

Gender Budget Watchdog Report of Planned and Executed Funds in the EBRD green projects for Western Balkan and Moldova



*Gender Responsive Budgetary
Analysis Framework for
Green City Action Plan*

*Green City Action Plan - a case study
for the EBRD green projects*



June, 2026

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This report was prepared with funds of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) in the framework of the project Gender Budget Watchdog Network II. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation, is the contractual partner supporting this project. The content of this document is solely the responsibility of the Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) and does not necessarily share or reflect the views and interpretations of the Austrian Development Agency and the Swedish International Development Agency.



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ACRONYMS:

- EBRD** - European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- EUR** - euro coins
- GCAP** - Green City Action Plan
- GHG** - Green House Gas
- GrCF** - Green City Framework
- GRES** - Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
- ICLEI** - International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
- NGOs** - non-governmental organisations
- OECD** - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF THE ANALYSIS

This analysis was commissioned by the Center for Research and Policy Making (Skopje, North Macedonia) as part of the project '*Strengthening transparency and accountability for gender equality in Western Balkans and Moldova (Gender Budget Watchdog Network, Phase II)*' in autumn 2025. The purpose of the analysis is to assess the planning and execution of climate-related public funds in Western Balkans and Moldova through a gender-responsive budgeting lens and to analyze how gender considerations are integrated into the allocation and use of funds from European Bank for Reconstruction and Development green projects. EBRD has several streams of funding for 'green projects' (e.g. Green Cities, Just Transitions, Green Economy Financing Facilities, Corporate Climate Governance Facility, and others).¹ Imposed by constraints of limited time for research and human resources, and by mutual agreement, the framework of Green Cities and the analysis on Green City Action Plan were established as the focus of the analysis.

The choice for looking at the EBRD's Green Cities Framework and the development and adoption of a Green City Action Plan fits the request to analyze climate-related public funds. The EBRD's GrCF was set up to help cities in reaching their commitments to climate change, by reducing the green gas emissions and changing the infrastructure and energy consumptions.² The administration of the city (the institution of the mayor, of the city council, the departments ensuring the administration of a city, the service companies own by the municipality) is the primary client and beneficiary of a Green City Action Plan.³ A Green City Action plan is commissioned by a municipality, paid by the EBRD for the technical assistance part of hiring contractors, developed as a collaborative effort of these actors for the benefit of the city and its community. In this way and by these terms, the public function of Mayor has a fundamental role as it is the decision-making position engaging the city's resources (especially the financial ones) to such an exercise. Along with the well and clearly defined objective to address climate change, the EBRD's GrCF is relevant from this analysis as it affirmed its aims to: '1) provide policy support on gender equality and support municipalities in introducing principles of gender equality into their practices; 2) ensure greater gender equality in access to and use of municipal services; 3) building capacity of city administrators and key stakeholders to ensure greater gender equality in access to employment; and 4) increasing public awareness and enhancing social, economic and environmental co-benefits.'⁴

These objectives were to be translated within the methodology developed and provided to carry out the Green City Action Plan and subsequent actions and projects. Still, as we show in this

¹ EBRD Green, <https://www.ebrd.com/home/who-we-are/ebrd-values/ebrd-environmental-social-sustainability/EBRD-green.html>

² Annex 4. Environmental and Social Management Framework and System (ESMFS) of the Green Cities Facility, 1.1 Background: 'The Green Cities Facility provides cities with the tools essential to make substantive, positive improvements to their environmental performance and establish important, globally adaptable precedents for addressing the increasingly pressing challenges related to climate change in urban areas. [...] Facilitate finance for climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience investments in priority sectors including: public building energy efficiency, water and wastewater, urban transport, urban roads and lighting, solid waste management and district heating modernisation.'

³ EBRD Green Cities. Green City Action Plan methodology (2019), p 7: 'The EBRD should work to ensure senior political commitment to kick-start the GCAP process. To legitimise action, the mayor (or equivalent) and/or the city council should give municipal staff the official go-ahead and mandate to work on the GCAP. Municipal staff need to be engaged early on in the process, as staff members will institutionalise and implement the GCAP process and monitor developments.'

⁴ Annex 4. Environmental and Social Management Framework and System (ESMFS) of the Green Cities Facility (2018), 1.2 Facility Description

analysis, the operationalization of these objectives has been problematic. The first versions of the GCAP methodology did not include any aspects of gender or gender equality in the baseline assessment, proposed actions, stakeholders' involvement, and others. It was later, after 2020, when several GCAPs and projects had been implemented, and their outcomes were unsatisfactory for several stakeholders, including civil society representatives ⁵, EBRD reviewed the GCAP methodology and included specific aspects of gender equality. The baseline of GCAP was to consider several gender aspects that might support the assessment proposed. A gender expert was requested to be present in the team supporting the development of the GCAP, with a specifically allocated budget for contract.

The EBRD's GrCF projects have been evaluated from a gender perspective by non - governmental organizations like Bankwatch (2019 - 2025) ⁶ and by the Evaluation Department of the EBRD (2023) ⁷. Still, the current analysis brings specific aspects and new findings as it is focused on countries from a specific region (Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova), covers the entire timespan of the GrCF Programme (2018 - 2025) and, most importantly, apply a gender responsive budgetary lens on GCAPs process and their contents. The last aspect is the substantive novelty of the analysis, not encountered in any of the previous evaluations.

The main questions for this analysis are:

- 1) How the planning and execution of climate-related public funds in the Western Balkans and Moldova have been done/carried out through a gender-responsive budgeting lens?
- 2) How are gender considerations integrated into the allocation and use of funds from the European Bank of Development and Reconstruction into green projects, more specifically within the Green Cities Programme to develop Green City Action Plans?

The **specific questions** of the analysis are focused on the development process of the Green City Action Plan and its content:

- Within each city context, has the process of developing and proposing GCAP been gender sensitive? In which way and for which aspects and areas?
- Has the adopted GCAP for each city taken into consideration gender aspects of the local population in the proposed measures? In which ones? At what level?
- Have aspects of gender equality infrastructure (legislation, institutions, experts, reports and analyses) been considered and included in the adopted GCAP in each city?
- If and to what level the measured proposed in the adopted GCAP of each city have been sensitive to gender?
- If any (new) entry points to include gender aspects in the implementation of the adopted measures of the GCAPs can be identified.

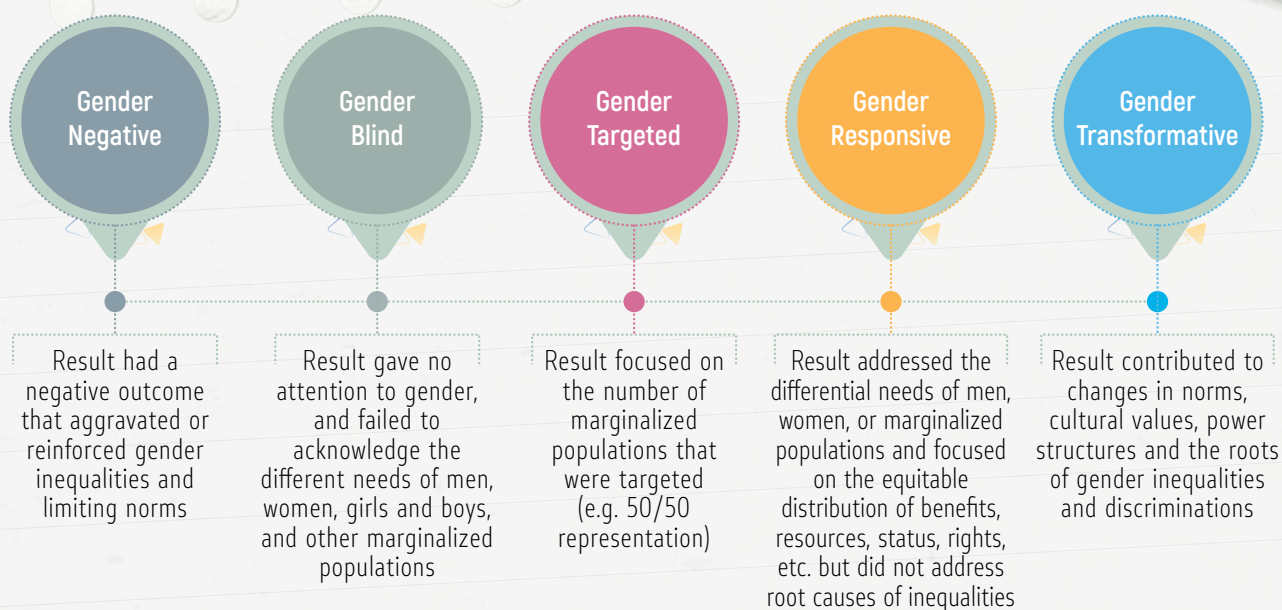
The analysis uses the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) to look at the actions proposed in the GCAPs. The GRES Methodology was chosen by Gender Budget Watchdog Network to be used in this project for monitoring the gender perspective on climate change financing.

⁵ Fidanka Bacheva-McGrath (2020): 'Informing women is the first step to empowering them.Evidence of meaningful implementation of the Gender Action Plan for EBRD and GCF's Green Cities Framework - not found.', CEE Bankwatch, <https://bankwatch.org/blog/informing-women-is-the-first-step-to-empowering-them>

⁶ <https://bankwatch.org/ebd> and <https://bankwatch.org/ebd/updates>

⁷ EBRD Evaluation Department (2023): Supporting Green Transformations in Municipalities. The EBRD Green Cities Programme interim evaluation (2016 - 2021)

The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale



Source: Adapted from the Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, IEO, UNDP, 2015

The analysis makes a brief presentation of the scop and objectives of the Green Cities Programme of the EBRD, introduces the cities from Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova that joined the Green Cities, had a Green City Action Plan adopted and started to implement sub-projects under this framework, presents briefly the Green City Action Plan methodology focusing on the gender aspects requested to be considered and included, presents briefly the methodology of gender responsive budgeting lens applied in the analysis, presents the steps taken for the analysis and main findings of the analysis. It ends with conclusions and recommendations.

2. CITY LEVEL GREEN FUNDING MECHANISM: GREEN CITIES PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN BANK OF RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (2016 - 2025)

2.1. BRIEF INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2016, the Board of Directors of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) approved the framework for investment called **Green Cities Framework** (GrCF) with the aim to provide loans to governments, municipalities, municipal owned and private companies providing municipal services, in the countries from EBRD regions.⁸ The initial adopted budget was of 250 millions EUR to be spend in a period of five years. The framework proved successful as the allocated budget was spend within two years and in 2018, the Board adopted a next Green City Framework 2, with a headroom of 1.1 billion EUR, with 700 million from the Bank's own capital and the remainder from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other donors. Since 2016, the GrCF and GrCF2 have mobilised nearly 1.5 billion EUR in EBRD and donor funding.⁹ By the end of 2025, the BoD of the EBRD approved a Green City Framework 3 (GrCF), with a budget of up to 3 billion EUR.¹⁰ The GrCF3 will be divided into two 'windows': 350 million EUR under Green Cities Framework 3 - Window I (GCF co-financing) ('GrCF3 W1') for the fifteen eligible countries¹¹; 2,650 million EUR under Green Cities Framework 3 - Window II ('GrCF3 W2') for all EBRD Countries of Operations ('COO'). GrCF3 availability period will be until end of 2029.

2.2. THE 'GREEN CITIES' OF WESTERN BALKANS AND REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The current analysis is focused on cities (which are mainly capital cities) from Western Balkans countries and Republic of Moldova that joined the Green Cities Framework, became 'Green Cities' by adopting a Green City Action Plan and were approved loans from the EBRD to invest in municipal infrastructures, like public transport, heating system, water, energy efficiency in public buildings, and/or waste water. Several cities were among the first clients of EBRD's Green Cities Framework, like Tirana (Albania) in 2017, Zenica, Banja Luck and Sarajevo (Bosnia and Hertegovina), Belgrade (Serbia) and Chisinau (Republic of Moldova) in 2018 joining the GrCF. In the next years, up until 2025, several other cities (Pristina, Skopje, Novi Sad, Balti) joined the GrCF, adding up to 12 cities. The current analysis is based on information from 10 cities (out of 12). This limitation is imposed by time as two cities (Novi Sad and Tuzla) did not have their GCAPs available by the end of 2025: Novi Sad carried out the development of GCAP, but only at the end of 2025 announced its possible adoption, but no document was publicly available; Tuzla joined the GrCF only in mid-2025, and even if it announced the intention to carry out a GCAP, by the end of 2025, no information was available about further developments.

