

Pristina energy efficiency

Pristina was among the first cities globally to receive technical assistance from the Gap Fund. With challenges similar to those other cities around the world face, the capital of Kosovo has grown rapidly, from being home to around 109,000 people in 1981, to now having an official population of about 220,000 or even more if considering daily and weekly commuters and temporary residents with families living elsewhere in Kosovo.

However, despite good progress on upgrading the city's infrastructure and public amenities, today only 28% are connected to the district heating network. Air pollution is a significant challenge for the city, due to emissions from two coal-fired power plants, individual household heating systems based on solid fuels (firewood and coal) and a polluting and obsolete vehicular fleet. Congestion and flooding are also significant challenges and, like many other cities, COVID-19 had a strong and negative impact on Pristina's economy and municipal finances.

During an 18-month Gap Fund initiative from January 2021 to June 2022, technical assistance has helped Pristina's Office of the Mayor, Deputy Mayors, and officials in the city's departments of Urban Planning, Public Services and Strategic Planning to work together to better plan, design and invest in the city's green development and achieve its climate goals.

The Gap Fund supported training and technical assistance to city officials to review the urban planning, transport and energy investment and policy decisions outlined in Pristina's draft Municipal Development Plan (MDP) through the "Urban Performance" tool. The objective of the review is to gauge whether investments and policy decisions are climate-smart, can drive sustainable urban development and support the wellbeing of its people.

A shared vision to harness the potential of integrated, climate-smart city planning to achieve climate and environmental goals, nurture human wellbeing and be cost-effective underpinned Pristina's cross-sectoral approach to urban development. City leaders believe that this new, more integrated way of working across sectors could be replicated in other cities in Kosovo.

While adapting the city's MDP to the recommendations provided by the Gap Fund, Idriz Maliqi, Program Manager in the Mayor's Cabinet, believes Pristina can lead the way as a "city of the future." He also added that "the technical expertise provided by the Gap Fund helped us understand how we can design, finance and implement investments that will allow Pristina to develop in a way that is climate-smart, sustainable and that promotes inclusive economic growth and the wellbeing of its inhabitants."

"Understanding and visualising the long-term impact of current policy and investment decisions has been invaluable. We are now in a better position to take the necessary course-corrective actions. The lessons we learnt could be shared with other urban areas in Kosovo to promote the transition towards more liveable

cities."

Asked whether the technical knowledge gained from Gap Fund assistance could help to inform Kosovo's national climate policy, Mr Maliqi added: "We are optimistic that it will. The national spatial law is under consideration and if approaches such as the ones used in Pristina could be replicated at the national level, the country could enter a more sustainable growth trajectory."

According to Augustin Maria, Program Manager for the Gap Fund, what was done in Pristina could become a blueprint for the future of sustainable, climate-resilient urban communities globally. "It's really having created a prototype engagement on how to work with cities on climate change in an integrated, holistic way - on transport and urban growth management, and therefore anchor the engagement at the local, city level. It is getting us started in the right direction."

COP27 confirmed the need to increase climate finance, link global processes with city and local climate action, and support capacity building for local governments to achieve the twin goals of sustainable urban development and mitigation and adaptation ambitions.

Looking ahead, the Gap Fund plans to extend its assistance to 40 new cities globally, raise awareness of its activities with cities and urban networks, expand outreach activities to promote low-carbon, more resilient urban development and support cities to transform their sustainable energy and climate action plans into projects that can contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation goal.

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