

CASE STUDY - BISTRIȚA

Each city has experienced a unique journey; no two the same. Provided with the same information and support; learn about the collaboration and development across a two-year project and how it helped to shape impactful collaboration, change and decarbonisation.

Key moments/highlights

- **The URBACT baseline study** developed in the framework of the first phase of the ZCC project gave Bistrița municipality an important starting point in the elaboration of the Zero Carbon Integrated Action Plan for Bistrița. The study presented information on the necessity of developing science-based targets, municipal carbon budgets and examples of engaging residents and businesses.

- The transnational cooperation and URBACT events

The transnational meetings bringing together project partners, the workshops, masterclass sessions and other events held within the Zero Carbon Cities network provided valuable opportunities to exchange experience and to build knowledge on climate-related actions, as well as to engage local stakeholders in the mission towards climate neutrality.

Through URBACT events such as URBACT e-University, URBACT City Festival, URBACT webinars like “Hints and tips for Online working”, “Digital Friday Breakfasts” sessions, “Creating Effective Digital Study Visits”, URBACT provided Bistrița municipality with a greater level of focus on municipal capacity building, digital transformation, gender equality and inclusiveness.

-The set up of Bistrița URBACT Local Group (ULG)

The URBACT tools and the transnational experience within the ZCC project helped the municipality lay the foundations of a local working group with representation both at local level and at higher level of governance – Bistrița-Năsăud County. The list of ULG members is open and constantly being updated with new members, but in regard to long-term collaboration with the local group of stakeholders, the municipality aims to continue implementing actions even after the end of the project.

The ULG’s active involvement in bringing to light the main challenges and opportunities a zero-carbon city implies has helped the municipality shape Bistrița’s path for the next 30 years with a clear vision and a specific set of objectives towards 2050.

- Apply a data-based approach – Calculate Bistrița Carbon Budget

The experience of Manchester (the lead partner) on developing carbon budgets and using science-based targets clarified how to elaborate and to implement a carbon budget at

local level. This supported the adjustment and design of Bistrița’s development plans and actions in such a way that the city can achieve its targets on CO₂ emission reduction. In this regard, the project Masterclass sessions were very useful, as there were many topics with good examples and theoretical knowledge.

The CO₂ reduction targets for Bistrita were calculated on a scientific basis starting from the carbon budget, according to the Tyndall methodology, enabling the city hall to set out clear planned actions.

Bistrita municipality will adopt a local carbon budget to help guide strategic decisions on a policy level. Defining a carbon budget emphasizes the sense of urgency of climate action on a science-based method in alignment with targets set under the Paris Agreement.

-Development of Bistrița Integrated Action Plan

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) shows the main steps for the municipality to achieve its goal of carbon neutrality. Bistrita IAP provides measurable actions that can be tracked in order to oversee the climate related problems Bistrita is facing and enforce taking actions. The urgency of actions is represented via the carbon budget. The municipality has little time to delay its actions if it strives to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and not consume its carbon budget until then. Understanding the carbon budget and the urgency of the climate related actions Bistrita had to understand the local context, the local drivers of CO₂ emissions and thus create the action plan in order to meet its targets.

-“Sustainable Urban Mobility Campaign” (Bistrita SSA)

Through this local campaign the citizens are encouraged to use sustainable alternative means of transport and to foster cycling culture. Also, Bistrita municipality is concerned with protecting the environment, reducing CO₂, thus carrying out in the framework of this campaign a series of education, information and awareness actions.

The ZCC project represents for Bistrita the foundation for its future focus on reducing the effects of climate change. The methodology used in calculating the available carbon budget until the end of the 21st century has underlined through a scientific method the urgency for GHG reduction actions, as the current activities in the city depict that its carbon budget will be expended before 2050 if local stakeholders don’t take action on this matter.

As perceived from the ZCC project, **cooperation is the quintessential element** for the success of the actions. The knowledge sharing and best practices within this project helped Bistrita municipality understand not only the importance of future actions, but also the mechanisms through which it can engage stakeholders in delivering more

innovative projects towards the final goal.

Complications/challenges

- The lack of data (data needed for calculating Bistrița's carbon budget) from the private sector and the tertiary sector represented a challenge but until the end of the project Bistrița municipality succeeded to involve more stakeholders and to get some more data. Also, managed to use and estimate the local level data - from the existing national/regional data.
- At the beginning of the project the low engagement and awareness of the relevant local stakeholders was also a challenge. Small scale action (SSA) provided an excellent tool for climate goal communication and citizen engagement in Bistrița. The SSA helped to increase awareness about the topic of sustainable mobility and climate change and to engage citizens directly in the matters of climate change mitigation.
- Setting up a Local Group of Support was complicated especially because of the COVID pandemic. Most of the ULG meetings took place online and this required more online expertise and skills and of course time to prepare and get used to online tools.
- The COVID pandemic also caused delays and changes of plans regarding for instance the number of participants and the location of some SSA activities (because of the imposed restrictions)
- Further the successful transition of the IAP from development to implementation will also pose a new series of challenges for the municipality and the local group as the IAP document proposes an extensive portfolio of projects, setting the city's ambitions for 2050. So, in the future, it is very important to continue monitoring and evaluate the plan implementation.

Future plans (post-project)

- Create a long-term partnership with the current ULG members in order to ensure continuity after the ZCC project ends;
- Develop the energy management team within the City Hall;
- Integrate the IAP medium and long-term actions in other strategic documents of the city in order to foster synergies and improve the potential for funding;
- Present the IAP to other possible stakeholders and improve media coverage of the target Bistrița has set for 2050;
- Reach out further to private entities in the city, especially economic agents from the industry sector where there is a lack of data, and invite them to events with the ULG in order to expand the group;
- Implement on a yearly basis short-term actions in order to raise public awareness on the need to address climate change and necessary actions

- towards a climate neutral city;
- Constantly organize meetings in order to monitor the implementation of all IAP actions;
 - Implement the IAP proposed actions.

Quotes /photos

“It is very important cities have strategies and plans heading in the right direction. The right direction for those policies that allow the sustainable development of cities based on solid principles.” (Liliana Cociu, Chief Executive of European Projects Management & Environmental Protection, Bistrița Municipality)

“By understanding the remaining available carbon budget and calculating our present energy consumption necessity through this Plan, we now understand more than ever the urgency to act together, as a community, towards reducing our CO₂ emission levels, thus creating a more lasting “green” impact through our projects. Nonetheless, the road towards a “zero carbon city” will require an intelligent use of our resources and diligence in implementing sustainable and durable actions. (...) Our mission not only underlines what our community needs to accomplish from an environmental perspective, but also the quality of life that our community deserves. Through the designed actions in our plan, we wish to create a better, “greener” urban environment for the next generations, while also setting an example of fruitful relations between public administrations and the community.

This is our commitment, to put Bistrița on the right path towards climate neutrality!” (Ioan Turc, Mayor of Bistrița)



Few of the activities carried out as part of the Small Scale Action