⁸ EBRD regions: <https://www.ebrd.com/home/what-we-do/where-we-invest.html>

⁹ 'The Green Cities Framework (GrCF), approved by the Board in November 2016, set an ambitious agenda for the Bank's municipal business, with the over-arching aim being 'to serve as a sector-wide catalyst for addressing environmental challenges at the City level'. After only 2 years of operation, the Framework proved its ability to act as such a catalyst with the utilisation of the entire EUR 250 million headroom. As a consequence, in October 2018 a new Framework was approved by the Board, Green Cities Framework 2 (GrCF2), with a headroom of EUR 1.1 billion, with EUR 700 million from the Bank's own capital and the remainder from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other donors. Since 2016, the GrCF and GrCF2 have mobilised nearly EUR 1.5 billion in EBRD and donor funding.'

¹⁰ Green Cities Framework 3, approved by the BoD in November 2024.

¹¹ Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia and Tunisia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Montenegro has joined EBRD, and initially, in 2018, Podgorica (its capital city) announced to joining to GrCF and aimed to become a Green City.¹² Only in 2024, the municipality of Podgorica contracted two loans for energy efficiency in public buildings (schools and hospitals) of 32 million EUR, but still no news and development of adopting a GCAP by the end of 2025.

Due to these limitations, there are only 10 cities and their adopted GCAPs that support the current analysis. All 10 cities joined both the GrCF and GrCF 2 programmes of EBRD.

TABLE 1: Cities in Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova in EBRD's Green Cities

Country	Join EBRD	City in GrCF	Year to join GrCF	GCAP adopted (year)	GCAP Budget (EUR) (000s)
Albania	1992	Tirana	2017 - GrCF	2018	285
Bosnia& Herzegovina	1996	Zenica	2018 - GrCF	2019	300
		Banja Luka	2018 - GrCF	2020	300
		Sarajevo	2018 - GrCF	2020	300
		Brcko District	2022 - GrCF 2	2024	275
		Tuzla Canton	2024 - GrCF 2	Not yet	-
Kosovo	2012	Pristina	2019 - GrCF	2021	290
Montenegro	2006	Podgorica	2018 - GrCF	-	-
North Macedonia	1993	Skopje	2019 - GrCF	2020	300
Serbia	2001	Belgrade	2018 - GrCF	2021	500
		Novi Sad	2019 - GrCF	End of 2025	300
Moldova	1992	Chisinau	2018 - GrCF	2019	300
		Balti	2019 - GrCF	2021	300

Source: The information presented is compiled by the author based on information available at ebrdgreencities.com and <https://www.ebrd.com/home/what-we-do/projects.html>

To be able to join the EBRD's GrCF and become a 'Green City', there are several conditions that a city needs to fulfill simultaneously: 1) to be a city in the EBRD regions; 2) to have a population of at least 100,000 (cities with a population of 50,000 will be considered in exceptional circumstances); 3) to be willing to conduct a Green City Action Plan; 4) to initiate an investment trigger infrastructure project in one of the following sectors: solid waste, water and wastewater, urban transport, district energy, low-carbon and climate-resilient buildings, renewable energy, street lighting, distribution network, smart solutions, climate change resilience and nature based solutions; 5) the initiated projects must target a 20% reduction in GHG emissions, energy or resource consumption, or pollution; or have significant climate resilience benefits.¹³

The population criteria imposed a selection of capital cities and of second biggest cities in the country, with feasible financial resources that can guarantee for the loans. The financial capacities of the municipalities are not among the criteria imposed, but they were assessed when preparing the Green City Action Plan, and served as the basis for loan capacities to be able to implement the

¹² <https://www.ebrd.com/home/news-and-events/news/2018/podgorica-joins-ebrd-green-cities.html>

¹³ <https://www.ebrd.com/home/work-with-us/projects/psd/48171.html#customtab-ff5e5ca94a-item-f8b3743d32-tab>

proposed projects.¹⁴ Thus, population criteria is extremely relevant as it drives indirectly the financial capacities and the economic power of the city.

TABLE 2: Cities in Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova in EBRD's Green Cities by population and budgets

Country	City in GrCF	Population (year)	% women in the population	City budget - millions EUR	GCAP adopted (year)
Albania	Tirana	389 323 (2023)	53	141	2018
Bosnia& Herzegovina	Zenica	107 705 (2022)	51	-	2019
	Banja Luka	185 177 (2022)	52	66	2020
	Sarajevo	419 543 (2022)	52	-	2020
	Brcko District	81 622 (2022)	50	77	2024
	Tuzla Canton	108 073 (2022)	53	-	-
Kosovo	Pristina	227 466 (2024)	50	86	2021
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	-
North Macedonia	Skopje	422 540 (2021)	51	90	2020
Serbia	Belgrade	1 682 720 (2024)	53	778	2021
	Novi Sad	260 438 (2022)	53	-	End of 2025
Moldova	Chisinau	720 128 (2024)	54	174	2019
	Balti	90 954 (2025)	55	33	2021

Source: The population data for the cities were taken from citypopulation.de, where % of women in the population is presented. Data on budget is from the information provided in the GCAP, the latest available year. It presents the revenues of the city.

Two observations on city populations and its impact on economic capacity of the city.

One aims at the gender distribution of the population: half or even more (up to 55% in Balti) of the population living in each of these 12 cities are women. This reality is little or not at all reflected in the social and economical baseline presentation within the GCAPs. Only two cities (Brcko District and Balti) present gender aspects of social and economic situations of the city, present sex disaggregated data and highlight aspects of gender differences, relevant for the areas of actions and intervention (transport, energy, etc.). The GCAPs for two other cities (Belgrade and Chisinau) mention briefly gender differences in terms of population (Belgrade) and use of public transport (Chisinau) in their baseline part. The other six GCAPs are completely gender-blind documents in their baseline reporting, with no reference, data or aspect related to gender, gender equality, gender differences in respect to the social and economic aspects of the city.

The second observation aims at the economic power of bigger cities: there is no simple direct link between the size of a city and its economic capacity, but it is a proven tendency. Also, cities exist and function within the economic realm of the country, thus the economic situation of the country impacts on the situation of the city and is reflected in it. Balti has a bigger population

¹⁴ Each GCAP, in the introductory section where it presents the city, has a section called 'Financial overview' where it presents the budget situation of the city in the last three years (approximately), with analysis of its financial capacities to produce revenue, to collect the local taxes, to access national and international financial support. Based on this information, the financial capacities of the city to support the proposed projects are estimated (how much of the estimated budgets of the proposed projects can be supported by the municipality's budget).

compared to Brcko District, but its budgets is two times less. Chisinau, the capital of Republic of Moldova, second biggest city in terms of population among the ten, has, in comparison, half of the population of Belgrad (the biggest city among the 10), but four times less budget. The economic advancement and development of the entire country counts. The big cities, capital cities, are indeed the engine, the most advanced parts of a country that can guarantee loans for green investments. By focusing on cities to invest in infrastructure that reduce GHG emissions, the EBRD GrCF bets on the engines of these economies to move things forward, financially too, along with climate targets. To access GrCF, a city needs to propose and contract a 'trigger' investment project in municipal infrastructure sectors, and to also addressed climate change mitigation or adaptation. The city commits to develop and adopt a Green City Action Plan. The GCAP is developed with the financial support of the EBRD and by external consultants that carry out baseline diagnostics using a set methodology and identify the priority environmental issues to be addressed (GCAP Methodology). The GCAP needs to be adopted at city level, by its decision-makers (mayor and city council), after a set of consultations and discussions with several relevant stakeholders within the city. Once adopted, the GCAP offers the base and framework for future sub-projects to be funded through GrCF. This signals the role of GCAPs at city level in attracting funding for infrastructure development within the commitments for addressing climate change risks and adaptation.

Most cities from Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova (10) contracted the 'trigger' investment projects before 2020, while Brcko District and Tuzla Canton joined recently (2022, 2024).

TABLE 3: Trigger investment projects in the cities from Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova in GrCF

Country	City in GrCF	Year to join GrCF	Trigger investment project (year)	Budget (000s EUR)	GCAP (year)
Albania	Tirana	2017	UKT Tirana Water Company - 2018	15,000	2018
Bosnia& Herzegovina	Zenica	2018	Energy Efficient Refurbishment of Zenica Hospital - 2018	10,000	2019
	Banja Luka	2018	Banja Luka District Heating - 2017	8,347	2020
	Sarajevo	2018	Sarajevo Water - 2017	10,000	2020
	Brcko District	2022	Brcko Water - 2021	13,000	2024
	Tuzla Canton	2024	Energy-efficiency improvements to public buildings - 2025	-	Not yet
Kosovo	Pristina	2019	Pristina Public Buildings - 2019	5,000	2021
Montenegro	-	-			-
North Macedonia	Skopje	2019	Skopje Bus project - 2019	10,000	2020
Serbia	Belgrade	2018	Belgrade Green Boulevard -2017	20,000	2021
	Novi Sad	2019	Novi Sad Bus Fleet Renewal - 2019	15,000	2025
Moldova	Chisinau	2018	Chisinau buildings - 2017	5,000	2019
	Balti	2019	Balti Trolleybus Project - 2019	2,500	2021

Source: The information presented is compiled by the author based on information available at ebrdgreencities.com and <https://www.ebrd.com/home/what-we-do/projects.html>

GrCF proved of interest for the cities in these regions and also a good source of funding for infrastructure projects at city level. The total amount of the contracted projects as 'trigger' project to start GCAP reached almost 114 million EUR, representing 25% of the total amount contracted by these cities by the end of 2024. As reported by the EBRD, the 10 cities from Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova with a GCAP adopted contracted projects of around 447 million EUR in the GrCF.¹⁵ The projects are mainly focused on energy efficiency in public buildings (4), on improving and extending water infrastructure within the municipality (3), and on improving and greening the public transport (buses and trolleybuses) (3). (see Table 8: Investment projects in cities from Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova after GCAP adoption, below).

2.3. GENDER ASPECTS OF THE METHODOLOGY FOR A GREEN CITY ACTION

2.3. a) Methodology for a Green City Action Plan - development, structure, relevance

The over-arching aim of the **Green City Framework** was to serve as a sector-wide catalyst for addressing environmental challenges at the city level. The preparation and implementation of a Green City Action Plan would help in identifying the city level environmental challenges and set up a budget estimate for implementing actions to address these challenges. A **Green City Action Plan** is a tool to help cities 'to plan and deliver' green funds infrastructure projects.

The creation of a Green City Action Plan, which is a strategic document adopted at city level, is based on a methodology proposed by EBRD in 2016. The **Green City Action Methodology** was prepared by the OECD and ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) for the EBRD and was made available at the beginning of 2017. This version was used in the preparation of GCAPs for Chisinau, Tirana, and Zenica. A slightly changed version was used for the development of the GCAPs for Banja Luka, Sarajevo, and Skopje. At the end of 2020, a revision version of the GCAP Methodology was published, following the request to have several cross-cutting issues introduced, (including gender aspects). The revised version considered changes requested as feed-back from already adopted GCAPs, and from dealing with COVID-19. This revised version was used in the preparation of GCAPs for Balti, Belgrade, Pristina. In 2024, another revision of the GCAP Methodology took place, followed by its publication in 2025. The GCAP for Brcko Distric was prepared based on this third improved version. Relevant for our analysis is the introduction of gender aspects and the use of gender equality as a frame of assessment starting with 2020/2021. These changes were at the level of stakeholders, city baseline assessment, risks and vulnerabilities assessment, and co-benefits assessments. Other crucial elements of the GCAP methodology remained untouched by the gender perspective.

Developing and adopting a GCAP at city level have been used as means of identifying priority environmental challenges facing a city and subsequent green investments, together with wider strategic objectives. Once a city joined the GrCF and had its GCAP adopted, it can apply for loans within the GrCF to fund the projects presented in the GCAP. This is one of the reasons GCAP adoption became so relevant for ensuring access to green financing at city level. A GCAP became a strategic document whereby environmental challenges are benchmarked, priority areas for environmental improvements identified, environmental objectives defined and indicative investments determined.¹⁶ Starting with 2020, gender equality became a cross-cutting thematic, but not a project and action objective, as of itself.

