NET ZERO CITIES | BELLONA EUROPA | Hafslund Rådgivning



Utrecht

Towards zero-emission construction in a climate-neutral city

KEY FACTS

Population
378,140
in the city

City area
99.21 km²

Construction activity
€250 million
annual spending

Climate goal
Climate neutral
by 2050

LOCATION



WHY UTRECHT?

- Deployment of ZECS aims to reduce air pollutant emissions in the city
- Local clean air strategy drives zero-emission construction activity
- Utrecht has committed to the ambitious tier of the SEB Roadmap for zero-emission construction
- The city faces net grid congestion challenges

STATUS FOR ZERO-EMISSION CONSTRUCTION

Utrecht's zero-emission construction policy is driven primarily by its clean-air initiatives. Since 2021, the policy has banned older diesel construction machinery, and since 2023, it aims to transition to zero-emission construction. The city is a signatory to the Dutch SEB Covenant, agreeing to require zero-emission construction machinery for municipal works. Consequently, its tenders align with the ambitious tier of the national Road Map for Zero-Emission Construction, which sets specific targets for municipal construction and machinery procurement. Since 2024, Utrecht has completed at least one fully zero-emission project annually, with the number increasing. These projects typically deploy 30-60% zero-emission machinery. Beyond public procurement, Utrecht has applied the national roadmap's minimum level to private construction sites since 2025. From 2030, using zero-emission small and medium-sized machines will be mandatory. Key challenges include grid congestion and limited knowledge in the construction sector. The city has taken steps to ensure access to public charging infrastructure for construction equipment and exploring ways to incorporate requirements into local building permits and the national building code.

UTRECHT POLICY MIX TO ACCELERATE ZERO-EMISSION CONSTRUCTION

POLICY INSTRUMENT	STATUS TODAY	EXPECTED IMPACT	SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS
Healthy Air for Everyone 2025–2030 The strategy treats mobile machinery as one of the three main local sources of air pollution that the city can influence, alongside mobility.	Mobile machinery is the second largest source of nitrogen oxides in Utrecht after road traffic. Emissions-free construction measures also cover construction transport.	●●● High	Assess zero-emission construction zones in sensitive areas such as schools, hospitals, and the city centre, for introduction in 2030
Zero-emission construction procurement roadmap Utrecht signed the Dutch voluntary agreement in 2023 and follows its ambitious roadmap, targeting zero-emission machinery in nearly all public works as of 2030.	Zero-emission machinery below 19 kW required in municipal tenders. At least one fully zero-emission project per year since 2024, with monitored projects averaging 30 to 60% zero-emission machinery.	●●● High	No suggested next step. Since 2025 the national roadmap's minimum level also applies to private sites, with light machinery up to 56 kW zero-emission from 2030
Market dialogues Structured dialogue between Utrecht and local and regional contractors, as well as other cities in the region, the province, and regional water authorities.	Dialogues 2-3 times a year, site visits and an annual roundtable with company boards. Construction sector associations co-designed and signed the national roadmap.	●●● High	Build on a joint position with industry to make the national roadmap's minimum level binding in the national building law. Utrecht already works towards this.
Construction Charge Pass Allows contractors to reserve public EV charging points to power light construction equipment, reducing the use of diesel generators and the need for a new grid connection.	Available through the national Stroomkaart platform. Utrecht, Arnhem, and Amsterdam are testing public charging points for construction and also offer advice on smart charging.	●●● High	Map available grid capacity and charging points for each municipal project and share this information with contractors at tender stage

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