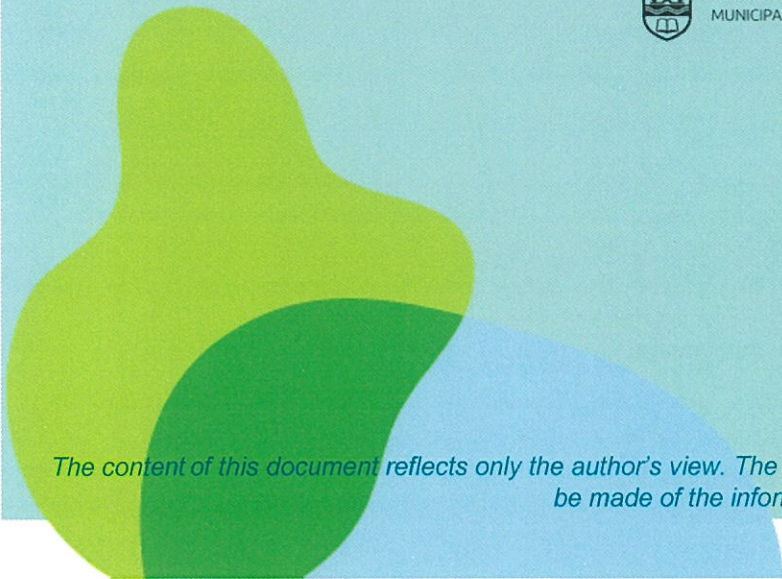


Climate City Contract

2030 Climate Neutrality Commitments

Climate Neutrality Commitments of GABROVO



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1 Introduction

Background

Situated in south-eastern Europe, Gabrovo is centrally located at the heart of Bulgaria, serving as a strategic gateway between Northern and Southern Bulgaria. This advantageous positioning enhances Gabrovo's role as a key economic and cultural center in Bulgaria, making it an ideal location for sustainable urban development.

Gabrovo Municipality is nestled in the Balkan Mountains, alongside the Yantra River, which contributes to its natural beauty and diverse ecological landscape. The city is the administrative center of the municipality, which includes 133 villages and covers an area of 555.579 km². The population of Gabrovo Municipality is 64,000 people. More than half of the municipality's area is covered by forests, highlighting its rich biodiversity and commitment to preserving natural resources.

Historically known as "The Bulgarian Manchester," Gabrovo has been at the forefront of Bulgaria's industrial development for over 150 years, initiating modern factory production during the 19th century. This legacy of innovation and entrepreneurship remains a cornerstone of Gabrovo's identity, supporting its strategic ambitions today.

Motivation

Gabrovo's decision to join the EU Mission '100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030' is driven by its commitment to sustainability and climate action. The EU Mission provides a framework for cities to accelerate decarbonization and achieve climate neutrality, aligning with Gabrovo's long-standing dedication to environmental stewardship.

In the face of escalating global climate-related emergencies, the EU has committed itself to spearheading climate action through ambitious goals and legislation. The EU aims to cut emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and reach climate neutrality by mid-century. Cities, responsible for more than 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions while occupying only 3% of the Earth's surface, play a pivotal role in this endeavour.

Gabrovo recognizes the opportunity to leverage the EU Mission to enhance its climate action plans and implement innovative solutions. This participation allows Gabrovo to access funding, expert guidance, and collaboration opportunities, strengthening its ability to address local climate challenges and contribute to the EU's broader climate goals.

Gabrovo's Vision and Strategic Commitment

Gabrovo envisions a transformative journey toward climate neutrality by 2030, positioning itself as a beacon of sustainable urban development in Southeast Europe. Central to this vision is a strategic commitment to achieving an 80.5% (from the SECAP and CCC) reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2008 levels by 2030. This ambitious target is encapsulated within Gabrovo's Climate City Contract (CCC), which delineates a comprehensive framework for collaborative action, engaging local authorities, businesses, academia, and the citizenry at large.

In alignment with the overarching objectives of the European Green Deal and the EU Mission for 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, Gabrovo is steadfast in its pursuit of climate neutrality. This

commitment is intricately woven into the fabric of the Gabrovo Integrated Development Plan 2021-2027, manifesting through a series of strategic plans that collectively drive the city's sustainable transition:

Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) 2022-2030: This plan orchestrates a holistic approach to energy efficiency and emissions reduction across all sectors, underscoring Gabrovo's leadership in climate governance.

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) 2021-2030: SUMP advances the transition towards low-emission mobility, fostering the development of a comprehensive and resilient transportation network.

Waste Management Programme of Gabrovo Municipality 2021-2028: This program redefines waste management through the lens of the circular economy, enhancing resource efficiency and minimizing environmental impact.

Program to Promote the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources and Biofuels 2021-2030: A pivotal initiative that accelerates the adoption of renewable energy, thus reducing dependency on fossil fuels and mitigating climate risks.

Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Gabrovo Municipality 2021-2027: Integrating sustainability into the tourism sector, this strategy ensures the preservation of Gabrovo's rich cultural and natural heritage while promoting economic vitality.

Strategy for Smart Specialization of Gabrovo Municipality 2021-2030: Leveraging innovation and technological advancement, this strategy drives sustainable economic growth and positions Gabrovo as a hub of smart, green development.

Environmental Protection Program 2023-2027: This program fortifies Gabrovo's commitment to environmental stewardship, ensuring the protection and enhancement of the city's natural assets.

These strategic initiatives are meticulously aligned with the Gabrovo Integrated Development Plan 2021-2027, which articulates a vision of "Gabrovo as a green, innovative, and accessible municipality, with a rich cultural heritage and sustainable tourism, open to all." Through this integrated approach, Gabrovo not only advances its climate objectives but also contributes to the broader European agenda of cultural preservation, sustainable development, and enhanced quality of life for all citizens. The city's dedication to this cause positions it as a leader in climate resilience and a model for sustainable urban transformation within the European Union.

Alignment with Action Plan Objectives:

Gabrovo's Climate Neutrality Commitment is rooted in clear and actionable objectives set forth in the city's 2030 Climate City Contract (CCC) and aligned with the broader goals of the Gabrovo Integrated Development Plan 2021-2027 while strategically working within the scope of various EU and national policies, strategies, and plans to address on achieving climate neutrality. The following targets are central to this commitment:



Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Achieve an 80.5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2008 levels by 2030 (from SECAP and CCC). This is a foundational target driving all initiatives within Gabrovo CCC. *Achieving this reduction will lead to cleaner air, improved public health, and a significant decrease in the adverse effects of climate change, making Gabrovo a healthier place for its citizens to live and work.*

Energy Systems: Increase the use of renewable energy sources (RES) across all sectors, with a focus on solar, wind, and other sustainable energy technologies to significantly lower carbon emissions. *This expansion will reduce the city's dependence on fossil fuels, lower energy costs for residents and businesses, and protect the natural environment by minimizing pollution and conserving resources.*

Built Environment: Implement comprehensive energy efficiency improvements across municipal, tertiary, private and industrial building and facilities. This includes retrofitting of existing buildings, adopting energy-saving technologies, and promoting energy-efficient practices citywide. *Enhancing energy efficiency will lead to reduced energy consumption, lowering utility bills for households and businesses while contributing to a more sustainable and resilient urban infrastructure.*

