

Kosovo electric vehicle charging infrastructure

The development of cities is both the cause and the solution to climate change. Today, Kosovo's* cities emit more greenhouse gases than ever before from congested traffic and the use of fossil fuels for electricity and heating. New apartment buildings are being constructed on narrow streets without proper planning. Green spaces are few and far between.

Over the past 20 years, urban centres have multiplied in size, with an increasing carbon footprint. Globally, 70 percent of all carbon emissions are city-based. Liquid and solid wastes from cities, as well as urban air and soil pollution, have environmental and health consequences that affect urban and rural residents. Urban agglomerations have expanded resulting in low-density environmentally-damaging sprawl. This has brought many challenges, including lack of public transport and efficient energy systems in homes.

Kosovo's development plans lack effective measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation, despite the development of strategic environmental assessments required under the law. Spatial development to meet the social and economic needs of Kosovo's municipalities has not yet adequately addressed environmental impacts. Greening and blueing infrastructure, retrofitting buildings with bio-based materials, and creating more greenery for residents is crucial to adapting to the new climate reality.

A new assessment by UN-Habitat on climate change planning capacities in Kosovo's 38 municipalities found that less than three percent of staff had expertise in climate research and analysis, or in implementing climate adaptation and mitigation. The use of climate science to inform urban research, planning and capacity building is sub-optimal. The development of a more robust evidence base for cities is still nascent, fragmented and detached from Kosovo-wide policy and decision making.

In Prizren, local climate action has been piloted through evidence-based and participatory planning process by developing a cross-sectoral investment plan that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Collaboration will soon continue to the next phase, building on the promising results achieved, with an increasing emphasis on nurturing innovative financing and partnerships through the Green Growth Centers, and by shifting towards more sustainable food systems in Prizren and the neighboring Suhareka. These initiatives demonstrate that carbon-neutral development can be achieved through strong commitment and municipal action.

Transport is the fastest growing contributing sector to Green House Gas Emissions in Kosovo and with an estimated annual traffic growth of 4.4 percent, the number of private vehicles will double in 16 years. This is the window to act to avert this scenario leading to heightened emissions and total gridlock of transport systems with settlement patterns that are unsustainable and liveability in cities endangered.

Since the majority of cities in the Western Balkans do not yet have a policy that focuses on public and non-motorized transport, it is vital to implement sustainable transport measures that disrupt car-oriented development. The way Kosovo cities plan and manage their growth, ensuring proximity, mobility, and connectivity for people and the movement of goods will also determine their prospects for climate action since transport-related emissions are the fastest growing in Kosovo.

UNDP and UN-Habitat will continue to work together in supporting Kosovo municipalities - in partnership with actors across the society and international actors - to adopt integrated approaches to strengthen local climate action whilst pursuing people-centred cities which prosper within a 1.5C future. UNDP and UN-Habitat are the co-chairs of the UN Kosovo Team Results Group on "Resilient, Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development" which coordinates UN system wide action for climate in Kosovo.

It will be used to finance the acquisition of 30 buses, comprising 24 Euro VI vehicles and six battery electric buses, as well as the associated charging infrastructure.

Regional authorities hope to use the loan to improve the reliability, safety and efficiency of its public transport system, and is expected to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the current urban transport system by 76%.

"By building on the achievements of our previous project with the city and Trafiku Urban, we solidify a successful partnership and reaffirm our strong commitment to Pristina and its citizens."

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