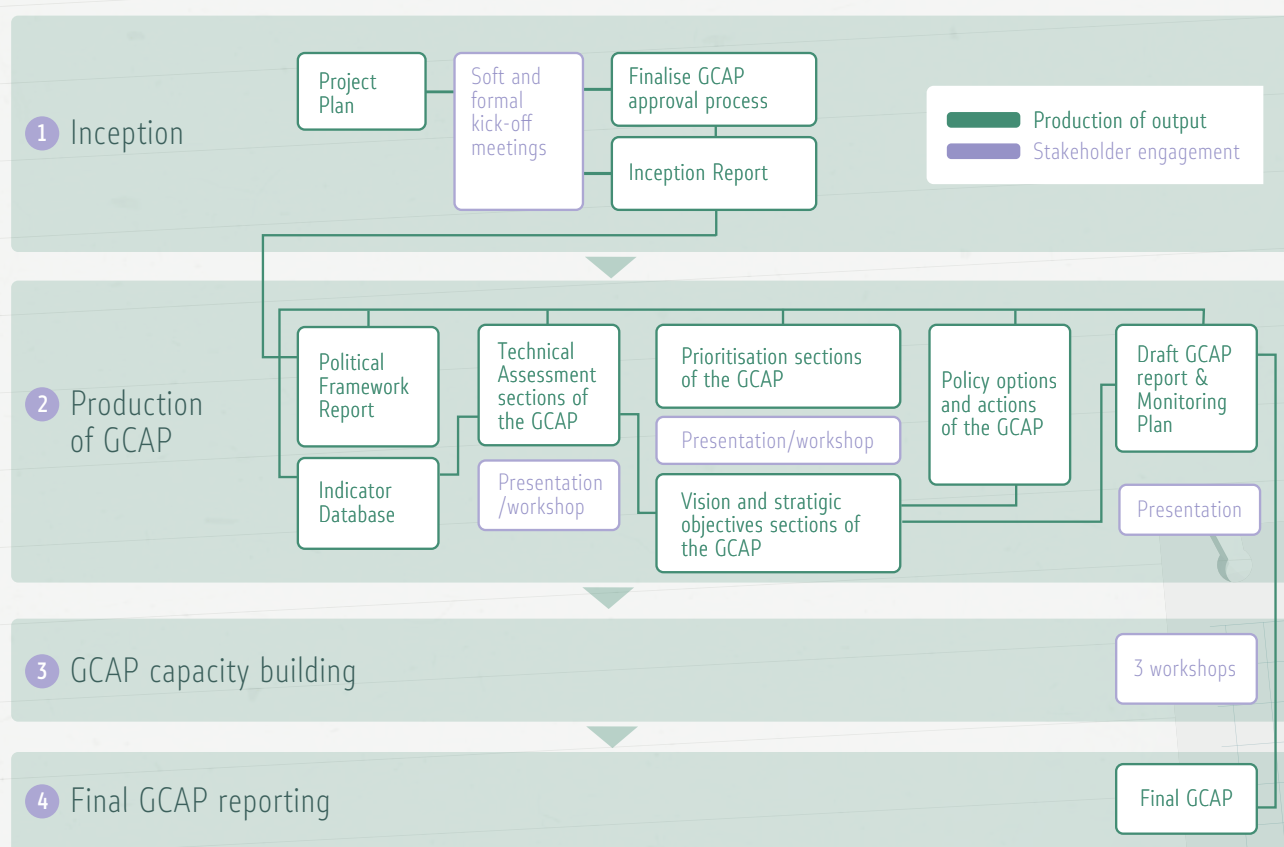
¹⁵ See <https://www.ebrd.com/home/what-we-do/projects.html>

¹⁶ The Green Cities project objectives, at <https://www.ebrd.com/home/work-with-us/projects/psd/48171.html#customtab-ff5e5ca94a-item-f8b3743d32-tab>, Green Cities specific web-page ([ebrdgreencities.com](https://www.ebrdgreencities.com)) (<https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/public/our-cities/gcap/>)

GCAP methodology takes a systematic approach to identifying, benchmarking, prioritizing and guiding green city actions by city. The process involves four steps:

- 1. Green city baseline and priority setting:** measuring the current status of environmental challenges in the city based on 70 core indicators and identifying the priority environmental challenges that need to be addressed.
- 2. Green City Action Plan:** preparing a document that articulates the city's vision, strategic objectives and priority actions and investments to address priority environmental challenges and meet the objectives.
- 3. Implementation:** execution of the GCAP.
- 4. Monitoring and evaluation:** monitoring the GCAP results and updating the GCAP as necessary.

FIGURE 2: Green City Action Plan Development Process



Source: Figure 3-2: GCAP development process and tasks, based on the GCAP Methodology 2016 of OECD & ICLEI, in Green City Action Plan for Banja Luka (2020, p. 9)

Having a Green City Action Plan carried out and adopted, a city benefits from:

I) The existence of a unified an environmental risks assessment

The GCAP presents a picture of the environmental situation of the respective city (climate change risks, pollution factors, mitigation actions), within the legislative and policy frame of the country. Given that factors impacting the environment change very slowly, the presented pictures remain for long term and have a long-term use. The legislative and policy capacities change more frequently.

II) The existence of a list of projects addressed at the environmental risks identified

The most consistent part of a GCAP is the list of actions (projects) that can be taken (implemented) to address the identified environmental risks. The area where these actions need to focus on are: transport – municipal transport; ensuring energy efficiency, especially in public buildings; water distribution systems at municipal level either by improving the infrastructure or the treatment of water; waste management either improving collection, sorting, treatment; land use by reconsidering the green-grey-blue distribution in municipal own land, land allocation and exploitation; and climate change risks, adaptation and mitigation plans and preparations.

III) The existence of a financial estimate of the city capacity to attract green funds and the requested budget for implementation

The GCAP assesses the financial capacities of the city and presents means through which the city can extend these capacities, increase them, or make them stronger to secure funds for the proposed projects in the GCAP. Each action (project) proposed has an estimated budget needed for implementation. For example, for the 10 cities analyzed, the estimated budgets to implement all the proposed actions in the GCAPs vary from 186 million EUR (Balti) to 5 221 million EUR (Belgrade) (see Table 6: GCAPs' estimated budgets and number of actions proposed by GCAP, below).

2.3.b) The gender aspects of the Methodology for a Green City Action Plan

The gender aspects introduced by the revised version of the GCAP Methodology in 2020 addressed:

Stakeholders: A stakeholder can be a persons, groups and/or organisations who are directly and/or indirectly affected by the GCAP development or outcomes; have an interest in the GCAP development or outcomes; or have the potential to influence GCAP development or outcomes or City operations. Stakeholders present their views on the current situation of the environmental quality, urban planning and infrastructure development of the city; their perceived vulnerabilities or risks the city faces in terms of maintain quality and consistency of municipal operations and are involved in prioritizing the set of challenges identified at city level. Stakeholders can be engaged 'in multiple ways, either as members of, or advisers to, the GCAP team or related working groups, through a parallel stakeholder group that works with the GCAP team, or through stakeholder forums organized throughout the planning process with one or more groups. 'Along with representatives from public organisations such as city administrations, municipal utilities, public housing or social care organisations, or national ministries, the EBRD encourages cities to include diverse stakeholders from NGOs, **women's organisations**, private business, universities, research and knowledge institutions, as well as international and bilateral organisations to enrich the GCAP development process. [...] The EBRD encourages all relevant stakeholders to be included in the GCAP development process, regardless of their gender, place of birth, age, sexual orientation, disabilities or other circumstances. Particular efforts should be made to involve women and stakeholders from under-represented or vulnerable groups (such as people or groups of people who may be more adversely affected by project impacts than others by virtue of characteristics such as their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, indigenous status, age (including children, youths and the elderly), physical or mental disability, literacy, political views, or social status).'

Green City Baseline: the assessment of the social and economic conditions: 'Describe the socio-economic and demographic landscape in the City with the goal of identifying any social and economic issues that could influence urban environmental performance. [...] Demographics: city-level population data including - inter alia - gender, age structure, disabilities, nationality, and other relevant groups. Key social conditions and trends influencing the operations of urban sectors need to be identified; Economic: city-level economic productivity and growth, per capita and household economic data, key economic trends, and employment trends and levels of education in the city level (by gender, and other groups – youth, people with disabilities, etc.).' This assessment should include a specific section on *'Gender and vulnerable population representation and participation in city development:* an assessment of the extent to which men, women and vulnerable groups **have equal economic and other opportunities** in the City's governance and socio-economic framework, and their **representation in a City's decision-making and governance processes**. The assessment should consider institutional, political and legal barriers women and vulnerable groups, who may face disproportionate barriers to economic opportunities, face to participate in the City's infrastructure development. The assessment should answer whether **there is political support within the municipal government towards vulnerable groups and gender-inclusive policies and approaches**, and if the City has already developed such approaches. If yes, the assessment will review these policy approaches, and will ensure that this assessment builds on any urban policy previously developed. It should also consider **a City's capacity to develop and implement gender-responsive policies and measures.**'

Environmental risk assessment: this considers the sensitivity of systems and assets, and communities and people to expected impacts and their respective adaptive capacity. The assessment identifies communities and persons, including their locations, exposed to hazards and impacts identified previously. In identifying vulnerable communities, the assessment should consider **opportunities to promote gender equality and economic inclusion**. The assessment then classifies the vulnerability of certain communities based on their sensitivity and capacity to adapt to expected impacts.

The proposed actions and their prioritisation: the proposed actions need to be evaluated to consider opportunities to maximise co-benefits. The social and economic co-benefits of each proposed action needs to be assessed and presented. Among the social and economic benefits, gender equality is to be included and considered.

The GCAP Methodology is well developed and clear in how gender aspects can be included and considered at the level of stakeholders and when carrying out social baseline assessment, it becomes elusive (less clear) and lax as to how gender aspects are to be included in environmental risk assessments and vulnerabilities and action prioritization or benefits assessment. This discrepancy affected the content of GCAPs. The analysis shows that lack of clarity and guidance led the contractors to differentiated ways to assess gender equality co-benefits of actions, to less transparent and unclear methodologies applied that translated in fewer gender sensitive actions.

This presentation also shows that gender aspects did not touch crucial areas of the GCAP Methodology, like baseline indicators, target indicators, and budgets. The budget proposals do not have a gender responsive budgeting methodology included; the proposed actions that were evaluated to have co-benefits for gender equality or higher impact were not allocated more money or set up as priority; there is no budget for actions that target specifically gender equality or to carry out a clear gender impact assessment of the proposed action.

2.3.c) Relevant areas for the current analysis are three:

I) The gender distribution of the political decision-makers of the city - the holders of the positions of mayor and city councilor decide on the final content of the GCAP, prioritize the actions to be implemented and funded, and engage the city in loan contracts for investments. The analysis looks at what women's political representation in the city councils is and who holds the position of mayor; at what women's representation is at the level of in municipal departments, companies and among the consulted stakeholders, as experts at the level of administration work.

II) The gender distribution of stakeholders engaged in the consultation and development process - this aspect is relevant as they present their views on the local situation, city's conditions, access to services and infrastructure; they represent a diversity of voices consulted. Their role is relevant for justice reasons (to consult the 'other half' of the population too), to give space for debate and raised issues, to acknowledge the social and economic contribution of all actors in the city. The analysis looks at the gender distribution of the stakeholders involved (stakeholders outside of the municipal decision-making level and municipal departments, like companies, SMEs, non-governmental organizations, universities, associations, others), at whether women's rights or gender equality focused organizations were involved and/or consulted.

III) The gender considerations for budget. Each GCAP has a well document section presenting the city's revenues and financial capacities to attract funds and loans for green projects, and, implicitly, for the proposed actions. The analysis looks at the budgets to identify if there are any gender perspectives in their estimates and allocations, if any specific action targeting gender equality was proposed for funding. At the level of GCAP development, the analysis looks at the composition of the consultant team to identify if a gender expert was contracted, and if a gender sensitive baseline assessment was carried out. And, at what the percentage of budgets of proposed actions impacting gender equality is out of the total budget estimated for a GCAP. In what follows, this analysis presents, from a gender equality perspective,

A) the development process of a Green City Action Plan in terms of stakeholders involved and other relevant actors (consultants).

