



# What is the role of green investments in the future of Romanian cities?

A review of local development strategies

# Executive Summary

**The preparedness of local public administrations in Romania for the paradigm shift in the coming years - in which green investments must be prioritised - remains low.** The lack of strategic planning and of transparent and undertaken mechanisms for prioritising investments at local level weakens the capacity of public administrations to substantiate and publicly explain these priorities. In theory, we have many strategic documents that should provide real support to local public administrations, but in practice they are often used ineffectively.

The approach used by most local administrations is more a matter of context, (lack of) political will and availability of national or European funding, and less a matter of transparent and long-term planning of the public investments. And green public investments are no exception.

**Ideally, local development strategies - which are the most important strategic documents at local level, as they include the whole portfolio of projects and provide mechanisms for prioritising investments - should support strategic planning, targets and indicators assumed by the local authorities and the development vision.** They identify and prioritise public investments and indicate the evolution of local development objectives in a structured manner. The reason why we say "ideally" is because in the Romanian administration the planning component, i.e., the monitoring and evaluation of these strategies, is deficient, with little public data available to assess the degree of achievement of the targets assumed.

What needs to be emphasised is that these strategic documents have been drawn up with local administrations as sole target audience and with marginal focus on involving the local community, civic groups, NGOs, academia, or the general public. This architecture affects the inclusion of other local stakeholders in the development of the strategy, but especially in its implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages. This often leads to increased opacity and a very limited understanding by the public of what the local government is undertaking as a long-term development objective with significant impact on the relationship between government and community.

**At CRPE, we analysed from a green perspective the project portfolios that are part of the development strategies of the county capital municipalities and the city halls of Bucharest for the current programming period (2021-2027).** We built a methodology for selecting green projects or projects with a substantial green component in order to better understand the focus of public administrations in Romania ahead of decades that will prioritize green investments. The report, we hope, presents the vision of the most important municipalities in Romania in terms of sustainable development and (re)focusing of public investments towards the major objective that is climate neutrality.

We have analysed the green priorities of local governments based on a ranking system that includes six main types of investments related to Air Quality, Water, Urban Biodiversity, Waste and Circular Economy, Noise Pollution and Energy Efficiency. The methodology is aligned with European classifications and the types of investments shortlisted at for each priority are based on the project portfolios in local development strategies.

**According to our calculations, Romania's most important cities will allocate capital investments (including those co-financed by European funds) of over €19.1 billion between 2023 and 2030.** This is an optimistic scenario, where 30% of local budget spending will be allocated to development, compared to an average of 20% between 2017 and 2022.

**Bucharest and its six sectors have an investment potential reaching almost €7 billion over the period 2023-2030, followed by cities such as Timisoara (€922 million), Iasi (€940 million) or Cluj Napoca (€913 million).** However, this amount is significantly below the value of the project portfolios for the period analysed and can only partially cover what we have identified as green investments. It should be noted that these amounts are estimates and may vary significantly, some of the county capitals do not have an updated strategy or many project portfolios do not include cost estimates.

There are also significant differences between what is included in the development strategies and what is the financial capacity of the cities.

**What we have categorised as green investments or investments with a significant green component represent a portfolio of projects of at least €19.2 billion out of a total of over €95.4 billion**, divided into the following investment types: C1 (Air Quality) - 3.28 billion, C2 (Water Quality) - €1.3 billion, C3 (Urban Biodiversity) - €2.66 billion, C4 (Waste and Circular Economy) - €1.3 billion, C5 (Noise Pollution) - €0.14 billion and C6 (Energy Efficiency) - €10.5 billion.

**Significant planned energy efficiency budgets dominate the project portfolios both in terms of estimated values and in terms of number of projects.** Historical backlogs in public infrastructure, a preference for visible and more achievable projects, and a timid approach to greening and pollution reduction processes in big cities that could lead to lost votes (on issues such as road traffic, stricter waste policy, noise, heating, or air pollution) cause these portfolios to be focused around more achievable goals.

**Projects that should improve very weak environmental indicators on the circular economy, noise pollution or urban biodiversity are very limited, both in value and number.** There are few targets set by local governments concerning these issues. Noise pollution, for example, which dramatically affects all cities in Romania, is quasi-ignored in development strategies, with only a limited number of cities expecting to at least develop noise maps (and those investments are not coupled with a range of indicators that can be tracked annually).