Mobility & Transport: Expand the infrastructure and usage of electric vehicles (EVs) and electric buses to reduce transportation-related emissions. This objective includes the development of charging stations and the transition of public and private vehicle fleets to low-emission alternatives. Develop a safe, connected, and extensive cycling infrastructure that promotes active transportation as a sustainable and healthy alternative to motorized transport. *Promoting electric mobility will result in quieter, cleaner streets, reducing noise pollution and improving air quality, particularly benefiting urban areas with heavy traffic.*

Waste & Circular Economy Initiatives: Advance circular economy practices by enhancing waste management systems, increasing recycling rates, and minimizing waste generation. This objective supports sustainable consumption and maximizes resource efficiency. *Adopting circular economy practices will lead to less waste ending up in landfills, preserving natural habitats, reducing environmental degradation, and promoting a more responsible consumption culture.*

Green Infrastructure & Nature-Based Solutions: Strengthen urban resilience by implementing nature-based solutions and expanding green spaces. This objective focuses on climate change adaptation through enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality, and providing recreational opportunities. *Expanding green infrastructure will create more green spaces for recreation, improve mental and physical well-being, protect local wildlife, and enhance the city's resilience to extreme weather events.*

Enhancing Synergies through Strategic Collaboration, Capacity Building, and Public Engagement Initiatives within Gabrovo's Climate Ecosystem: To drive a cohesive and integrated approach towards climate neutrality, Gabrovo is committed to fostering robust partnerships among all stakeholders—including local authorities, the private sector, academic institutions, and civil society organizations. This will be achieved through the orchestration of regular capacity-building programs, expert-led workshops, and targeted public awareness campaigns. These initiatives are designed to ensure that all stakeholders are not only well-informed and strategically aligned but are also empowered with the advanced skills and knowledge necessary to actively contribute to and accelerate Gabrovo's ambitious climate goals. *By cultivating a culture of collaboration and continuous learning, Gabrovo aims to build a*



resilient, forward-thinking community that is fully engaged in and supportive of the city's transformative journey towards sustainability and climate resilience.

Why Join the EU Mission?

Gabrovo is renowned as one of Bulgaria's most dynamic, inventive, and entrepreneurial cities, boasting a rich heritage and lively culture. It stands out as one of the leading Bulgarian municipalities in securing EU funds and actively participates in numerous EU projects, focused on innovation, energy efficiency, sustainable procurement, energy communities, and smart cities, funded by Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020, Interreg Europe, Interreg Danube, Erasmus+, Urbact, and more.

Over the past two decades, Gabrovo has made significant strides towards becoming a climate-neutral and smart city by developing and implementing sustainable energy policies, strategies, and projects across key sectors such as buildings, transportation, waste management, street lighting, renewable energy integration, smart grids, and being the leader of the first energy community in Bulgaria. Joining the EU mission is a natural, logical pathway for Gabrovo.

Gabrovo's decision to join the EU Mission was driven by several key factors:

- **Long-standing dedication to environmental sustainability:** Gabrovo has consistently prioritized sustainable development, making this mission a natural extension of its goals. Joining the mission reflects the city's proactive approach to combating climate change through innovative and effective strategies. Gabrovo aims to leverage the EU's support to implement comprehensive sustainability practices that benefit both the environment and its citizens.
- **Access to Financial Resources for Large-scale Projects:** Participation in the EU Mission grants Gabrovo access to significant funding dedicated to climate initiatives. This financial support empowers the city to undertake ambitious projects that would be difficult to finance solely through local budgets, ensuring that transformative urban development is economically feasible.
- **Expert Guidance and Knowledge Sharing:** The mission provides Gabrovo with access to a vast pool of expertise and knowledge from leading European experts in sustainability. By collaborating with experienced professionals, Gabrovo can enhance its climate action plans by incorporating cutting-edge technologies and strategies. This exchange of ideas fosters innovation and drives Gabrovo's progress toward its climate goals.
- **Network of Cities Committed to Sharing Best Practices:** Being part of the mission allows Gabrovo to learn from and contribute to a network of cities, sharing successful strategies and innovations. This collaboration fosters a sense of solidarity and collective progress toward a common goal of sustainability. Gabrovo benefits from the shared experiences of these cities, which help in shaping effective policies and practices.
- **Alignment with EU Targets:** The mission's goals align perfectly with Gabrovo's vision for a green, smart, and innovative city, supporting its ambition to become a leader in climate action. This alignment ensures that Gabrovo's efforts are synchronized with broader European policies, enhancing their impact and reach. It also helps Gabrovo contribute to the EU's broader climate objectives, reinforcing its commitment to global sustainability.

Gabrovo's Climate Journey: Highlights

1997: Gabrovo co-founded the **EcoEnergy** municipal network, marking its commitment to energy efficiency. This early involvement laid the foundation for the city's ongoing dedication to sustainable practices and energy conservation, positioning Gabrovo as a leader in municipal energy initiatives.

1998-2001: Pioneered an integrated **street lighting** system, establishing Gabrovo as a leader in sustainability in Bulgaria. This project not only reduced energy consumption but also showcased Gabrovo's capability to implement innovative solutions in urban settings, setting a benchmark for other cities.

In **2013**, Gabrovo developed and approved its **Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP)** and joined the Covenant of Mayors, solidifying its dedication to climate action and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This membership underscores Gabrovo's commitment to aligning with global standards and achieving tangible climate goals, enhancing its reputation as a proactive city in climate governance.

In **2021**, Gabrovo developed and approved its **Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP)** and was awarded the **European Green Leaf Award**. This prestigious accolade recognizes Gabrovo's achievements in sustainable urban development, highlighting the city's successful efforts in integrating environmental considerations into urban planning and confirming its status as a model city in Europe.

In **2022**, Gabrovo was honoured in the **Green Municipality** category at the National Mayor Awards, underscoring its vision to become the first climate-neutral city in Bulgaria. This accolade highlights Gabrovo's leadership in climate policy and its role as a model for other Bulgarian cities, advancing the national sustainability agenda.

In **2022**, Gabrovo was selected as one of the **100 cities** in the EU Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030.

In **2023-2024**, Gabrovo was recognized as a **Twin City** in partnership with Dijon, France, and Matosinhos, Portugal, focusing on shared climate initiatives. These partnerships enable Gabrovo to collaborate on innovative projects and enhance its international profile as a sustainable city, fostering mutual growth and learning.

In **2024**, Gabrovo was selected as a **Pilot City** for the NET ZERO HERO project, showcasing its leadership in renewable energy and sustainability practices. This pilot role enables Gabrovo to test and implement innovative technologies that can be replicated in other urban areas, furthering its impact on global sustainability efforts and establishing its role as a pioneer in climate action.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Baseline Inventory

Final energy use by source sectors

In 2008, the total energy consumption within the municipality amounted to 844,574 MWh. The primary energy consumer on our territory was the Private and Commercial Transportation subsector, accounting for 43.2% of the total energy usage. Following closely was the Industrial Facilities subsector, responsible for 35.9% of the energy demand. Additionally, the Residential Buildings subsector consumed 15.7% of the energy.

Electricity accounts for 30.7% of final energy consumption in the buildings and facilities sector, while diesel dominates the transport sector with a 26.4% share.

The total energy consumption on the territory of the municipality in 2018 was 807 338 MWh.