B) the content of each of the 10 GCAPs in their final, published version, publicly available and adopted by the city's decision-makers; each GCAP has a social and economic baseline assessment, followed by a set of proposes actions (to be transformed into projects) in six or seven areas of interest (transport, energy efficiency, waster systems, waste management, land use (infrastructure) and climate change adaptation and mitigation) that are aimed to address the environmental challenges identified at city level;

C) the proposed budgets for each GCAP and calculates the percentage of it allocated for actions assessed as having an impact on gender equality.

The analysis does not look at the implementation strategy for the adopted actions presented in GCAPs. There are several reasons for this: 1) limited resources in terms of time, finance and human capacity; 2) language capacity; 3) there are no publicly available implementation reports of the GCAPs from the local authorities or from the EBRD.

3. GENDER EQUALITY ANALYSIS OF THE GREEN CITY ACTION PLAN ADOPTED BY 10 CITIES FROM WESTERN BALKANS AND REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

3.1. THE GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL DECISION-MAKERS AND STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN A CITY - CRUCIAL ACTORS FOR THE CREATION, COORDINATION AND ADOPTION OF A GREEN CITY ACTION PLAN

The process of developing a GCAP involves several crucial actors, takes up to one year or even longer and it can encounter delays until its' adoption. At the city level, the Mayor and the City Council have the crucial role of initiating the process, being the drivers of it, overseeing the budget, and being the ultimate decision-makers over its content. This political layer of municipal structure is complemented by the technical staff, from the departments and municipal own companies. It is the Head or Director of a Department that has been involved in a GCAP process of preparation. The administrative process and technicalities of the GCAP are coordinated by a team of consultants and experts contracted by the EBRD to provide technical support. They are responsible for gathering data, organizing meetings, consultations, workshops, and writing the GCAP. The consultants are teams made up of international, national, and local experts. Identified stakeholders, either at national, regional local level, like ministries, private business and entrepreneurs, researchers and academia (universities), non-governmental organisations are invited for consultations and discussions. Their inputs are reflected in city baseline assessment, environmental risks and vulnerabilities assessments, and, most importantly, in prioritizing sectors and actions to address the identified environmental risks. The stakeholders have an important role in the outcome of a GCAP development but cannot decide on its final version. This responsibility belongs to the mayor and city council, in consultation with the consultants and EBRD.

Based on this structure and the different roles of the actors, we analysed the 10 GCAPs at the level of political decision-making and stakeholders' involvement from a gender perspective.

At the political decision-making level, all 10 cities were led by a man as mayor.¹⁷ Women's presence and representation in the city council is not presented in the GCAPs, except for Balti, where the social and gender baseline assessment mentions that 50% of city councilors are women. The involvement of women within the Steering Committees or Working Groups is little and comes from positions of staff within the Mayor's Cabinet. Women's presence tends to be higher among the technical staff from the public administration, and their presence is more common in areas like budget and finance, public health, and planning. The numbers of people involved, the presentation of their roles and positions is done differently in the 10 GCAPs, raising difficulties to carry out a straight-forward comparative analysis.

¹⁷ Most GCAP start with an introductory word and 'Welcome' from the mayor, where his name and/or a photo is presented.

The presentation in the GCAPs of the consultant teams and experts involved differs too. Most GCAPs (6) do not provide any information on the project leaders and experts involved. 4 GCAPs (Balti, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Skopje) present their teams briefly; as project leaders, two GCAPs (Belgrade, Skopje) were led by men, and other two (Balti, Sarajevo) were led by women. Among the experts in the teams, women were almost 30%.

The stakeholders involved were mainly private local companies from the city, local or regional environment focused NGOs and technical universities (architecture, environment, urban planning, engineering). Compared to the other two levels (political decision-making and consultants/experts), at stakeholders' level women's presence is higher, but poorly reported. It is not clear which institution/organization the women represent and what their position and role are. Most GCAPs report % of women among the participants to meetings and workshops, but no other information. Two cities (Balti, Brcko District) involved women's organisations in consultation and meetings. The table below summaries the involvement of stakeholders' within each GCAP development, in the way it was reported in the GCAP, focusing on how the gender distribution was reported, and at what level and for what purpose.

Women's involvement in the GCAP development is lower compared to men's at all levels of engagement. Women are missing completely at the decision-making level as **no city had a woman mayor** while developing and adopting the GCAP. In most cities, women's rights organisations are not present and involved in the process. Only two cities (Balti, Brcko District) consulted local women's organisations and discussed gender-related aspects relevant to the actions presented in their GCAPs. Among consultants and experts involved, women were present in a higher number (around 30%). Among stakeholders, women were present as experts (university heads, researchers) or as heads of departments within public administration. Overall, women's involvement in the GCAPs' developments is significant but not equal with that of men's. Women were involved as GCAP's coordinators, from the side of public administration, representatives of institutions, and experts. They were less involved and present in most specific areas of expertise (environment, climate change, transport, water systems, infrastructure, waste management) and missing at decision-making level.

⁴⁸ <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/press-releases/green-climate-fund-greenlights-144-million-towards-strengthening-flood-resilience-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

TABLE 4: Stakeholder's engagement in the development of Green City Action Plans and gender aspects presented

Country	City	Population (year)	% W	GCAP (year)	Consultant companies for each GCAP	Stakeholders' involvement
Albania	Tirana	389 323 (2023)	53	2018	ARUP, Abkons, Grant Thornton Studio Legale D'Andrea	'Municipal staff', local stakeholders, external stakeholders, investors. 3 working groups, 1 workshop, 1 public consultation. A list of stakeholders, presenting the name of institutions from national and municipal level, of utilities companies, private sector associations, and NGOs. The stakeholders are organised by areas of interest (transport, energy, water, etc.); no names of persons, no percentage of women and men participating. City structures/department: Municipal heads of departments. Other stakeholders: local stakeholders. The Municipal Council adopted the GCAP.
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Zenica	107 705 (2022)	51	2019	PwC Advisory ARUP	There is no information about the stakeholders involved, about the municipal departments consulted. There is no information presented. No information on the consultant team, on the experts consulted, who adopted the GCAP.
	Banja Luka	185 177 (2022)	52	2020	Atkins	The process of stakeholders' engagement is clearly presented, the institutions involved presented, and the personnel at city level. The names of NGOs consulted is presented. There is a specific chapter of GCAP Contributors presenting the working team and stakeholders. Name of the persons, position and department are presented. Names of institutions, public utilities, companies, and NGOs present at discussions are presented. No names and position of the person present. 2 city administration meetings, 2 city administration workshops, 4 stakeholder workshops, and other informal consultations and formal email exchanges with several stakeholders. City structures and departments participating: 25 municipal staff (including the mayor), 11 were women (44%). In the team from the Mayor's Cabinet, only one is a woman = Mayor's Advisor for Financial Management. Among the heads of departments, only 2 are women (Finance and Local Economic Development). The other 9 women are associates within the city's department. Stakeholders: 60 people (no information as to sex); no gender or women's rights NGO. 4 environmental focus NGOs and 2 faculties (architecture and forestry).

	Sarajevo	419 543 (2022)	52	2020	Atkins	A sub-chapter on GCAP team and another one on stakeholders' involvement. 2 administration meetings, 2 administration workshops, 3 stakeholders' workshops. There is a full list of the consultant team involved, with names, and function - 20 experts, 7 women (35%). Also, the EBRD team involved is presented, 4 employees, 1 woman (Associate). City structures/department: 5 persons (Premier), 1 woman, Deputy Minister for Environmental Protection. List of stakeholders provided by the consultant: several federal, cantonal, and local level institutions; local level public and private companies, universities and NGOs. Name and position of person participating is provided. 71 institutions, 100 people participating (18 women - 18%). 7 environmental focus NGOs.
	Brcko District	81 622 (2022)	50	2024	Kommunalkredit Public Consulting GmbH (KPC), LDK Consultants, Dvokut-Ecro	The local administration had designated a Steering Committee and a Technical Expert Group, and the communication between the different parties was kept by a Green City Officer (GCO). The two groups are formed of 33 person, 13 women (40%). In the Steering Committee, out of 13, only 2 are women, while in the Technical Expert Group, out of 20, 11 are women. For the other stakeholders, only the name of the institution represented is mentioned. 2 administrative meetings; 3 stakeholders' workshops. A list of stakeholders is provided; more than 100 individuals from around 40 institutions, organisations and companies took part in 4 GCAP workshops. The gender distribution of each GCAP workshop is presented (50/50 all 4). 8 NGOs participated, 1 being a women's right organisation.
Kosovo	Pristina	227 466 (2024)	50	2021	Mott MacDonald, E Co Ltd	The process of selection of stakeholders is presented, together with the names of representatives from the municipal structures, departments, and companies. A list of all entities consulted is presented, their names, and level of structure (mostly municipal level). No names of persons representing the entity. City level: coordination was ensured by the Deputy Mayor (a man), supported by two women from the mayor's cabinet (1 being the GCAP Coordinator). A Technical Team was created, where representatives from different departments were nominated. 8 meetings, 5 on-line events and consultations. Stakeholders: 137 entities were involved, Information and characteristics about stakeholders engaged are presented by the contractor. Each event and workshop is presented with numbers of participants and the ratio of women/men participating. 11 NGOs with activities on environment and urban planning, none in women's rights and/or gender equality.
North Macedonia	Skopje	422 540 (2021)	51	2020	Atkins Acuity LDK Consultants hcl consultants	There is NO information on city's departments involved, stakeholders consulted. There were 4 meetings, out of which 3 were workshops.

Serbia	Belgrade	1 682 720 (2024)	53	2021	Mott MacDonald Limited	There is a section presenting the stakeholders involvement, from municipal departments, public own companies, A 'City Working Group' was designated, made up of 5 people, 3 women (60%). Number and % of women among these participants are presented for each public event organized. There are no names of the institutions, departments, organisations, universities involved in stakeholders' consultations and workshops. There are no names of persons representing these institutions. A set of 3 events (stakeholders' workshops) are mentioned, the number of participants, and % of women among the participants. 174 participants, and 41% were women. From 174 participants, 17% were representatives of NGOs.
Moldova	Chisinau	720 128 (2024)	54	2019	Resources & Waste Advisory Group (RWA) -Arcadis,	A Working Group and a Steering Committee were set up. The municipality's departments represented in the two structures are presented, with the title of the position held in the department (Head), but not the names and the gender distribution. The Steering Committee has 3 members (do not know its gender composition), the Working Group has 9 members (do not know the gender composition). 2 meetings and 2 on-line consultations were held. There were 21 NGOs consulted, but no name of the organisations, of the person representing and her/his position.
	Balti	90 954 (2025)	55	2021	Resources & Waste Advisory Group (RWA) - Arcadis, Ecocontact	There is a set-up Working Group, formed of 9 members, and led by a woman. There is a separate Stakeholders' Engagement Plan (SEP). There were more than 100 participants consulted, 55% were women. There were 13 people representing NGOs and the public at large. A dedicated workshop to discuss aspects related to gender equality and social inclusion, and to find ways of mainstreaming these considerations into the GCAP actions. A dedicated online survey aimed at consulting citizens of Balti about the environmental challenges of the city was conducted. 159 persons responded to the survey, out of which 40% were women and 60% were men.

Source: The 10 GCAPs, available at <https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/our-cities/cities/>

3.2.GREEN CITY VISIONS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ARE GENDER BLIND

A significant part of the GCAP is the identification and presentation of the environmental challenges at city level in terms of water resources, air quality, green space, soils, biodiversity and ecosystems, mitigation of GHG emissions, adaptation and resilience to natural disasters risks. Statistical data collection, environmental data monitoring, focus groups and interviews with technical staff and stakeholders within the city help establish the parameters of the local situation which is measured against international established benchmarks in respective areas. At the end of this exercise, the city's challenges are presented. The solutions to these are turned into strategic objectives and a vision for a 'green city'.

Overall, the announced visions for 'a green city' tend to be inclusive of their population, making it the main beneficiary of actions, by promising a healthier and better and improved life. Care for the city's environment and responsibility towards future generations for a clean environment are also present. The gender-neutral formulation of the visions might hint towards inclusivity and non-discrimination, but it can also stand for gender blindness and lack of specific focus on gender equality. Half or even more of the cities' inhabitants are women, with specific other identity characteristics that affect their access to services, employment, power, space. The visions need to acknowledge these realities to be representative and inclusive, and they need to declare gender equality among their objectives for a fair and just climate change adaptation and mitigation, at city level.