**We point to some major challenges in the development strategies.** Firstly, the lack of correlation between the investment portfolios and the targets set - either environmental or focused on general improvement of local quality of life. Administrations do not always follow the indicators and targets set in the strategies, and the lack of relevant public data prevents both administrations and the public from monitoring and evaluating the impact of the investments made. Given the obvious difficulties in collecting and tracking these indicators, a first step at local government level is to strengthen their capacity to collect, use and evaluate these indicators.

**We need more transparency and a major simplification of the development strategies.** Their opacity is high and, for the public or even for specialists, almost impossible to follow and evaluate. The use of formats of hundreds and (sometimes) thousands of pages, with endless lists of projects and indicators, without aggregated data and without the inclusion of simplified structures, prevents any external monitoring. Our experience from this research indicates that it is quite difficult even for local governments to follow their own strategies, and for the public this exercise becomes almost impossible.

**However, in addition to specific measures that would help to make local development strategies coherent and transparent, we propose a dedicated plan of green projects for climate neutrality.** This plan starts from the need for transparency and the need to ensure that this strategic document defining the long-term vision of the administration is directed towards the public. It involves a medium to long term roadmap, based on the current strategic documents at local level, with transparent and easily trackable targets and indicators, with clear responsible parties at each objective level and a monitoring and evaluation process that would hold the administration accountable by regularly publishing and evaluating the foreseen indicators and projects.



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# 1. Methodology

## How we analysed project portfolios

### 1. Importance of transparency at local government level

**It is not news that the European Union supports an accelerated "greening" of local, national, and European budgets, to ensure that public investments meet their climate commitments.** Defining green investments to drive sustainable policy priorities is a process that started last decade at European level and is a key step towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions within the EU's 2030 and 2050 targets. Both the EU and Member States or private initiatives have developed ranking systems.

**Cities play a key role in this process, as they are responsible for more than 2/3 of greenhouse gas emissions, but the classification of these investments in Romania - especially at local government level - is still at an early stage.** This translates into a difficulty for local public administrations in Romania to present publicly consistent data on financial allocations and the main directions, targets and measures undertaken in terms of their green and sustainable development and climate neutral policy. And, furthermore, an even more limited understanding of the general public of the local government's vision on this subject.

**This is the case even though administrations have numerous strategic documents with relevant objectives for climate neutrality and environmental quality improvement** (besides local development strategies, relevant indicators are also found in the SEAPs - Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans or the SUMPs - Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans), and **several cities in Romania are part of European climate neutrality initiatives and have dedicated plans for green or climate neutral investments** (*Mission 100 Green Cities, Green Cities Agreement or European Green Capital / European Green Leaf initiatives*).

**We are not proposing a duplication of these strategic documents which, in the case of many public administrations, have sufficient public data, targets and investment portfolios to indicate the green or less green direction in which local government is heading.** But we are proposing a simplified roadmap that will truly help both the administration, but especially the public, to track, monitor, evaluate and adjust where necessary the city's green future and climate neutrality targets. We began this exercise by looking at the most important document at local level - the *Local Development Strategy*.

We started from the following objectives in our approach:

- **Defining a methodology for selecting green projects at the level of public authorities in Romania**, aligned with best practices and priorities at EU level and the specificities of local development strategies, which can help improve strategic planning;
- **Selecting and creating a list of projects** that can be classified as green investment or with a significant green component;
- **Publishing a pilot analysis of the green component of local development strategies**, including by linking to available local government funding for capital investment for the period 2023-2030;
- **Measures to improve strategic planning capacity** at local government level;
- **Measures to improve the capacity of local public authorities to monitor and evaluate green project plans and the climate neutrality roadmap.**

## 2. Defining the methodology for project classification

**The classification was based on the five priorities underlying the Green City Accord initiative, a movement of European cities committed to safeguarding the environment and significantly improve the environment in urban areas.** We adjusted this methodology to the realities of investments managed by local public authorities in Romania and to available public data.

The Green Cities Accord has five major environmental quality objectives - *Air Quality, Water, Urban Biodiversity, Circular Economy & Waste and Noise*, but we added an additional category: *Energy Efficiency*, since there are numerous projects managed by local governments that required a separate component to better understand how they determined their medium and long-term vision and their investment targets.

**The mapping of the types of investments related to each component was done based on the urban development strategies for the period 2021-2027(2030) for each territorial administrative unit.** Ideally, these strategies support the strategic planning and development vision of the local government, identifying and prioritising public investments and showing the evolution of local development objectives in a structured manner.