The primary energy consumer within the municipality was the Private and Commercial Transportation subsector, accounting for 44.5% of the total energy consumption. Following closely was the Industrial Facilities subsector, responsible for 33.9% of the energy usage within our territory. The Residential Buildings subsector consumed 16.0% of the energy. These figures highlight the distribution of energy demand across different sectors in our community.

Electricity accounts for 29.6% of final energy consumption in the buildings and facilities sector, while diesel dominates the transport sector with a 32.4% share.

GHG emissions

Total GHG emissions on the territory of the municipality in 2008 are 324 566 t CO₂eq with LULUCF and 400 573 t CO₂eq without LULUCF. The main source of GHG emissions were Buildings and facilities sector with 68.6% of total emission without LULUCF, followed by Transport sector (24.3%) and Waste sector with 7.0%. In the LULUCF sector 76 007 tons of CO₂ were absorbed in 2008.

In 2018, the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within the municipality amounted to 216,743 t CO₂eq with land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) considered, and 257,831 t CO₂eq without LULUCF. The primary source of GHG emissions is the Buildings and Facilities sector, accounting for 55.4% of the total emissions (excluding LULUCF). It is followed by the Transport sector (37.9%) and the Waste sector (6.8%). Additionally, the LULUCF sector absorbed 41,088 tons of CO₂ in 2018.

The reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in 2018 compared to 2008 is 35.6%. The main decrease was achieved in the Buildings and Facilities sector – 48.1%, and the Waste sector – 37.8%.

2 Goal: Climate neutrality by 2030

Main goal of Gabrovo CCC: Achieve an 80.5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2008 levels by 2030 (from SECAP and CCC).

Specific goals by sectors:

Energy Systems & Built Environment

Gabrovo's objective is to achieve substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by transforming energy systems and enhancing the built environment across municipal, tertiary, private and industrial building and facilities through innovative technologies, regulatory improvements, and community engagement as follows:

Adoption of Advanced Technologies:

Goal: Integrate tailored energy technologies across sectors.

Outcomes: Widespread use of advanced energy solutions, targeting a reduction of GHG emissions by 38 747 tons of CO₂eq by 2030 (CCC).

Co-benefits: Reduced energy costs, improved quality of life and increased competitiveness of local industry.

Investment and Strategic Partnerships:

Goal: Drive investment in energy projects through robust business models.

Outcomes: Increased investment and enhanced public-private collaboration.

Co-benefits: Attraction of new financial resources.

Policy Alignment and Capacity Building:

Goal: Update local policies to align with climate goals and empower community involvement.

Outcomes: Strengthened governance, a well-informed citizenry, and increased participation in sustainability initiatives.

Co-benefits: Improved regulatory environment and community resilience.

Mobility & Transport

Objective: Achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by transforming Gabrovo's transportation systems, enhancing public transport, promoting the adoption of electric and alternative fuel vehicles and development of charging and cycling Infrastructures.

Promotion and Integration of Key Innovative Solutions and Technologies:

Goal: Transition Gabrovo's vehicle fleet towards the use of Electric Vehicles (EVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), and other alternative fuels, optimization of transport system, development and implementation of cycling infrastructure for sustainable mobility.

Milestones: Identify local transportation needs and suitable innovative technologies. Engage relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, transport providers, and the public, in the adoption of sustainable transportation solutions.

Outcomes: Noticeable shift in the vehicle fleet with increased adoption of EVs, PHEVs, and alternative fuel vehicles; Reduction of GHG emissions by 35 466 t CO₂eq by 2030 (CCC).

Co-benefits: Improved mobility and quality of life, increased use of public transport, enhanced air quality and community health, improved safety conditions, and the development of new competencies and innovations.

Development of Sustainable Business Models and Investment Plans:

Goal: Foster public-private partnerships and secure investments for sustainable transportation projects.

Milestones: Identify and leverage funding opportunities at local, national, and international levels. Develop business models that facilitate investment in sustainable transport infrastructure.

Outcomes: Successful implementation of investment projects focused on sustainable transportation.

Co-benefits: Increased public funding and private sector investment in the transportation sector.

Review and Enhancement of Local Strategies and Regulations:

Goal: Align local transportation policies with national and EU climate objectives to support sustainable mobility.

Milestones: Review and analyze existing local strategies and the national regulatory framework. Update and improve local strategies and regulations to promote climate-neutral transportation.

Outcomes: Improved governance and regulatory environment that supports sustainable transportation.

Co-benefits: Strengthened governance and a regulatory framework that facilitates the transition to sustainable mobility.

Capacity Building through Education and Community Engagement:

Goal: Enhance the capacity of all societal groups to contribute to CO₂ neutrality in the transportation sector.

Milestones: Organize workshops, training sessions, and information campaigns focused on sustainable transportation.

Outcomes: Increased capacity among citizens, businesses, and institutions to support and engage in sustainable mobility initiatives.

Co-benefits: Greater public awareness, active participation in transportation sustainability efforts, and improved safety conditions in transport.

Fostering Social Innovation and Community Involvement:

Goal: Investigate and implement social innovations that support sustainable transportation and mobility solutions.

Milestones: Explore potential social innovations and initiate implementation.

Outcomes: Social innovations are integrated into the broader transportation strategy, contributing to enhanced mobility and sustainability.

Co-benefits: Strengthened community involvement, increased social equity, and improved transportation safety and efficiency.

Waste & Circular Economy

Objective: Achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by enhancing waste management practices and promoting a circular economy, focusing on innovative solutions, strategic investments, and community engagement.

Implementation of Innovative Solutions and Technologies:

Goal: Identify and promote advanced waste management technologies tailored to Gabrovo's needs.

Milestones: Assess local needs and identify suitable innovative technologies. Engage stakeholders, including citizens, businesses, and institutions, in the adoption of these solutions.

Outcomes: Increased adoption of advanced waste management technologies, contributing to a reduction to 10 407 t CO₂ by 2030.

Co-benefits: Reduced waste disposal costs, improved quality of life, increased material reuse in local industries, and enhanced circularity.

**Development of Sustainable Business Models and Investments:**

Goal: Foster public-private partnerships and secure investments to support waste management and circular economy projects.

Milestones: Identify funding opportunities at local, national, and international levels. Develop business models that attract investments in waste management and circular economy solutions.

Outcomes: Successful implementation of investment projects focused on waste management and circular economy.

Co-benefits: Increased public funding and private investment in sustainable waste management practices.

Enhancement of Local Strategies and Regulatory Framework:

Goal: Align local waste management strategies with national and EU climate objectives.

Milestones: Review existing local strategies and the national regulatory framework. Update and improve local regulations to support sustainable waste management and circular economy practices.

Outcomes: Strengthened local strategies and regulations that promote circular economy initiatives.

Co-benefits: Improved governance and regulatory framework supporting waste management innovation.

Capacity Building and Community Engagement:

Goal: Increase the capacity of citizens, businesses, and institutions to engage in sustainable waste management practices.

Milestones: Organize workshops, training sessions, and awareness campaigns on waste reduction and circular economy.

Outcomes: Enhanced capacity among all societal groups to participate in and support waste management and circular economy initiatives.

Co-benefits: Greater public awareness and active participation in sustainability efforts.

Promotion of Social Innovation in Waste Management:

Goal: Develop and implement social innovations that support waste management and circular economy practices.

Milestones: Explore and pilot social innovation initiatives.

Outcomes: Successful integration of social innovations into waste management strategies.