The table below presents the 'green city vision' announced by each city in the GCAP, together with the set of identified strategic objectives in the six areas of interest (transport, efficient use of energy, water systems, waste management, land use, green and blue infrastructure, climate change risks) that help reach these 'green city vision'

TABLE 5: 'Green city vision' as presented in the 10 Green City Action Plans

Country	City	Population (year)	% W	GCAP (year)	Stakeholders' involvement
Albania	Tirana	389 323 (2023)	53	2018	'Municipal staff', local stakeholders, external stakeholders, investors. 3 working groups, 1 workshop, 1 public consultation. A list of stakeholders, presenting the name of institutions from national and municipal level, of utilities companies, private sector associations, and NGOs. The stakeholders are organised by areas of interest (transport, energy, water, etc.); no names of persons, no percentage of women and men participating. City structures/department: Municipal heads of departments. Other stakeholders: local stakeholders. The Municipal Council adopted the GCAP.

Bosnia & Herzegovina	Zenica	107 705 (2022)	51	2019	Zenica to be a clean, liveable and active city, resilient to future environmental pressures. Clean and liveable City: Zenica will create a clean environment with a focus on delivering clean air, land, and water. The improvement in air quality will help the city achieve its goal of becoming a leading sports destination. There will also be improved public transport to minimise pollution from private car usage. The city will work to clean up contaminated land, connect all homes to the wastewater treatment service, increase waste collection coverage, and divert waste away from landfill where possible. Active City: Zenica will become a city which encourages residents to lead healthier and more active lifestyles. Specifically, more residents will be encouraged to commute using active modes of transport such as cycling and walking due to improvements in air quality and access to necessary infrastructure. Furthermore, the level of sports participation will increase at a local, regional and international level, bringing Zenica a step closer to becoming a sports City. Finally, citizens will be empowered to care for the natural environment and enjoy the recreational facilities it offers both in and around the City's urban core. Resilient City: The ambition of the city is to use natural protection measures to build resilience to risk future natural disasters which are predicted to intensify climate change. Examples include the development of sustainable urban drainage systems, and the protection of surrounding forests. Zenica will also become a city committed to climate change mitigation, with specific attempts to improve energy efficiency in buildings and street lighting and the efficiency of the district's heating network.
	Banja Luka	185 177 (2022)	52	2020	'Banja Luka aims to be an exemplar of innovative, smart and sustainable utility and transport infrastructure, supported by an efficient land use system and increased resilience to climate change and other natural disasters. With a healthy and vibrant built environment, a network of green and blue infrastructure will protect and enhance water resources, soil quality and biodiversity, maintaining Banja Luka's status as a 'city of greenery.'
	Sarajevo	419 543 (2022)	52	2020	'Sarajevo Canton will have cleaner, greener, affordable and smarter transport, buildings and industries. It will be served by efficient and high-quality water and wastewater infrastructure, efficient district heating, with improved waste and pollution control management. The Canton will be a healthy, compact, sustainable place to live and work, with good quality, accessible green spaces and biodiversity and natural values maintained or enhanced. Resilience to climate change and other natural disasters will be increased.'
	Brčko District	81 622 (2022)	50	2024	'Brčko District - a green urban community on the water (Sava River) with a healthy environment for all its inhabitants and future generations, with sustainable planning and efficient investment in green buildings. Brčko will become an innovative and sustainable community of preserved water resources, clean and healthy air and preserved soil, resistant to climate change and weather disasters.' This vision is to be reached by 1. ensuring water resources sustainability through planning and construction of water supply and wastewater infrastructure, supported by an operationally viable tariff system; 2. improving air quality by applying energy resource-efficient technologies with reduced environmental impacts, introduction of low carbon emissions transport policies; 3. improving soil quality throughout the BDBiH by reducing solid waste and implementing land quality monitoring; 4. reducing greenhouse gas emissions by applying efficient energy management and introducing motorised and nonmotorized modes of transport; 5. improve the land use sector through appropriate strategic and legislative policies that will integrate all sectors considering the improvement of environmental assets and the reduction of urban development pressure.

Kosovo	Pristina	227 466 (2024)	50	2021	'Pristina is a city that we love, with an active and responsible society, high living standards and an efficient use of resources and environmental protection.' The specific objectives of this vision are: to reduce reliance on private cars and encourage greater use of public and active transport modes to reduce impacts on the city environment; implement projects to improve thermal and electrical efficiency; enhance the quality of greenspace across the city and use land more efficiently; to create a more sustainable mix of energy sources, implementing climate and energy strategies and creating fair access to energy and warmth; to encourage the business sector to participate in creating a clean and efficient city; to reduce water use and improving urban drainage and flood risk; to establish a new management approach to handling solid waste, with a greater emphasis on recycling; to reduce environmental impacts, especially relating to city air quality; and to improve the level of understanding its vulnerabilities and adapting to climate risks.
North Macedonia	Skopje	422 540 (2021)	51	2020	'The City of Skopje will be a leading sustainable city in the region, offering its citizens a high quality of life through the provision of clean air and water, healthy green spaces and accessibility for all, while contributing to national and international efforts to address climate change.' This vision is to be reached by 1) regularly monitoring and incrementally reduce atmospheric concentration of pollutants; 2) incrementally reducing pollutant concentrations in the River Vardar; 3) improving resilience to the impacts of weather events to reduce the number and severity of public assets and households at risk; 4) improving the efficiency of water supply networks indicator by 50%, against current benchmark; 5) clearly identify, categorize and reduce the number of contaminated sites within the city, by 50%; 6) halting the increase of GHG in all sectors and even reducing to achieve GREEN indicator status; 7) improving safeguarding of natural habitats for wildlife by halting unplanned urban development and increasing the enforcement and number of protected sites against 2020 benchmarks; 8) increasing the proportion of accessible public green spaces for residents by 100% against current benchmark.
Serbia	Belgrade	1 682 720 (2024)	53	2021	'We are a capital city which is developing smartly for its citizens, especially children, and pursuing the ideals of an even greener, healthier, and more sustainable future.' This vision is to be reached by: 1) Urban mobility and transport: Improve city mobility and reduce congestion; Enhancing Green Mobility in Central City Area; Increasing use of alternatively fueled vehicles; Higher density development; Preventing sprawl; Improve the importance and capacity of Green Infrastructure and provide access to public green spaces in all parts of the city. 2) Energy and Efficiency: Take action to improve the energy efficiency of the city's buildings; Using existing buildings to create elements of green infrastructure; Developing and improving the efficiency of district heating distribution; Cut Greenhouse gas emissions from the city; 3) Water and Waste

Moldova	Chisinau	720 128 (2024)	54	2019	'Chişinău is a leafy, safe and clean city, proving that city governance and culture are working for urban development. The task at hand is to protect and build those values through strong local governance, community participation, and integrated planning. Connecting people for a better quality of life in a green city.' This vision is to be reached by 1) enhanced institutional capacities for the implementation, assessment, and monitoring of the sustainable urban development process. 2) sustainable mobility and transport. 3) climate resilience with green-blue infrastructure. 4) sustainable and efficient energy. 5) sustainable resources and waste management.
	Balti	90 954 (2025)	55	2021	'Balti is a city located in the North region of Moldova. Its geographic position provides a significant role in the region as a hub and an urban center for municipal and health services. The city attracts citizens from all over the region due to its development and opportunities for employment. The vision of the city is to become a green urban zone where citizens will find opportunities for fulfilling their development needs in a comfortable and pleasant environment. Balti aims to become a green treasure city of Moldova. The vision is to have an organic development of the city and to invite people to discover its secrets and the green development opportunities.' This vision is to be reached by 1) reducing pollution and improving public health by implementing future-proof urban services; 2) mitigating climate change and contributing to energy security by scaling up clean and affordable energy; 3) improving the quality of life and optimizing land use by mainstreaming community and knowledge-based development; 4) enhancing resilience through investments in resource efficiency and circular economy.

Source: The 10 GCAPs, available at <https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/our-cities/cities/>

3.3. THE MISSING GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE OF THE GREEN PROJECTS AND ACTIONS

The vision and strategic objectives are to be reached by specific actions presented in the GCAPs, together with an estimated budget necessary for their implementation. The actions are assessed mainly in terms of climate benefits and smart or digital solutions' impacts, but they also go through an assessment process for social and economic benefits they may bring once implemented. Sometimes the assessment considers the benefits of gender equality. In what follows, we present briefly the actions proposed in the 10 GCAPs, their assessments for benefits to gender equality, and the estimated budgets necessary for implementation.

There are 306 actions in total proposed in the 10 GCAPs, with each GCAP having a medium of 30 actions. Two cities are exceptions as the GCAP for Zenica presented only 18 actions, while the GCAP for Brcko District had 43. The total estimated budget needed for these 306 actions is close to 6 billion EUR. The GCAP for Belgrade, of 33 actions, would be the most expensive, its' implementation was estimated to need a minimum 5 billion EUR. The GCAP for Balti, of 30 actions, was estimated to need a bit under 200 million EUR, being the cheapest GCAP from the group of 10 (see Table 6 below).

TABLE 6: Estimated budgets and number of actions proposed in the 10 Green City Action Plans

Country	City	GCAP	Actions in GCAP (number)	CapEx Budget for GCAP (estimated) ('000s EUR)	OpEx Budget for GCAP (estimated) ('000s EUR)	Budget for GCAP (estimated) ('000s EUR)
Albania	Tirana	2018	38	547,932	50,619	598,551
Bosnia& Herzegovina	Zenica	2019	18	265,409	5,657	271,066
	Banja Luka	2020	32	290,145	11,802	301,947
	Sarajevo	2020	32	626,804	28,227	655,031
	Brcko District	2024	43	428,410	20,639	449,049
Kosovo	Pristina	2021	23	368,440	7,990	376,430
North Macedonia	Skopje	2020	26	482,250	25,500	507,750
Serbia	Belgrade	2021	33	5,210,980	9,510	5,220,490
Total			245			
Moldova	Chisinau	2019	31	364,432	39,467	403,899
	Balti	2021	30	180,000	6,154	186,154
Total			61	544,432	45,621	590,053
TOTAL			306			5,810,543

Source: Author's calculations based on the information and data provided in the GCAPs: GCAP Report for Tirana, page 9; GCAP for Zenica, page 7; GCAP Banja Luka, page 13; GCAP Sarajevo Canton, page 17; GCAP Brcko District, page 52; GCAP Pristina, page 3; GCAP Skopje, page 45; GCAP Belgrade, page 9.

Note: The budgets were calculated by the consultancy delivering the GCAP Report, based on their own estimates and calculations. The year of the budget estimates offered is the year when the GCAP was adopted and published (see column 2 here). In the GCAPs, the estimated budgets are offered also in local currency, and the currency conversion is offered. For comparison reason, in the table, EUR was the chosen currency.

If the 306 actions are grouped by the six areas of interest for investment of GrCF, energy efficiency for public and private buildings and heating systems would come as the first, with most actions (79), followed by the area of transport and mobility (68), then land use (green and blue infrastructure in the city) (49), water management and water system infrastructures (50), and waste and solid waste management (44). Ironically, climate change risks were addressed directly only by 17 actions (see Table 7 below).

TABLE 7: Number of actions in each of the 10 Green City Action Plans by areas of interest

Country	City	GCAP year	Actions in GCAP (number)	Transport	Energy	Water	Waiste	Land use	Industry	Climate change (adaptation and resilience)
Albania	Tirana	2018	38	10	7	4	2	9	0	6
Bosnia& Herzegovina	Zenica	2019	18	5	4	NR	4	5	0	NR
	Banja Luka	2020	32	7	5	7	6	4	1	2
	Sarajevo	2020	32	6	6	9	6	3	1	1
	Brcko District	2024	43	8	16	9	3	7	0	NR
Kosovo	Pristina	2021	23	6	4	4	2	3	1	3
North Macedonia	Skopje	2020	26	5	5	4	4	4	0	4
Serbia	Belgrade	2021	33	7	8	6	4	7	0	1
Total			245	54	55	43	31	42	3	17
Moldova	Chisinau	2019	31	8	8	3	8	4	NR	NR
	Balti	2021	30	6	7	4	5	3	2	NR
Total			61	14	15	7	13	7	2	NR
TOTAL			306	68	79	50	44	49	5	17

At the city level, the hierarchies of the areas are different, depending on the identified environmental challenges. The number of actions proposed to address them can be higher. In Belgrade, Balti, Brcko District, energy efficiency remains the top priority, with the most proposed actions. In most cities (Banja Luka, Chisinau, Pristina, Skopje, Tirana, Zenica), transport and mobility represent the priority, gathering the most proposed actions. Access to clean water, water systems and infrastructure for the priority area of three out of four cities in Bosnia & Herzegovina (Banja Luka, Brcko District,

and Sarajevo). Belgrade and Tirana placed land use (urban infrastructure, green and blue) as second priority. Climate change actions are strangely addressed as specific problems. Four cities do not address them at all in their GCAPs, while the other six have few proposed actions (1,2,3,4). From the 306 actions, 13 materialized into sub-projects funded within the GrCF; they are from 7 cities with adopted GCAPs and most of them address priority areas identified in their GCAPs (see Table 8 below).

