal, and climate city contracts)
- Policy labs developing concrete measures aligned with national and EU frameworks

Co-financing and in-kind contributions

- The effective funding structure is approximately 50/50:
  - ~50% from the Ministry
  - ~50% from the research centre's own resources (staff funded through other projects)
- Municipalities contribute mainly in kind, through staff time, expertise, and political engagement.
- Participation is voluntary, yet engagement remains high, underlining the perceived value of the platform.

Time horizon and constraints

- Environmental Fund financing is annual, which creates uncertainty.
- Although formally granted for 2024, the funding is treated in practice as a two-year envelope, through extensions.
- Public procurement and hiring procedures delayed full implementation.
- The platform is currently awaiting confirmation of continued Ministry support from 2026 onwards.

Future funding opportunities

Recognising that reliance on short-term public funding is not sustainable, the platform is actively exploring additional funding models:

- **Continued public funding** from the Ministry and Environmental Fund remains a priority, as it is seen as well-aligned with national climate objectives.
- **Philanthropic funding i**s being considered to diversify income sources and reduce dependency on annual public budgets.
- **Municipal membership fees** have been discussed, potentially linked to transforming the platform into a formal legal entity. However, this option raises legal and administrative challenges for municipalities.
- **Cross-subsidisation via research projects** at the host institution currently plays a critical stabilising role.

Importantly, even without renewed Ministry funding, the platform estimates it can maintain around 90% of its activities until September 2026 using internal resources, though with reduced staffing and optimised operations.

Summary

Portugal's National Platform operates on a **lean, coordination-focused funding model** that prioritises capacity-building, policy alignment, and peer learning over direct financial support to cities. Initial public funding from the Ministry, complemented by substantial in-kind and institutional contributions from the research centre, enabled rapid setup and strong engagement.

While the platform delivers significant value to municipalities at no direct cost, its future depends on **diversifying funding sources** and potentially formalising its legal status. The experience demonstrates that relatively modest operational funding, when combined with strong political leadership and institutional backing, can unlock substantial collaboration and momentum at national level.

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