Co-benefits: Strengthened community involvement, increased social equity, and improved waste management practices.

Green Infrastructure & Nature-Based Solutions

Objective: Enhance Gabrovo's climate adaptation by improvement of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, while achieving substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Implementation of Innovative Solutions and Technologies:

Goal: Promote the adoption of green technologies and nature-based solutions tailored to Gabrovo's specific needs.

Milestones: Assess local requirements and identify suitable green infrastructure technologies. Engage stakeholders, including citizens, businesses, and institutions, in the adoption of these solutions.

Outcomes: Increased use of green technologies and nature-based solutions.

Co-benefits: Improved quality of life, creation of green jobs, increased number of visitors and tourists, enhanced community adaptation to climate change, and protection of biodiversity.

Development of Sustainable Business Models and Investments:

Goal: Foster public-private partnerships and secure investments to support green infrastructure and nature-based projects.

Milestones: Identify funding opportunities at local, national, and international levels. Develop business models that attract investments in green infrastructure.

Outcomes: Successful implementation of investment projects focused on green infrastructure.

Co-benefits: Increased public funding and private investment in sustainable urban development.

Enhancement of Local Strategies and Regulatory Framework:

Goal: Align local strategies and regulations with national and EU climate objectives to support green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Milestones: Review and analyse existing local strategies and the national regulatory framework. Update local strategies and regulations to encourage the integration of green infrastructure.

Outcomes: Strengthened local strategies and improved regulatory environment that promotes green infrastructure.

Co-benefits: Enhanced governance and support for sustainable urban development.

Capacity Building and Community Engagement:

Goal: Increase the capacity of citizens, businesses, and institutions to engage in green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Milestones: Organize workshops, training sessions, and awareness campaigns focused on green infrastructure.

Outcomes: Enhanced capacity among all societal groups to support green infrastructure initiatives.

Co-benefits: Greater public awareness and active participation in urban greening and sustainability efforts.

Promotion of Social Innovation in Green Infrastructure:

Goal: Develop and implement social innovations that support the integration of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Milestones: Explore and pilot social innovation initiatives.

Outcomes: Successful integration of social innovations into urban planning and green infrastructure strategies.

Co-benefits: Strengthened community involvement, increased social equity, and enhanced resilience to climate change.

3 Strategic priorities

3.1. Energy Systems & Built Environment

Objective: To transform Gabrovo's energy systems and built environment by increasing the share of renewable energy sources (RES), enhancing energy efficiency, transitioning from high-emission to low-emission fuels, and constructing low- and zero-emission buildings.

Reason for Selection: Energy Systems & Built environment in Gabrovo, encompassing municipal, tertiary (non-municipal) buildings, residential, and industrial buildings and facilities incl. their energy systems, accounts for a significant proportion of the city's GHG emissions. Much of the existing infrastructure relies heavily on inefficient, high-emission energy systems, necessitating a shift towards more sustainable energy solutions.

Gabrovo's strategic approach for achieving climate neutrality by 2030 is through the construction of near-zero and zero-emission buildings, retrofitting existing structures to the highest energy efficiency standards, and integrating renewable energy installations in buildings. A decrease of carbon footprint in industry by trainings and capacity building programs is also planned, alongside the development of an advanced energy monitoring system that will optimize energy consumption and reduce the city's overall carbon footprint. The timeline for the CCC of Gabrovo is focused on 2024 – 2030.

Timeline and Targets:

From 2024 to 2030, the municipality aims to implement ordinances to limit high-emission solid fuels and heating appliances across the renovated buildings. The plan includes integrating renewable energy sources (RES) installations in the renovated buildings and retrofitting of the planned buildings to achieve class A and B energy efficiency standards. Additionally, a decrease of industrial carbon footprint and the implementation of a comprehensive energy monitoring system across all municipal buildings are planned. By 2027 at least 2 municipal buildings, 2 tertiary and 23 multifamily buildings will be renovated.

Critical Stakeholders:

Municipality of Gabrovo: As the key local governmental body, it plays a crucial role in policy creation, regulation, and funding allocation, which are essential for driving the transition to low-emission energy systems and sustainable urban development.

ENERGO-PRO Gabrovo (Electricity Supply Company): Manages and supplies electricity, making it essential for integrating renewable energy into the grid and supporting smart grid initiatives.

Citigaz Bulgaria JSC (Natural gas Supplying Company): Manages and supplies natural gas, making it essential for fuel mix change.

Sustainable Energy Development Agency (SEDA): Provides strategic direction and support for national energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives, influencing local project implementation.

Ministry of Energy: Sets national energy policies and regulations, providing the framework necessary for transitioning to low-emission fuels and integrating renewable energy systems.

Ministry of Innovations and Growth: Promotes technological advancements and supports innovation in energy systems, which are crucial for the development of smart city solutions and energy efficiency.

Ministry of Finance: Controls the financial resources needed to fund energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, making it vital for the success of these initiatives.

National Association of the Municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB): Advocates for municipal interests and ensures that national policies and funding support local climate and energy initiatives.

Technical University of Gabrovo (TU Gabrovo): Contributes critical research and innovation in smart energy systems and energy-efficient technologies, essential for advancing sustainable energy solutions in the built environment.

Regional Innovation Center „Ambitious Gabrovo“: Drives innovation and supports the development of smart city solutions, making it a key player in integrating advanced technologies into energy systems.

3.2. Mobility & Transport

Objective: A sustainable urban mobility and optimization of transport systems by increasing the use of electric vehicles (EVs), development of a new cycling infrastructure, and promoting public transportation.

Reason for Selection: The transport sector is a major source of GHG emissions in Gabrovo, primarily due to the high reliance on fossil fuel-powered vehicles. Transforming this sector is critical to achieving the city's climate neutrality goals.

Strategic Approach: Gabrovo plans to gradually replace the public transport and municipal vehicle fleets with electric and compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles. In addition, the city will construct new EV charging stations. A mobile application will also be developed to enhance the convenience and accessibility of public transport.

Timeline and Targets:

From 2024 to 2030, the municipality plans to replace the public transport fleet and municipal vehicles with electric vehicles (EVs) and compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles, and construct the necessary EV charging stations infrastructure. By 2027 at least 7 e-buses plus 7 e-charging stations for public transportation will be purchased. Additionally, car-restricted zones for high-emission vehicles will be implemented, and the fee-based parking system will be expanded with new regulations, including incentives for EV parking. By the end of this period, the municipality aims to achieve a transition to electric and low-emission vehicles in public transport.

Critical Stakeholders:

Municipal Transport Company: Responsible for transitioning the public transport fleet to electric and compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles and managing sustainable transport services, including the integration of smart mobility solutions.

Ministry of Transport: Provides national policies, regulations, and frameworks that support the transition to cleaner vehicles and sustainable mobility, including smart city transport technologies.

Gabrovo Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Interior (Gabrovo Police Department): Ensures enforcement of traffic regulations, including low-emission zones, and supports the deployment of smart traffic management systems to optimize transport and reduce emissions.

ENERGO-PRO Gabrovo (Electricity Supply Company): Supports the infrastructure for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and provides the necessary energy supply for electric mobility, integrating with smart grid technologies.

Citizens: Their adoption of sustainable transport options, such as public transportation, cycling, and electric vehicles, is crucial for the success of mobility transformation, supported by digital tools and smart city applications.