TABLE 8: Investment projects funded by Green City Framework, based on adopted Green City Action Plan

Country	City	Investment project in GrCF - year contract signed	Description	Budget
(000s EUR)	Banja Luka	GrCF2 W2 - Banja Luka Water Phase 1 - 2019	The rehabilitation and expansion of existing water supply network	4,000
		GrCF2 W2 - Banja Luka Water Phase 2 - 2020	The rehabilitation and expansion of existing water supply and wastewater network	
	Sarajevo	GrCFW2 Sarajevo Public Transport Part 3 - 2020	Transport - new trams	6,000
		GrCF Tram line Ilidza&; Hrasnica (f.Sarajevo E-Tram Ext.) -2022	Infrastructure - Transport - Two tram tracks	
Kosovo	Pristina	GrCF2W2 -Pristina Urban Transport II -2022	Transport - buses and batteries	10,000
		GrCF2 W2 E2 Pristina Solar District Heating -2022	Heating - Solar Plant	30,000
North Macedonia	Skopje	GrCF2 W2 -Skopje Wastewater Project -2019	Waste water - introduce first time wastewater treatment services for most population through the construction of a large-scale Wastewater Treatment Plant	10,000
		GrCF2: Skopje Bus Rapid Transit Project -2020	Transport - the construction of a Bus Rapid Transit ("BRT") corridor on two dedicated lanes, the acquisition of a new tram-bus fleet and the construction of a new depot.	23,200
Serbia	Belgrade	GrCF2 W2 -Belgrade Public Buildings -2021	Energy efficiency - energy efficiency and associated structural measures in 4 public buildings: Emergency Medical Institute, City Library, Student Healthcare Centre and Student Hospital. Most buildings were constructed in the 1920s and no major refurbishment since then.	60,000
		GrCF2 W2 - Belgrade Water Phase 2 -2022	Water and wastewater treatment - Refurbishment of the Jezero Water Treatment Plant & construction of facilities for the collection and treatment of waste and process waters and sludge treatment	70,000
		GrCF2 W2 E2 -Belgrade Pedestrian and Cycling Bridge -2023	Infrastructure	5,000
		GrCF2 W2 -Public ESCO Serbia -2023	Private buildings - homeowner - energy efficiency	13,000

Moldova	Chisinau	Green Cities: Chisinau Solid Waste -2020	Solid waste management at municipality level - improve level of solid waste services	17,000
		GrCF2 W1-Chisinau River Bic Rehab. & Flood Protection -2022	Climate change - adaptation	50,000
	Balti	GrCF2 W1-Balti District Heating Phase 2 -2021	District Heating - Energy Efficiency - to enhance district heating operational and energy efficiency through improved system control, introduce apartment level consumption-based billing to district heating consumers	9,000

Source: The information presented is compiled by the author based on information available at [ebrdgreencities.com](https://www.ebrd.com/home/what-we-do/projects.html) and <https://www.ebrd.com/home/what-we-do/projects.html>

The actions proposed in the 10 GCAPs have no gender aspect included in their presentation. Gender equality comes up only as a possible co-benefit in case they are to be implemented. The methodology used to assess these co-benefits for gender equality and/or gender equality is not presented in any of the 10 GCAPs. Some GCAPs (Balti, Belgrade, Brcko District, Pristina, Skopje) describe the benefits such actions could bring for gender equality, but these presentations are briefed. They vary among the GCAPs, but also among the areas of action. Transport, infrastructure and energy efficiency tend to have more gender aspects highlighted in their actions compared with the others of waste management, water or climate change risks (see Table 9 and 10 for comparison).

The table below summarizes the way gender equality co-benefits were assessed and presented in the proposed actions in each GCAP (see Table 9 below). The GCAPs do not use a uniform methodology in the way they assess and present gender equality as benefits of an action. In three GCAPs (Chisinau, Sarajevo, Zenita), gender is absent as it got diluted into the social co-benefits assessment.

TABLE 9: Gender assessment of proposed actions in the Green City Action Plans – existence and methods used

Country	City in GrCF	Population (year)	% W	GCAP (year)	Gender assessment of proposed actions in GCAP
Albania	Tirana	389 323 (2023)	53	2018	The actions were scored against five socio-economic indicators: Economic returns for investors; Economic inclusion; Public health; Gender equality; Community involvement. 'Y' indicating potential for impact. There is no presentation as to what stands for gender equality and how the actions were assessed.

Country	City in GrCF	Population (year)	% W	GCAP (year)	Gender assessment of proposed actions in GCAP
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Zenica	107 705 (2022)	51	2019	Each action was assessed for social impact (what social benefits it can bring). 'Social' is a general term, the assessment looks at 'people/humans', with no differentiations along identities (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, economic status). The actions were assessed collectively, with no description of their specific social impact.
	Banja Luka	185 177 (2022)	52	2020	Each action was assessed for the impact on gender equality. There is no presentation of the methodology used.
	Sarajevo	419 543 (2022)	52	2020	Each action was assessed for its social and economic benefits. Gender was not included. The impacts were described in general terms (public health, access to services, employment, reducing energy poverty). There was 1 action, in transport, where benefits for gender equality were identified, but not mentioned.
	Brcko District	81 622 (2022)	50	2024	Each action was assessed for its gender equality and social inclusion benefits. Recommendations were formulated on how to include gender specific actions commonly applied in the respective sectors, and were focused on employment and capacity building.
Kosovo	Pristina	227 466 (2024)	50	2021	Each action was assessed for its social benefits. The criteria used to assess each action were not presented. A scale of 4 (0,1,2,3) grades of intensity was used, with 3 being a high degree of benefits, and 1 as marginal benefits. It is not clear if 0 stands for NO benefits or that the assessment was not carried out. Each action was assessed for gender equality benefits. The assessment was focused on the different needs of women and men the implementation of the actions can serve. There was a strong focus on gender aspects in transport and space design; women's role is mainly assigned as caregiver and as 'vulnerable category'. The gender equality benefits stayed together with other social benefits like public health improvement, safety, and economic inclusion and growth. These other social aspects have no gender dimensions included.
North Macedonia	Skopje	422 540 (2021)	51	2020	Each action was assessed for social benefits, including some gender aspects. The assessment was presented in general terms. There was an condensed resume of how the preparation of GCAP included gender aspects: 'The city took gender perspectives into consideration when formulating specific actions for GCAP, aims to ensure an equal gender representation of the stakeholders engaged and report on this, aims to include the gender perspective in the budget line, ensure an equal gender participation of staff from its own departments and institutions to trainings, consultation and information sessions.'

					The GCAP provided an overview of the socio and economic co-benefits of the actions for education, access to finance, public health, gender equality, and accessibility. The identified co-benefits for gender equality were a higher increase of participation to decision making of citizens and a more gender sensitive (adjusted to the specific needs of women and men) infrastructure. The co-benefits of education, access to finance or public health had no gender aspects included when presented.
Serbia	Belgrade	1 682 720 (2024)	53	2021	The social and economic benefits of the action are briefly presented, including gender equality. The presentation of the sectors and actions did not include social or gender aspects. The matrix used to assess the feasibility of the proposed actions did not include social (including gender) and economic aspects. The general formulation that '...the suggested GCAP measures are critical in providing efficient and effective climate responsive services and facilities that positively impact social and gender exclusion.' stands as the social and gender impact assessment of the benefits brought by the adopted measures. Each action was assessed on the scale of significant benefit, secondary benefit, and marginal benefit, including gender equality. The criteria used to assess each action are not presented. A scale of 4 (0,1,2,3) grades of intensity is presented, with 3 being a high degree of benefits, and 1 as marginal benefit. It is not clear if 0 stands for NO benefits or that the assessment was not carried out. In comparison, the environmental benefits of actions (on air quality, on water use, land use, biodiversity, others) were fully explained, and their long-time impact assessed in terms of climate mitigation, while the social and economic benefits were not explained at all.
Moldova	Chisinau	720 128 (2024)	54	2019	The actions did not include any gender aspects. There was no assessment of the benefits for gender equality. The actions were assessed for benefits for employment, public health and safety/security, but none of the aspects have gender included.
	Balti	90 954 (2025)	55	2021	The action plan includes findings of social and gender assessment. Each action includes, where relevant, additional measures and specific activities related to reduction of gender inequalities, social inclusion, maximizing the socio-economic benefits and ensuring equal opportunities for all categories of persons, including the most vulnerable.

Source: The 10 GCAPs, available at <https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/our-cities/cities/>

The consultants were creative in assessing and presenting the gender equality benefits of the proposed actions. Some GCAPs affirmed that the action may reduce inequalities (thus it can be beneficial), others affirm that the action could promote and/or empower women (thus it can be beneficial), and others affirm a clear benefit only if the action is followed up with other measures that include and promote gender equality. But the consultants were not unclear and transparent in how they carried out these assessments. Most GCAPs do not present the methodologies they used and do not present any criteria used for assessing the benefits of gender equality. It is not clear if the benefits brought by the action are to improve gender equality, to reach gender equality, to support the access of women to decision-making, services, jobs, education, skills, and others (all these benefits can be present, but they are different). There are significant differences towards

which the benefits could be. Thus, the reader is left alone to imagine and assume, if interested. These limitations and differences hamper the comparison in a more substantive way.¹⁸

Overcoming these limitations was possible only by taking at face value the assessments of the proposed actions, even if differently done and not clearly explained. This to find out that out of the 306 actions presented in the 10 GCAPs, 103 were assessed as having a benefit and impact for gender equality, representing 34% of the total actions (see Table 10 below).

TABLE 10: Number of actions with co-benefits for gender equality proposed in Green City Action Plans

Country	City in GrCF	Population (year)	% women	GCAP (year)	Number of proposed actions in GCAP with impact on gender equality	% of total actions
Albania	Tirana	389 323 (2023)	53	2018	4	11
Bosnia& Herzegovina	Zenica	107 705 (2022)	51	2019	0	0
	Banja Luka	185 177 (2022)	52	2020	19	60
	Sarajevo	419 543 (2022)	52	2020	2	6
	Brcko District	81 622 (2022)	50	2024	12	28
Kosovo	Pristina	227 466 (2024)	50	2021	15	65
North Macedonia	Skopje	422 540 (2021)	51	2020	8	31
Serbia	Belgrade	1 682 720 (2024)	53	2021	12	36
Moldova	Chisinau	720 128 (2024)	54	2019	0	0
	Balti	90 954 (2025)	55	2021	21	70
TOTAL					103	34

Source: The 10 GCAPs, available at <https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/our-cities/cities/>

As mentioned previously, transport is the area with the highest number of actions (31) with impact and/or benefit for gender equality, followed by energy efficiency (24) and land use (19). Waste management tend to be seen as very gender neutral, as only 5 proposed actions were considered to have impact for gender equality, out of 36.¹⁹

¹⁸ Some GCAPs could be compared (one-by-one) as they were carried out by the same consultant (Atkins, Mott, RWD Group) that used the same methodology. A deep overall comparison of the 10 GCAPs is difficult. Changes introduced in the GCAP Methodology along the years affected their content, which is visible in a comparative analysis along the years and makes it difficult. The overall problem of the GCAP Methodology is not setting up clear targets for gender equality remains even after the included changes.

¹⁹ This differences in gender equality sensitivity could be explain, up to a level, by the degree of development of the area of expertise. Gender equality and gender sensitive analysis in these areas come in only in recent years and expertise is not extended. Transport, urban development and energy efficiency tend to be more frequent as subjects of analysis and expertise from the gender perspective, compared to waste or solid waste management.