**However, each of these strategies includes a portfolio of projects that define the local government's vision and are divided into locally agreed strategic objectives.** They represent only a preliminary version of how the local government proposes long-term development. Development strategies are not the only local strategic documents. A broad understanding of how local governments project their green future and climate neutrality goal should be corroborated with all existing planning documents. Nonetheless, development strategies come with one great advantage, which is that they include the main development directions (also indicated in the other supporting documents) in an integrated manner.

**Based on these project portfolios, in our pilot exercise we grouped the types of investments into the 6 components defined above.** However, we faced several limitations:

- Random setting of the total value of the project portfolio in some cases (lack of budget at project level, lack of details concerning the type of investment and related budget, significant differences between similar investments, extreme values of some projects that significantly exceed the financial capacities of local governments);
- Difficulties in calculating the total value of the priority project portfolio;
- Difficulties in identifying the exact component to which to allocate each investment due to inconclusive titles/ descriptions;
- Significant differences between the way project portfolios are drafted, without prior identification of the beneficiary and unclear degree of responsibility (e.g. investment with multiple beneficiaries at local government, county or functional urban area level);
- Limited centralisation of financial data at the level of development strategies and lack of clarity within local governments regarding the list of priority projects and the long list of projects.

**Nevertheless, the analysis can be an important step towards a better understanding of how local governments define their development vision for the period 2023-2027(2030) and how they incorporate green targets and investments into this paradigm.** And, of course, it can help us to better understand the need to present the achievement of the proposed targets against M & E indicators, as well as to include a new green component with related indicators. In the absence of these indicators and of increased transparency of the M & E process, there can be little understanding of how local government development objectives are being met.

Most local development strategies do not include a clear distinction between project beneficiaries and/ or they calculate the total portfolio values without differentiating between them. This can lead to exaggerated portfolio values, according to public documents, but without direct impact on the local budget (e.g., the most common example is in the mobility area where many CNAIR and CFR projects were included in the total calculations of local governments when we requested data or aggregated values are presented in public documents).

We came across similar cases in *Health, Environment, Culture* etc., where the calculations included projects with no local budget support. We tried in our calculations to exclude these investments in order not to affect the quantitative analysis and we are proposing, as a recommendation, a clear differentiation between these beneficiaries and the aggregate values. One strategy that includes a clear distinction is that of the municipality of Cluj-Napoca.

Also, a recurring problem was the presence of portfolios where many projects had no estimated values. We propose that, at least for the priority lists of projects, these estimates should be included and have realistic values at the time of drafting the document. We consider it absurd that some projects do not have cost estimates while others do, even if they are often in the idea stage. Any quantitative analysis of the local strategy (as in our case) is impacted by this situation, especially in the absence of estimates of the financial capacity of the local government for investment. In terms of these estimates, 9 out of 10 local governments do not match available financial resources with project portfolios.

### 3. Types of projects selected

**The types of green investments or investments with a significant green component that we looked at are as follows:**

#### A. Air quality

- Support for electric vehicles - including charging stations
- Investments in non-polluting public transport (hybrid or electric buses, trolleybuses, trams)
- Redevelopment of urban space (investment in pedestrian areas and cycle paths)
- Local government fleet replacement programme (purchase of electric or hybrid vehicles)
- Air quality improvement plans, including installation of air quality monitoring stations and interactive air quality maps

#### B. Water

- Water distribution (including drinking water)
- Wastewater management

#### C. Urban biodiversity

- Investments in new parks, green roofs, gardens, green spaces, recreation areas, urban forests and green belts, green-blue corridor
- Green lanes (only green component costs - green corridors)
- Urban regeneration projects, rehabilitated and re-naturalised natural areas, reconversion of damaged areas/industrial zones
- Wildlife support projects/ providing support for wildlife in urban communities

#### D. Circular economy and waste management

- Food waste
- Equipment re-use and repair projects
- Recycling/ sorting projects
- Waste management and waste treatment

#### E. Noise pollution

- Traffic management
- Noise maps and measures to limit noise pollution
- Investments in noise cameras

#### F. Energy efficiency

- Street lighting efficiency
- Energy efficiency in public and residential buildings
- Centralised heating investments
- Green energy production

## 2. Green priorities in local development strategies

**We noted the clustering of strategies around urban transport development projects, energy efficiency and green energy production,** and very limited interest in other significant urban issues - waste (especially food waste), waste traceability, noise pollution, air and water pollution, urban biodiversity and the protection of flora and fauna. The *Energy Efficiency* component dominates the portfolio of projects both in number and estimated value (54.61% of the total value of the green component). Of course, the portfolios mainly target potential investments from non-reimbursable European funds, but these are much more comprehensive than what is currently included in local environmental strategies.