Local Companies: Play a key role in adopting cleaner vehicles and contributing to the development of infrastructure, such as EV charging stations and smart mobility solutions, essential for scaling up sustainable transport initiatives.

Technical University of Gabrovo (TU Gabrovo): Provides research and innovation in smart mobility solutions, IoT, and energy-efficient technologies, making it a key player in advancing sustainable transport systems.

Ministry of Health: Focuses on addressing the health impacts of transport emissions and promoting healthier, more sustainable modes of transport, supported by digital monitoring and smart city initiatives.

Regional Innovation Center “Ambitious Gabrovo”: Drives innovation and supports the development of smart city solutions, including intelligent transport systems, mobility apps, and digital integration in public transport.

Public-Private Partnerships: Essential for implementing smart mobility solutions such as real-time public transport information systems, EV infrastructure, and smart traffic management, leveraging resources and expertise from both sectors.

3.3. Waste & Circular Economy

Objective: To enhance Gabrovo’s waste management system by reducing municipal solid waste (MSW), increasing the efficiency of waste collection, and promoting a circular economy.

Reason for Selection: Current waste management practices in Gabrovo are inadequate for achieving the city’s ambitious waste reduction and recycling targets. The transition to a circular economy is essential for minimizing environmental impact and conserving resources.

Strategic Approach: Gabrovo will modernize its waste collection systems, introducing smart technologies, separation of waste and expand underground waste collection. The city will also launch pilot programs for zero-waste practices in local businesses and engage citizens through educational initiatives to boost participation in waste separation.

Timeline and Targets:

From 2024 to 2030, the municipality aims to implement pilot projects for zero-waste practices in key districts and businesses, and achieve an increase in separate waste collection rates. The plan includes modernizing waste collection systems and expanding the share of underground waste collection.

Critical Stakeholders:

Municipal Enterprise “Urban Development”: Responsible for the modernization and maintenance of waste collection infrastructure, including the integration of smart waste management systems.

Ministry of Environment and Water: Provides the regulatory framework and national policies that are essential for guiding the transition to a circular economy and ensuring compliance with waste reduction targets.

Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water: Enforces environmental regulations and ensures that waste management practices meet national standards, critical for the effectiveness of local initiatives.

Waste Depo - Gabrovo: Manages the final disposal of waste and plays a key role in landfill management and exploring waste-to-energy solutions, crucial for sustainable waste management.

Local Business: Their adoption of circular economy practices and participation in waste reduction initiatives are essential for scaling up efforts and integrating sustainability into the local economy.

Citizens: Their engagement in waste separation and recycling is critical for the success of waste management strategies and achieving the city's waste reduction goals.

Technical University of Gabrovo: Provides research and innovation in waste management technologies, supporting the development of new solutions that are essential for advancing the circular economy.

National Trust EcoFund: Offers financial incentives and grants that are crucial for funding waste management projects and circular economy initiatives.

Regional Innovation Center "Ambitious Gabrovo": Drives innovation and supports the development of smart waste management solutions, including the use of IoT for waste tracking and resource optimization.

Public-Private Partnerships: Essential for implementing smart waste management solutions, such as smart bins and digital platforms for tracking waste separation and recycling.

3.4. Green Infrastructure & Nature-Based Solutions

Objective: To strengthen Gabrovo's urban and environmental sustainability against climate change through the improvement of green infrastructure, modernization of urban green systems, and implementation of nature-based solutions.

Reason for Selection: Gabrovo's green spaces and natural environment are vital for climate resilience. However, urban expansion and climate challenges necessitate enhanced protection and development of these areas.

Strategic Approach: The city will develop green corridors, eco-trails, and protective forest belts, modernize its urban green system, and implement advanced flood and fire protection systems. The use of technology, such as mobile apps to identify "cool spots," will also be employed to mitigate the effects of extreme heat.

Timeline and Targets:

From 2024 to 2030, the municipality plans to develop and implement guidelines for urban greening projects and initiate flood protection measures. The strategy includes increasing forest coverage in erosion-prone areas and establishing a comprehensive flood registry. By the end of this period, the municipality aims to expand green infrastructure, enhance biodiversity, and integrate compensatory greening criteria into local regulations.

By 2027 new Green Infrastructure Strategy and two demos for rainwater harvesting system and EWMS will be developed and implemented within MountResilience project, funded by Horizon Europe.

Critical Stakeholders:

Municipality of Gabrovo: Oversees the implementation of green infrastructure projects, integrates nature-based solutions into urban planning, and ensures alignment with the city's sustainability goals.

Ministry of Environment and Water: As the primary governmental body responsible for environmental policy and regulation, this ministry is crucial for providing the necessary frameworks, funding, and oversight for green infrastructure projects.

Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation: Plays a vital role in biodiversity conservation and habitat restoration, which are essential components of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

National Trust EcoFund: Provides critical financial support for green infrastructure projects, enabling the implementation of innovative solutions and nature-based strategies.

Ministry of Health: Their involvement in urban greening projects and initiatives to reduce air pollution and mitigate heat effects is crucial for ensuring the health benefits of green infrastructure are realized.

Regional Innovation Center “Ambitious Gabrovo”: Drives innovation and supports the development of smart city solutions that enhance green infrastructure, such as using IoT for environmental monitoring and the implementation of digital tools to manage urban green spaces.

Public-Private Partnerships: Essential for implementing smart city solutions that support green infrastructure, such as public-private initiatives for developing green roofs, green walls, and other sustainable urban design projects.

Technical University of Gabrovo: Contributes research and innovation in smart technologies that support green infrastructure, such as IoT-based environmental monitoring systems and smart water management solutions.

Private Sector: Plays a key role in implementing and financing green infrastructure projects, including the adoption of nature-based solutions in commercial developments and contributing to urban sustainability through innovative technologies.

Bulgarka Nature Park: Supports the management and maintenance of eco-trails, green corridors, and conservation areas, contributing to biodiversity enhancement and providing recreational opportunities that align with Gabrovo's environmental sustainability goals.

4 Process and principles

Gabrovo's path to climate neutrality by 2030 is not just a plan; it's a pioneering framework that embodies innovation, inclusivity, and strategic collaboration. Designed to set a benchmark for cities in South-eastern Europe, Gabrovo's Climate City Contract (CCC) is both a mission and a movement—a blueprint for how cities can mobilize and lead in the fight against climate change.

A Systematic and Smart Process for Urban Transformation

Gabrovo's approach is holistic, innovative, and driven by a bottom-up philosophy that empowers every stakeholder—from local citizens to international partners. This process is further strengthened by the active involvement and leadership of key regional figures and institutions:

- **Co-Creation and Bottom-Up Engagement:** At the heart of Gabrovo's process is co-creation. We engage a diverse array of stakeholders—including government agencies, businesses, academia, and civil society—in a continuous dialogue to design and implement climate solutions. This bottom-up approach ensures that the strategies are not only effective but also widely supported, reflecting the collective vision and needs of the community. Gabrovo's commitment to collaboration extends beyond city limits, fostering regional partnerships that amplify our impact. **Gabrovo Council for sustainable urban development** plays a pivotal role in aligning regional policies and resources with national objectives and the CCC, thereby strengthening the cohesion and effectiveness of our climate action.