The fact that the GCAP Methodology failed to be clear and rigorous about how benefits or co-benefits of an action in terms of gender equality need to be measured, assessed and presented led to a failure of the GCAPs in gender mainstreaming and ensuring that (some) proposed actions led to gender equality transformative projects. The presented co-benefits for gender equality in most GCAPs are rather wishes and hypotheses than clear measurable objectives. The assessments are not based on sex-disaggregated data, on gender sensitive baseline indicators. To move from simple wishes and hypotheses to clear, measurable objectives, the gender equality benefits of an action (future project) need to be clearly formulated, need to have data, indicators and to be measured. The lack of baseline indicators and target indicators and the absence of sex disaggregated data at city level **weakens the GCAP Methodology in including a gender sensitive perspective** and in delivering gender responsive projects proposals.

The 10 GCAPs differ in their consideration and inclusion of gender aspects and assessment for co-benefits for gender equality. The version of the GCAP Methodology used let its mark and explains most of these differences. The changes included in the GCAP Methodology in 2020, which included gender aspects significantly, are to be noticed in the GCAPs adopted after 2020. The GCAPs produced before 2020 (Chisinau, Tirana, Zenica) are closer to a *gender-blind project*, reflected also by the number of actions assessed as benefiting gender equality. In 2020, a middle year (before the GCAP Methodology was changed, but some adjustments introduced), three other GCAPs were adopted (Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Skopje) and gender aspects are more integrated, but not considerable and at all levels. These GCAPs could be characterized as *gender targeted projects*, but with a lot of improvements still needed. The GCAPs for Balti and Brcko District would gain the title of *gender responsive projects* except for their budgets. The GCAP Methodology did not consider gender in its budgetary assessments and proposals. This weakens significantly the GCAP Methodology in being a gender sensitivity one and ensuring gender mainstreaming for gender responsive projects.

3.4. GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING MISSING FROM THE BUDGET OF THE GREEN PROJECTS

The GCAPs benefiting from the work of a social and/or gender expert (part of the consultant team) had a part of their budget allocated to produce a gender sensitive baseline analysis. GCAPs for Balti and Brcko District had a separate Gender and Economic Baseline Assessment carried out, and a Gender and Economic Inclusion expert contracted for this work. Two other GCAPs (Sarajevo and Skopje) had a social/gender expert hired from local experts for the inclusion of social and gender aspects.

At the level of proposed actions, no GCAP contains gender equality specific actions, and no GCAP has a gender responsive budgeting. The proposed actions assessed as impacting gender equality have an estimated budget (which we present below), but this budget does not include gender specific actions. The impact of gender equality of the proposed action does not appear as a criterion for prioritizing an action for funding it.

To estimate the budgets necessary for implementing actions that impact gender equality, we added the budgets estimated for the identified actions that impact gender equality.

It is not a real and proper gender responsive budgeting assessment of the actions, but it is the one closest to that based on the data and information available. It is hypothetical as the included actions might not have an impact on gender equality and might not eliminate barriers to gender equality once implemented. Still, it is a good exercise to estimate the budgets that can go for gender equality if such projects are implemented. If the assessments were correct, such actions

might help promote gender equality or eliminate some barriers for gender equality. Thus, the GCAPs with a bigger number of actions beneficial for gender equality would also have a bigger budget that aims towards gender equality. It is crucial to keep in mind that the size of the budget is explained by the type of actions proposed and the estimated costs that such actions bear, and not because gender equality is a benefit of these actions.

Out of the amount of almost 6 billion EUR, estimated as minimum necessary for the 306 actions proposed in the 10 GCAPs, 61% comes as budgets for projects that benefit gender equality. In other words, the estimated budgets for the **103** actions that were assessed as beneficial for gender equality sums almost 3,5 billion EUR (61% from 6 billion EUR) (see Table 11 below).

TABLE 11: Estimated budget allocation for actions with impact on gender equality, proposed in Green City Action Plans (2018 - 2024)

Country	City	GCAP (year)	Actions in GCAP assessed as impacting gender equality (number)	Actions in GCAP assessed as impacting gender equality (% of total actions in GCAP)	Budget for GCAP (estimated) ('000s EUR)	Budget for actions impacting gender equality as in GCAP (estimates) ('000s EUR)
Albania	Tirana	2018	4	11	598,551	25,334
Bosnia& Herzegovina	Zenica	2019	0	0	271,066	0
	Banja Luka	2020	19	60	301,947	252,396
	Sarajevo	2020	2	6	655,031	15,191
	Brcko District	2024	12	28	449,049	243,070
Kosovo	Pristina	2021	15	65	376,430	35,578
North Macedonia	Skopje	2020	8	31	507,750	168,060
Serbia	Belgrade	2021	12	36	5,220,490	2,718,800
Total			82	33		3,378,752
Moldova	Chisinau	2019	0	0	403,899	0
	Balti	2021	21	70	186,154	143,031
Total			21	70	590,053	143,031
TOTAL			103	34	5,810,543	3,521,783

Source: Author's calculations based on the information and data provided in the GCAP Reports of the cities: GCAP Report for Tirana, page 9; GCAP for Zenica, page 7; GCAP Banja Luka, page 13; GCAP Sarajevo Canton, page 17; GCAP Brcko District, page 52; GCAP Pristina, page 3; GCAP Skopje, page 45; GCAP Belgrade, page 9.

Note: The budgets were calculated by the consultancy delivering the GCAP Report, based on their own estimates and calculations. The year of the budget estimates offered is the year when the GCAP was adopted and published (see column 2 here). In the GCAPs, the estimated budgets are offered also in local currency, and the currency conversion is offered. For comparison reason, in the table, EUR was the chosen currency.

Belgrade is the city with the biggest budget for actions beneficial for gender equality. This does not mean that Belgrade has the most gender-responsive budgeting in its GCAP. Belgrade had the biggest estimated budget for its GCAP among the 10, has the biggest population among the 10 cities. Belgrade has only 12 out of 36 actions (36%) assessed as beneficial for gender equality, but the budget is 52% of the total budget. The total sum of budgets for actions beneficial for gender equality is higher due to their concentration in areas like transport, energy efficiency and infrastructure (land use) which are costly areas in general, and thus the amount.

The situation for Banja Luka and Brcko District differs. Banja Luka has a significant amount of its actions (60%) assessed as beneficial for gender equality, and a significant part of its budget (84%) comes up as being beneficial for gender equality. For the Brcko District, the situation is most balanced and, most likely, closer to a better assessment, where half of the actions have benefits for gender equality, and thus the budget is also beneficial. Furthermore, the GCAP for Brcko District scores better on the other aspects to include gender aspects (stakeholders, participants, baseline assessment), thus the assessments of the actions are better done and reflected too in their estimated budgets.

For the other GCAPs, the budgets for actions beneficial for gender equality tend to be in-line with the approach applied for the assessment and the overall presence of gender aspects.

By carrying out this hypothetical exercise, we evaluated the chances of each GCAP to be seen as more gender sensitive, and to promote gender responsive projects.

The GCAP for Brcko District received positive evaluations in all the criteria used to analyze the 10 GCAPs. It is the latest adopted GCAP (end of 2024), carried out based on revised GCAP Methodology that is clearer and more inclusive when it comes to gender aspects. Thus, the GCAP for Brcko District presents gender aspects at all levels (less the mayor, which the GCAP can't change) and scores well, thus getting it closer to a gender responsive project. The GCAP for Balti comes closer or even higher if we are to highlight the holding of a stakeholders' workshop focused specifically on gender mainstreaming of the proposed actions. Both these GCAPs stand out as examples of good practices on how to carry out a gender sensitive GCAP and propose gender responsive projects, even from the budget point of view.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The Green Cities Programme of the EBRD proved of interest for the cities in Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova. Several capital cities from these countries were among the first cities to join the programme and brought to the end the commitment to adopt a Green City Action Plan (Belgrade, Chisinau, Tirana, Pristina, Sarajevo). Several other cities from the country joined afterwards and went through a similar process (Balti, Banja Luka, Novi Sad, Zenica). Novi Sad is the only exception as by the end of 2025 it did not adopt its GCAP even if it engaged to do so since 2020.¹⁹ The cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the most present in the programme, followed by Serbia and Republic of Moldova.

The pioneers of Green Cities Programme (Chisinau, Tirana, Zenica) paid the price of being the first and testing the waters. The first version of the GCAP Methodology used to develop these documents was gender blind and thus it led to gender blind process development and proposed actions. Learning from weakness and following critical observations to their process, the GCAP Methodology was improved and changed to include and address gender aspects. Improvements were visible in the second generations of GCAPs in cities like Banja Luka, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje, where gender aspects became more visible and in parts included in the assessment of proposed actions. Thus, these GCAPs can be assessed as gender targeted projects. Following a set of other improvements and changes within the GCAP Methodology, that were applied in the development of the GCAP for Brcko District, it turns the process of its development into one closest to a gender responsive project.

Acknowledging the improvements adopted in time to include gender aspects, the GCAP Methodology missed crucial aspects to transform its projects into gender-responsive and targeted ones.

- It missed providing a clearer link between the Gender and Social Baseline Assessment and the assessment of proposed actions towards gender equality. The situations described in baseline analysis were not transposed in objectives of proposed actions. Gender equality is still not an objective of any actions to be carried out within the Green Cities Programme. Gender equality is a possible co-benefit of such actions, but not one to stand alone.
- Consequentially, the GCAP Methodology does not include gender sensitive baseline and target indicators that can measure change, either towards or backwards gender equality. Thus, it is very difficult to assess any of the proposed actions in the GCAPs as gender negative or gender transformative based on the GRES.
- Most crucially the budget did not consider any gender aspects and no GCAP had a gender responsive budgets proposals to their proposed actions, despite most of these actions being assessed as beneficiary for gender equality.

²⁰ In its review of 2025, 'A Look Back: EBRD Green Cities in 2025', EBRD reports that Novi Sad completed its GCAP, but the document was not publicly available at the end of 2025, thus not included in this analysis (see <https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/news-and-events/news/a-look-back-ebrd-green-cities-in-2025/>).

Country	City	Population (year)	% W	GCAP (year)	City Mayor	Stakeholders	GC Vision & Objectives	Benefits for gender equality	Actions (number - %)	Budget GE actions (%)	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
Albania	Tirana	389 323 (2023)	53	2018	M	No information	Nothing	Yes	4 - 11	4	Gender blind
	Zenica	107 705 (2022)	51	2019	M	No information	Nothing	No	0 - 0	0	Gender blind
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Banja Luka	185 177 (2022)	52	2020	M	40% women as experts No information on others	Nothing	Yes	19 - 60	84	Gender targeted
	Sarajevo	419 543 (2022)	52	2020	M	35% women as experts 18% women as others	Nothing	No	2 - 6	2	Gender blind
	Brcko District	81 622 (2022)	50	2024	M	40% women experts 50% women others. 1 women organisation	Nothing	Yes	12 - 28	54	Gender responsive
	Tuzla Canton	108 073 (2022)	53	-	-	-				-	-
Kosovo	Pristina	227 466 (2024)	50	2021	M	10% women experts 30% women in others	Nothing	Yes	15 - 65	9	Gender blind
Montenegro		-	-	-	-	-				-	
North Macedonia	Skopje	422 540 (2021)	51	2020	M	No information	Nothing	Yes	8 - 31	33	Gender targeted
	Belgrade	1 682 720 (2024)	53	2021	M	60% women as experts 41% women as others	Nothing	Yes	12 - 36	52	Gender responsive
Serbia	Novi Sad	260 438 (2022)	53	2025	M	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moldova	Chisinau	720 128 (2024)	54	2019	M	No information	Nothing	No	0 - 0	0	Gender blind
	Balti	90 954 (2025)	55	2021	M	55% women as experts 60% women as others	Nothing	Yes	21 - 70	24	Gender targeted

RECOMMENDATIONS

In what follows, a set of possible recommendations are presented, addressed at different actors important in the process of developing, adopting and implementing a GCAP: a) to the team of experts from EBRD that have been and are managing the GrCF and their projects; b) to the decision-makers within the city that negotiate projects with EBRD and engage the funds of their municipalities, assume responsibilities for implementing and deliver on these engagements; c) to the representatives of several NGOs/CSOs, including those representing women's rights and gender equality, or any other form of inclusion (age, disability, ethnicity, citizenship) that could get engaged in the developing process of a GCAP and then monitor its implementation, engaging in dialogue with the local authorities and consultants.