- **Capacity Building and Empowerment:** Gabrovo recognizes that true transformation requires more than just policies—it requires empowered people. Our capacity-building initiatives are designed to equip local leaders, businesses, and citizens with the knowledge and skills they need to drive change. Through workshops, training programs, and knowledge-sharing platforms, we are building a citywide network of climate champions who will carry this mission forward. The **Technical University of Gabrovo** is leading academic and research initiatives that provide cutting-edge knowledge and innovation, which are critical to the city's climate strategy.
- **Innovation at the Core:** Innovation is embedded in every aspect of our process. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies and data-driven decision-making tools, Gabrovo is transforming how urban planning, energy management, and waste systems operate. This smart approach enables us to optimize resources, reduce emissions, and create a resilient city that can adapt to future challenges. The **Regional Innovation Center „Ambitious Gabrovo“** and **Technical University of Gabrovo** are in charge of fostering innovative partnerships and technological advancements that propel the city's climate initiatives forward.
- **Mobilizing a Transition Team for Climate Action:** Central to our strategy is the Climate Transition Team—an elite group that combines expertise, passion, and dedication. This team, structured into specialized Expert Groups, works tirelessly to implement sector-specific strategies in buildings, energy systems, transport and mobility, waste and circularity, green infrastructure and industry. The team's work is coordinated by a Secretariat that ensures smooth communication, seamless execution, and the continuous flow of innovative ideas. Led by **Gabrovo Council for sustainable urban development**, this transition team is the driving force behind Gabrovo's climate ambitions, and its set to inspire other cities to follow suit.

Adaptive Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Gabrovo's commitment to excellence is reflected in our rigorous approach to monitoring and continuous improvement. This process is supported by the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders to ensure that progress is not only tracked but also strategically enhanced over time:

- **Annual Reviews and Dynamic Updates:** At least once per two years, **Gabrovo Council for sustainable urban development** conducts a thorough review of our progress. This review is not just a formality—it's an opportunity to recalibrate our strategies based on the latest data, emerging trends, and stakeholder feedback. Adaptive management is at the core of our process, allowing us to evolve and refine the CCC as we move forward.
- **Engagement-Driven Feedback Mechanisms:** Feedback is a cornerstone of our strategy. We've created multiple channels—public consultations, workshops, and digital platforms—where citizens and stakeholders can share their insights. This continuous loop of feedback ensures that our actions are aligned with the community's needs and aspirations, making the CCC a living document that evolves with the city. **Gabrovo Council for sustainable urban development** is particularly involved in ensuring that feedback mechanisms are robust and inclusive, fostering broad-based participation across the region.

Principles Guiding the CCC Implementation: Leading by Example

Gabrovo's Climate City Contract is guided by principles that not only ensure our success but also position us as a leader and ambassador for climate action in the region:

Climate Justice and Equity: We believe that climate action must be inclusive and just. Gabrovo is committed to ensuring that all communities—especially the most vulnerable—benefit from our sustainability efforts. We aim to bridge social inequalities and create opportunities for every resident to participate in and benefit from our transition to a low-carbon future. **The Regional Inspectorate of environment and water** ensures that regional initiatives align with these equity principles, maximizing their reach and impact.

Multi-Level and Multi-Stakeholder Governance: Effective climate action requires coordinated efforts at all levels of governance. Gabrovo is committed to working closely with regional, national, and international partners to ensure that our policies are synergistic and aligned with broader climate goals. This multi-level governance approach maximizes the impact of our initiatives and fosters strong partnerships that transcend borders. The commitment of the **Mayor of Gabrovo Municipality, Rector of the Technical University**, and **Chair of Board of the Regional Innovation Center** exemplifies this collaborative spirit, ensuring that our strategies are comprehensive and well-coordinated.

Innovation and Flexibility: We embrace innovation as a catalyst for change. Gabrovo is open to experimenting with new technologies, methodologies, and ideas that drive our climate strategy forward. Flexibility is key—we are prepared to adapt to new challenges and opportunities, ensuring that our actions remain relevant and effective. All mentioned parties play a pivotal role in fostering these innovative efforts, ensuring that Gabrovo stays at the forefront of climate technology.

Stakeholder Empowerment and Citizen Engagement: Gabrovo's success is rooted in the active participation of its citizens and stakeholders. We are committed to empowering our community through transparent communication, participatory decision-making, and ongoing education. Our goal is to foster a sense of ownership and pride in Gabrovo's climate journey, making every resident a partner in our mission.





The Gabrovo Climate Transition Team is integral to these efforts, providing educational and engagement opportunities that empower the community. To ensure the efficient and successful implementation of Gabrovo's Climate Change Commitment (CCC), a dedicated transition team was established by Mayor Tanya Hristova in July 2024. This team operates under the oversight of the Gabrovo Council for Sustainable Urban Development, which is responsible for approving the integrated territorial investments outlined in the Gabrovo Integrated Development Plan 2027.

The transition team's composition is diverse and dynamic, involving not only Gabrovo Municipality's administration but also representatives from the quadruple-helix sectors. These sectors include regional and national authorities, business leaders, academia, and healthcare professionals.

The transition team's structure and responsibilities are carefully organized to leverage the unique skills and knowledge of each member. While maintaining simplicity, the team ensures effective communication. Their multifaceted duties include synchronizing efforts across various sectors, aligning initiatives with climate neutrality objectives, and fostering collaborative communication among stakeholders. This approach cultivates teamwork and mutual respect.

Gabrovo CCC has full political commitment the driving force behind Gabrovo's journey towards climate neutrality. Their dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit are what will guide us towards a sustainable future. Together, we are making Gabrovo a leader in climate action.

The purpose of the transition team is to develop a new inclusive model for urban development by involving various stakeholders, ensuring transparency and information exchange during the concept development stage, and improving interactions to encourage civic participation in decision-making. The lessons learned, which led to the formation of this team, emphasize the importance of coordinated dialogue, inclusive invitations for participation, and engaging the local community in the use, implementation, and long-term sustainability of projects. The transition team plays a crucial role in ensuring a smooth adaptation to evolving urban development needs, bridging the gap between planning and execution while fostering community trust and engagement. Key lessons include the need for structured processes with clear rules, distributed responsibilities and tasks, and a balance between formal and informal communication. Additionally, utilizing unified portals for comprehensive and up-to-date information, simplifying project presentations for the general public, integrating communication channels, and disseminating timely information are essential. These insights highlighted the need for a dedicated team to address these aspects effectively.

The rationale behind focusing on these five areas is Gabrovo's extensive experience in these domains. The Gabrovo municipality has been engaged in projects within these areas for years, thereby accumulating substantial expertise and knowledge. This experience, coupled with the already achieved reductions in CO₂ emissions and the implementation of new greenhouse gas (GHG) measures, underscores the municipality's commitment to sustainable development towards climate neutrality by 2030.

The Transition Team, overseen by the Council for Sustainable Urban Development and facilitated by the Directorate for Sustainable Development, is a crucial component of Gabrovo's climate neutrality journey. The team's interconnectedness is evident in its focus on five key domains: energy systems & built environment, mobility and transport, waste and circular economy, and green infrastructure & nature-based solutions. To address these areas

effectively, five groups of experts and stakeholders are allocated based on their expertise. The Directorate for Sustainable Development facilitates the work and communication between these groups, ensuring a two-way process and fostering collaboration among all participants. This interconnected approach, guided by the team's lessons learned and the Council's political commitment, aims to develop an inclusive model for urban development that prioritizes stakeholder involvement, transparency, and effective communication.





Transparency and Accountability: Building trust is essential for long-term success. Gabrovo is dedicated to maintaining open channels of communication, providing regular updates on our progress, and holding ourselves accountable to the highest standards. Our commitment to transparency ensures that all stakeholders are informed, engaged, and confident in our shared future. The collaboration between all committed parties in Gabrovo ecosystem ensures that all actions are transparent and accountable, fostering trust across all levels of governance.

CO-CREATION OF THE CCC FOR GABROVO

Gabrovo's Climate City Contract embodies a pioneering approach to urban climate governance, driven by a shared vision for achieving climate neutrality by 2030. This vision is supported by a comprehensive strategy that delineates the pathways to reach this ambitious goal. Emphasizing the importance of co-creation and collaborative leadership, the contract engages all stakeholders on local, regional and national level comprising of representatives of the quadruple helix and fosters continuous learning from the process that is led by Gabrovo Transition Team. The execution of Gabrovo's CCC is spearheaded by the city administration, which actively involves multiple stakeholders at various governance levels. This includes local government, businesses, academia, and civil society. By fostering a collaborative leadership approach, the city ensures that diverse perspectives and expertise are integrated into the decision-making process, enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of climate actions. Through this inclusive and adaptive approach, Gabrovo is well-positioned to attain its climate neutrality objectives and serve as an example for other cities.

However to accurately depict the reality of Gabrovo in terms of public works, decision-making, governance, and authority, it is essential to clarify the following:

Any financial or significant decision concerning the city of Gabrovo must receive mandatory approval from the Municipal Council, covering both budgetary and decision-making aspects. Additionally, all procedures related to these decisions must comply with public procurement regulations, ensuring transparency, fairness, and adherence to legal standards. This process can sometimes require technical time to pass the vote and come into effect.

Despite the constraints of a limited municipal budget and the challenges Gabrovo faces due to centralized funding and governmental bureaucratic delays, the city has successfully secured a substantial proportion of European and national funding for its projects. Compared to other Bulgarian municipalities, Gabrovo has also contributed a significant amount of co-financing from its own municipal budget, allowing it to continue making progress across all sectors, as outlined in the Gabrovo CCC Action Plan.

Gabrovo is committed to achieving climate neutrality and is prepared to implement a comprehensive Climate city contract plan. To ensure the success of this ambitious goal, the city has adopted several key strategies:

Transparency and Accountability: To ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of the CCC, Gabrovo has established regular monitoring and reporting mechanisms. These mechanisms provide stakeholders and the public with timely updates on the progress of climate initiatives, fostering trust and ensuring that the city remains accountable to its commitments.

Stakeholder Engagement: The co-creation process of the CCC involves active participation from all relevant stakeholders. This engagement ensures that the diverse perspectives and expertise of local government, businesses, academia, and civil society are integrated into the CCC. By involving stakeholders in the planning and execution phases, Gabrovo enhances the relevance and acceptance of its climate policies.



Citizens' Involvement: Citizens play a crucial role in the co-creation process of the CCC. They contribute ideas, feedback, and support for climate actions through public consultations and participatory workshops, studies and activities. This inclusive approach ensures that the voices of the community are heard and considered, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the city's climate goals.

Iterative Learning: The CCC is designed as a living document that evolves based on continuous learning and feedback from stakeholders. This iterative process will allow Gabrovo to identify and address obstacles, ensuring that the CCC remains relevant and effective over time. By embracing a culture of continuous improvement, the city can adapt to new challenges and opportunities in its pursuit of climate neutrality.

The ongoing political crisis in Bulgaria, which has persisted for several years, along with the absence of a stable government, has significantly delayed the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, the national programs for 2021-2027, and other related initiatives. These governmental delays and decisions have had a considerable impact on municipalities across the country. Local governments have struggled to access necessary funds and resources, hindering their ability to carry out critical projects and improvements. The uncertainty and instability at the national level have also disrupted the planning and execution of local initiatives, causing delays and setbacks in municipal operations and development efforts. In response to these challenges, the CCC will focus on five key areas: energy efficiency and the built environment, mobility and transport, waste management and the circular economy, green infrastructure, and nature-based solutions. The CCC will continue to involve and engage a broad range of stakeholders and citizens in relevant project activities and decision-making processes.

GABROVO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCE AND GOOD PRACTICES

The involvement of private stakeholders is crucial for the execution of the local climate policy, and the municipality is actively working to engage them in sustainable energy projects and initiatives.

- **Workshops and Brainstorming Sessions:** Regularly organized to gather ideas from diverse community members through events such as energy community, meetings of the private property owners, meetings of the Council for Sustainable urban development that comprises of various members of society – administrative bodies, academia, business, NGOs – RIC "Ambitious Gabrovo" is especially prominent for the city as it brings together academia, business and administration together to tackle and work on issues and projects.
- **Collaborative Projects:** continue project work that involves citizens, local organizations and municipal experts on projects pertaining to culture, sustainable governance, mobility and energy efficiency, also adapting to climate changes that has commenced last year for the municipality of Gabrovo. Projects that Gabrovo is involved in like AMIGOS, MountResilience, SOTERIA work with a broad stakeholder groups from the community comprising of members of – Technical University of Gabrovo, RIC "Ambitious Gabrovo", Regional Governor's office, ENERGO-PRO Gabrovo (Electricity Supply Company), Water Supply and Sewerage Gabrovo (local water utility company), Fire department, Police department, Tota Venkova General Hospital (MBAL Tota Venkova), National statistics institute, "Municipal Enterprise 'Urban Development', Insurance companies, Smart behavior – specializing in human behavior and change, and others.



- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Continuous collection of feedback through surveys, public forums, and social media that has been an ongoing practice for Municipality of Gabrovo. Apart from the websites for events that take place – chistogarovo.bg; Uzana Polyana Festival; radio programmes, FB page, Gabrovo has created a new platform dedicated specifically for projects on climate change and adapting to it. It is called FORUM. It is expected to be launched in the fall 2024.

2. Engaging Citizens

Engaging the community is a cornerstone of the CCC's mission. This is achieved through:

- **Public Events:** Gabrovo is hosting a variety of events such as festivals, concerts, and art exhibitions that are open to all throughout the year. There are seasonal festivals that take place during the year, but also a diverse array of artists that participate in the cultural life of the city – from classical and modern music through theatre, exhibitions and festivals.
- **Educational Programs:** Gabrovo offers a number of workshops, classes, and lectures that cater to different age groups and interests pertaining to health, mobility, energy systems, urban development and ecology. A number of these programs take place in the public, however there are those that cater specifically for children
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Encouraging citizens to participate in the CCC's activities by volunteering, which fosters a sense of ownership and involvement.

3. Governance Structure

The governance of Gabrovo CCC is designed to be inclusive and transparent:

Gabrovo's Climate Action Plan aims to foster collaboration and co-creation among stakeholders to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. A key principle of this plan is transparency and accountability, ensuring that decision-makers are held responsible for their actions and that these decisions are openly discussed and reported. Gabrovo aims to focus on five main domains of climate change:

1. **Energy Systems and Built Environment**
2. **Mobility and Transport**
3. **Waste and Circular Economy**
4. **Green Infrastructure**
5. **Nature-Based Solutions**

Each of these domains has an appointed leader who will work on issues specific to their area of expertise and relevant stakeholders. They will also be accountable for organizing and carrying out the initiatives within their respective areas of responsibility while communicating with the Council for Sustainable urban development and Directorate for sustainable development. Each individual domain is integral to Gabrovo's sustainable transformation and contributes accordingly to its specific goals.