To the **EBRD Team** involved in the Green Cities Framework:

- Include in the revised GCAP Methodology aspects of gender responsible budgeting by requesting an assessment of budget needed to implement the proposed gender equality actions; or by requesting an assessment of the GCAP proposed budget and their impacts on gender equality; or by requesting that proposed actions with high impact on gender equality have budgets included for specific actions for gender equality. Any form of gender responsive budgeting in the GCAP Methodology and proposed budget helps assess the impact of actions.
- Make sure the Social and Gender Baseline Evaluation is included and linked to the proposed actions in several areas of the GCAP. Revise the GCAP Methodology in this aspect and instruct clearly how the assessment of impacts on gender equality need to be carried out and links between the Social and Gender Baseline Evaluation and proposed actions presented. Make sure the gender responsive budgeting aspects are presented.
- Demand the involvement and cooperation of the Gender and Social Expert with the other thematic experts when proposed actions are developed and presented. Request the presence of the Gender and Social Expert to all consultations with stakeholders on any of the topics decided.
- Make sure the gender dimensions of leadership, stakeholders, consultations are reflected in the reports from the consultants and presented in the GCAP adopted.
- Ensure transparency of the consultants team and their expertise and of the stakeholders consulted.
- Make sure that several and diverse organisations of citizens and inhabitants of the city are informed and consulted in the development of the GCAP.
- Ensure that these organisations have access to information, documents, discussions and consultations, are informed and also capable to monitor the implementation of the adopted GCAP.
- Promote for funding actions and projects that have impacts on gender equality.
- Align the objectives of the EBRD's Gender Equality Strategy with the those of the Green Cities Programme, particularly considering the gender responsive budgeting.

To the **decision-makers** within the local and city administration:

- Make sure the GCAP Coordinator within the city structures is aware and knowledgeable of gender equality needs at city level and is able to ensure a gender mainstreaming process.
- Ensure an gender equal representation, both in terms of presence and also in terms of topics, of the participants and stakeholders involved in the development process of GCAP. Ensure that each meeting addresses, shortly, topics related to different needs of women and men, different categories of inhabitants (young and old, disabilities, minorities, migrants).
- Request that the consultancy company supporting the development of the GCAP pays attention to gender equality specific aspects within the community, formulates actions that have a gender sensitivity and promotes those that deliver higher level of gender equality.
- Train and implement the administrative staff in gender responsive budgeting for the assessment of the city budget. Strengthen municipal capacity for gender-responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring and integrate gender tagging and gender indicators into multi-sector municipal investment frameworks supported by the EBRD.
- Ensure that the proposed budget for the actions in GCAP has a gender sensitive dimension and assessment.
- Facilitate the gathering of sex disaggregated data as much as possible, at city level. And ensure each public institution involved in the GCAP development provides sex disaggregated data on leadership and employees, on regulations to address gender-based violence, harassment and sexual harassment.
- Support the funding of those actions that have a high impact on gender equality in the city.
- Collaborate and facilitate transparency for several and diverse organisations of citizens and inhabitants active in the city, including in the area of women's rights, gender equality and any other form of inclusion (age, disability, minority, citizenship).
- Use the technical opportunity provided by the GCAP development to instruct the administrative staff in topics and issues related to gender equality, gender responsive budgeting and sex disaggregated data collection.
- Align the national objectives of gender equality formulated in national legislation and strategy with the actions to be promoted at city level in the areas of the GCAP.
- Look for and promote gender specific knowledge exchange within national and regional countries in the specific areas of GCAP to support transfer of good practices.

To the **organisations** (non-governmental and/or civil society) active in diverse areas, like women's rights, gender equality, disability, age, minority:

- Form coalitions with organisations from environmental movement and/or local activism to gather strength and representation and put forward gender equality aspects within these areas (environment, climate change, urban development, public services environmental friendly).
- Monitor the announcements of the local administration on infrastructure and environmental related projects and demand consultations and reports on budgets spending.
- Participate to the announced events and discussions and present specific points of view on specific needs.
- Present local and specific initiatives carried out and implemented at city and local level relevant for diverse areas of the GCAP.

- Look for and promote national and regional gender experts and knowledge providers in the specific areas of the GCAP to facilitate translation of good practices.
- Lobby decision-makers to include gender equality aspects relevant for each proposed action in the GCAP and ask for gender responsive budgeting of each action.
- Facilitate training and knowledge exchange for the decision-makers and leaders of local authorities and public companies in gender equality legislation and policies and their implementation.
- Demand that all social data has a gender aspects and are sex-disaggregated (as much as possible), also aged and other social status.
- Establish contacts with the GCAP Coordinator within the local public administration and demand participation and consultation during the GCAP development.
- Ask transparency and access to data and information about the consultancy company/ies contracted and present the local/city situation in terms of gender equality, and other forms of inclusion (age, minority, disabilities) of the city.
- Ask for targeted actions that promote gender equality and support for such actions in being implemented among all those proposed for the GCAP.
- If possible, monitor the implementation of the GCAP actions and projects, ask for annual reports, including budget spending from the local authorities.
- Asked to be consulted on the final version of the Social and Gender Baseline Evaluation of the GCAP from the local authorities, demand a public presentation of this document before its adoption and acceptance by the local decision-makers.

The development of a Green City Action Plan can be a great exercise of public and civil society participation and consultation in decision-making on environmental and climate issues, a great chance to mainstream gender aspects within discussions and priorities of city's investments, to connect with the decision-makers and/or to hear from the community about how they see the infrastructure, public services, access to the city. Make good use of this opportunity and support the other cities and communities to learn from previous mistakes and avoid them.

5. SOURCES:

The analysis is based on extensive desk research, carried out in November – December 2025, of available data and analyses published by EBRD, especially in its dedicated web-site for the Green City Action Programme (<https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/public/news-and-events/news/>).

The analysis is based on secondary data analysis and the information collected within **a data base**, specifically created for it. A set of questions specifically designed for this analysis (e.g. who is the mayor? Who is leading the consultancy team? Is there a gender expert included in the consultant team? To complement the information from these sources (the 10 GCAPs), other sources were consulted and data was extracted. The report indicates all the sources used and presented. Other reports and analyses on the situation in the six Western Balkans countries and Republic of Moldova regarding gender equality/inequalities, gender aspects of climate change and environmental related issues were used, more to complement the frame, bring new and relevant information and support the analysis. These reports and analyses were published between 2023 and 2025, including.

6. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Time allocation: the research is carried out during mid-October – December 2025. This short time allocation does not allow for carrying out expert interviews or survey.

The analysis is limited by access to documents, information, and experts. In terms of *documents*, the analysis is based on the public available documents (Green City Action Plans for the 10 cities) and the information provided there. GCAPs were carried out under Technical Support contracts, between EBRD and consortium of consultancy companies (international ones like ARUP, Atkins, PwC Advisory, Mott McDonalds, LDK Consultants, Resources and Waste Advisory group (RWA), in partnership with locals). By the terms of the contract, the primary beneficiaries are the municipal authorities, that have the last word on the content and form of publication, and the EBRD. In terms of access to experts, the analysis benefits few inputs. Few GCAPs (4) have the teams of consultants and experts that supported the work for GCAP presented; not all teams were presented by tasks, and thus it was difficult to identify the presence of a social/gender expert in the team. Where we did (3 GCAPs), the gender experts were locals/nationals of the country. These experts were contacted, and brief discussions were carried out. Due to contract limitations, the discussions were informal, more at the level of methodology used, difficulties in finding sex-disaggregated data at city level and collaboration within the project team to mainstream gender aspects. In terms of access to information, the Gender Assessments carried for specific GCAPs are not publicly available for documents. Due to contractual issues, they cannot be accessed. All these factors limit the analysis and restrict it to the public available documents (adopted and published GCAPs), and the information presented there.

The analysis acknowledges the changes in GCAP methodology regarding gender aspects, introduced in 2020 and 2021.²¹ These changes impacted on the work carried out by consultants and significant differences are noticed between GCAPs carried out in different periods. The first GCAPs, from 2018 and 2019 (Tirana, Zenica, Chisinau) were carried out under the first version of GCAP methodology, where gender-related aspects were not operationalized and included in the work. The second round, from 2020 and 2021 (Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Skopje, Pristina, Belgrade, Balti) benefited from an improved GCAP methodology that required consultants clearly how to assess gender inequalities for baseline evaluation, presented areas to target, and asked for gender sensitive actions proposals, where possible. In the third round, the Brcko District GCAP adopted in September 2024, presents the 'lessons learn' of GCAP methodology in terms of transparency of persons involved and use of gender indicators and gender perspective to develop such a document. The latest GCAP methodology, published in August 2025, takes further considerations of gender aspects. A preliminary version was applied to the GCAP for Brcko District.²²

²¹ EBRD Green Cities. Green City Action Plan methodology, published October 2020, aspects of gender equality were specifically included: in stakeholders consulted, baseline analysis in terms of demography and economic capacities, participation to decision-making, including existence of gender equality policies at city level, inclusion of gender analysis in identifying the city challenges, in proposed actions (assess their impact in terms of promoting or not gender equality), and recommendation for sex-disaggregated data collection (at city level if possible) for demographic and economic aspects. In June 2021, EBRD Team held a on-line workshop with social and gender experts involved in work for GCAPs to present the GCAP methodology and its gender specific aspects and areas, to discuss challenges encounter in the field by experts, to offer some advice. It was stressed that the main objectives of introducing a gender perspective to GCAPs were: a) to be able to assess the proposed actions from the point of view of gender equality co-benefits; b) to be able to include gender components in the proposed actions.

²² EBRD Green Cities. Green City Action Plan methodology, published August 2025, announces that 'The Methodology mainstreams gender equality and human capital considerations throughout the GCAP process, recognizing these as fundamental dimensions of sustainable urban development. Gender equality and human capital considerations and digital, as well as risk and vulnerability are now mainstreamed throughout the GCAP rather than being addressed in a separate supplementary output.'

The analysis also identifies limitations imposed by the used GCAP methodology and approach considered. The GCAP methodology changed from a gender-blind methodology to a gender targeted and aimed towards a gender-responsive. In the current analysis framed by the geographical context and period mainly, the included GCAPs were mostly gender blind or gender targeted, within only one gender responsive. Furthermore, due to this, the main approach of the GCAP was not to support gender sensitive actions, to identify them, to present them, to budget them. The main approach was to 'include' gender aspects where possible (where data existed and supported the observations) in the proposed actions, developed independently from Gender and Economic Inclusion baseline, or to assess those proposed actions in terms of impacts on gender inequalities/equalities and of co-benefits they bring. Based on the discussion with experts, it was clear that gender baseline evaluation was a different, specific document, and not many of its aspects were integrated in the development of the proposed actions. The proposed actions had the main target to reduce pollution and address climate change risks, less to consider social and thus gender inequality aspects. Many proposed actions are technical in nature, consider improving or even creating new infrastructure, and is less focused on behavior change and impact at human behavior level, thus, to include gender and other identify aspects that influence behaviors towards climate.

Another limitation identified were the lack of sex-disaggregated data at city level and/or the difficulty to gather such data. In most cases, there was regional data or even national data from where implications for the city could be drawn. The city level analysis (micro level) used for the development of GCAP brings in specific gender inequalities/aspects that might be different compared to gender aspects identified at national level (macro). These are aspects related to gender inequalities present in developed, urban areas, different from rural and less developed communities. Still, as most of the GCAPs are for capital cities, gender aspects relevant for the specific country are reflected in the complex situation of gender inequalities identified at city level. City level data collection and the existence of sex-disaggregated data (SDD) is much rare and more difficult to find compared with SDD at national or even regional level. Therefore, extrapolations from national and/or regional levels of SDD could be done if necessary.

And, not least important, is the absence of consideration of gender distribution of decision-makers at city level: mayor, councils, and public administration. Except for the GCAP for Balti, the gender composition of the city's decision-making level and of the public administration of the city is never presented. The GCAP methodology ask, where possible, evaluation of access to decision-making from women and what it is called 'vulnerable groups'. Still, a clear methodology in looking at the levels of centers of decision-making power within the city is lacking. This also hampers a clearer picture of who decides over these GCAPs. The gender distribution of decision-makers is crucial in identifying the exact authors of the GCAPs, the exact responsible for deciding on the funding for a project or another, and the lack of women's representation and access to decision-making at this level and in these projects.

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