To ensure transparency, the Municipality of Gabrovo will publicly share information about its climate actions, including decisions, implementation measures, and results. This will enable citizens and stakeholders to stay informed and contribute to the goal of climate neutrality.



The CCC plan emphasizes inclusivity and diversity, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of age, gender, education, place of residence, or socioeconomic status, have an opportunity to participate. The process will be designed to be accessible to all interested individuals, avoiding any form of discrimination or harassment.

Gabrovo has a long history of involving citizens in the process of shaping their community. This tradition of citizen participation is essential for achieving climate neutrality by 2030.

Social responsibility and inclusion is of paramount importance for reaching our climate goals. Gabrovo Municipality has a long history of citizens' engagement and thus continues to work on projects while seeking active citizen involvement, working collaboratively with local stakeholders to create systemic change.

The Municipality of Gabrovo is actively working to empower its citizens and foster a sense of belonging and responsibility for climate-related issues. They have established several points of contact between citizens and local government actors, including, but not limited to the following parties:

- **District Information Point:** A one-stop shop for information and assistance.
- **RIC "Ambitious Gabrovo":** A resource centre for climate initiatives and smart specialization.
- **Monthly Vending Machine Events:** Regular events to engage the community.
- **Planned and Ad Hoc Meetings:** Opportunities for open dialogue and collaboration on everyday climate-related issues, such as waste disposal.
- **Open door policy** - Additionally, Gabrovo has an open-door policy, allowing citizens to call, visit, or receive advice on their issues via phone or personal visits to the municipality. Citizens can also book meetings with the mayor during regular open days.

This proactive approach aims to create a collaborative environment where citizens feel involved and responsible for addressing climate challenges in their community.

The processes of informing, monitoring and joint learning are crucial to ensure that climate actions are on track. However, this can be challenging due to the diverse range of stakeholders involved and the focus on individual and corporate actions. To address these challenges, the municipality will prioritize inclusivity in citizen participation measures, ensuring that underrepresented groups, including those from different age, gender, ethnic, religious, and minority backgrounds, are represented.

Joint learning provides a valuable platform for sharing knowledge and experiences among stakeholders and the community. By integrating a citizen-centered approach in the already established bureaucratic one, Gabrovo aims to set a new and innovative way for citizen's inclusion in the decision making. As clarified in the action plan, the decision making process for municipality of Gabrovo is oftentimes burdensome as it involves approval by the city council. Any decision that pertains to a new activity, project and or practice, and financing has to go through the city council's approval. Gabrovo's City Council is responsible for a wide range of activities that shape the community, namely

- **Urban Development:** They oversee the planning and development of infrastructure projects, including roads, public buildings, and parks.
- **Public Services:** This includes waste management, water supply, and public transportation.
- **Education and Culture:** They support local schools, libraries, and cultural institutions, organizing events and programs to enrich community life.
- **Economic Development:** The council works to attract businesses and investments to the area, fostering economic growth and job creation.



- **Environmental Initiatives:** They implement policies and projects aimed at sustainability and environmental protection.

For the Gabrovo CCC and its strategic implementation an array of various stakeholders from municipality – administrative and other departments, the Council for sustainable urban development, actors from municipal enterprises will be involved. But also service staff, including transport, waste management actors, universities, schools, national actors, and the industrial sector, will be involved in the process. Given the significant contributions of the transport, mobility, and industrial sectors to Gabrovo's emissions, the city will prioritize their involvement in assessing and implementing measures to bridge the gap towards climate neutrality. Technical meetings with sector leaders and dynamic sessions will be held to explore innovative approaches and inspire systemic, demand-driven actions.

By adopting a collaborative and inclusive approach, Gabrovo aims to create a sustainable and resilient future for its citizens and communities.

As one of the most proactive Bulgarian municipalities, Gabrovo places significant emphasis on strong cooperation with various levels of governance, including regional, national, and European. National-level policies and actions support capital allocation toward achieving net zero, including in cities. However, the prolonged political crisis has become a major obstacle, delaying access to available funding and the implementation of planned activities and projects. Citizen involvement is essential for achieving the goals of the CCC. Direct engagement of residents in various activities, including design and implementation, ensures their active participation in initiatives. These citizen engagement strategies aim to provide meaningful opportunities for residents to connect with the narrative and purpose of the CCC actions, fostering a deeper collective understanding, enabling co-creation, encouraging a sense of ownership of Gabrovo's climate policies, and stimulating local investment. By fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility, Gabrovo aims to not only meet its climate targets but also to inspire lasting, sustainable change that will benefit future generations. The involvement of businesses, NGOs, and educational institutions will further amplify the impact, ensuring that innovation and expertise are fully utilized in the city's climate journey. Through these combined efforts, Gabrovo seeks to position itself as a national leader in sustainable urban development, demonstrating that meaningful change is possible through collective action. A comprehensive citizens' engagement strategy will be developed as part of the NetZero Hero project. This strategy will include several key components: community surveys, co-creation workshops, pilot projects and demonstrations, capacity building and training for citizens, and community outreach and awareness campaigns.

Gabrovo is committed to achieving climate neutrality by leveraging the expertise and tools provided by administrative, financial, citizen, and academic institutions. By working closely with all citizens, Gabrovo ensures that its efforts align with the city's vision of being clean, green, smart, and sustainable, while adhering to the principle of "no one is left behind".



5 Signatories

The table below enlists the signatories¹ who are committing to this CCC, and thereby to help the city achieve its goal to reach climate neutrality by 2030. Specific agreements that articulate the details of the climate action(s) between the municipality and signatories are added to the individual contracts in Appendix 1 (see sample in section 6). The number and relevance of signatories' commitments is likely to increase over time.

Name of the signatory (organisation)	Sector / Domain / Level of operation ²	Legal form	Name of the responsible person	Position of the responsible person
Gabrovo Municipality	All sectors of Gabrovo CCC	Local authority	Tanya Hristova	Mayor
Technical University of Gabrovo	All sectors of Gabrovo CCC	State university	Prof. Iliya Zhelezarov	Rector
Regional Innovation Center «Ambitious Gabrovo»	All sectors of Gabrovo CCC	NGO	Nikolinka Hinkova	Chair of Board

¹ Climate City Contract signatories may be individuals or organisations. They ideally include national and/or regional governments, for example concrete agreements/ commitments made through the multi-level governance engagement processes supported by NetZeroCities, CapaCities, and other emerging national level initiatives.

² Please mention if the organisation is active at local, regional, national, or international level.



6 Sample contract with signatures


We, the undersigned, hereby pledge our collective efforts to achieve climate neutrality for City X by 2030. We are united in our ambition and commitments as outlined in the Gabrovo Climate City Contract.

Date of signature

Name

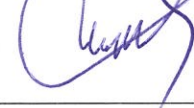
Signature

Mayor of Gabrovo


11.09.2024 Tanya Hristova 

Technical University of Gabrovo

Rector

11.09.2024 Iliya Zhelezarov 

Regional Innovation Center «Ambitious Gabrovo»

10.09.2024 Nikolina Hinkova 



Appendix 1: Individual / Cluster Signatory Commitments (to be added before submitting the Climate City Contract