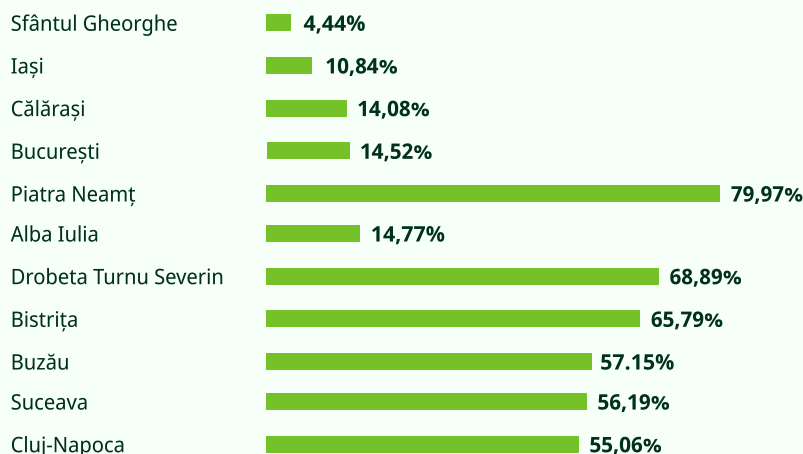
What we have defined as green investments have a total estimated value of €19.2 billion at the level of the municipalities of county residence and Bucharest. This estimate represents 20.12% of the total value of the strategies. If we exclude the largest strategy, value-wise, of the municipality of Bucharest of approx. 59 billion, this gives us a value of the green component of €10.5 billion, out of a potential total of €35.5 billion. In this case, excluding Bucharest, the green portfolio represents 29.56% of the total investment forecast for the period 2021-2027 (2030).



**Table 1 - List of green projects broken down by components per county capital**

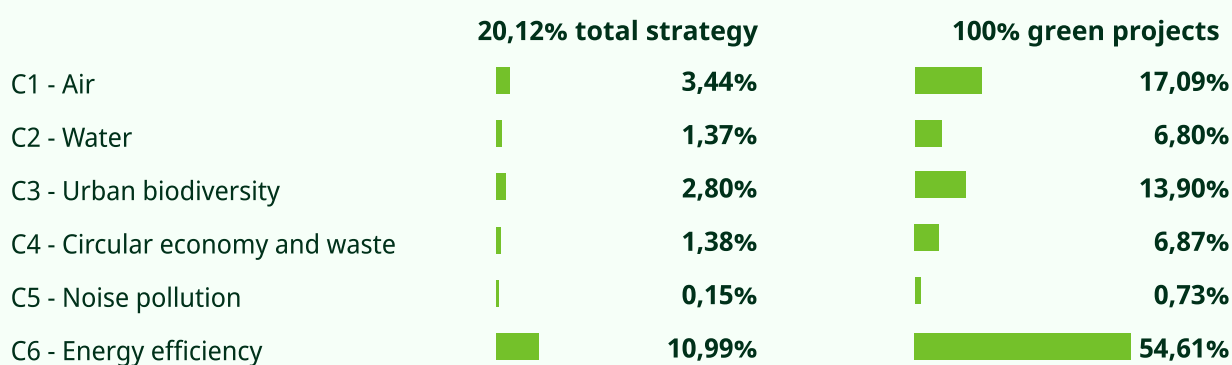
City	C1 – Air	C2 – Water	C3 – Urban biodiversity	C4 - Waste and circular economy	C5 - Noise pollution	C6 - Energy efficiency	Total green priority components	Total strategy projects	% green priorities vs. total projects
Alba Iulia	5.136.000,00	0	6.606.184,20	0	0	14.325.200,00	26.067.384,20	176.495.985	14,77%
Alexandria	35.330.301,20	850.000,00	29.450.028,20	2.290.000,00	1.020.000,00	49.217.074,40	118.157.403,80	407.270.407	29,01%
Arad	3.462.006,00	1.000.000,00	68.999.600,00	3.816.000,00	0	243.394.203,40	320.671.809,40	971.864.628,20	33,00%
Bacău	221.907.190	10.000.000	57.590.826	6.720.408	10.000.000	195.502.490	501.720.914	1.146.894.436,36	43,75%
Baia Mare	143.900.000,00	0	91.200.000,00	0	0	76.500.000,00	311.600.000,00	N/A	N/A
Bistrița	194.612.355,00	5.196.399,71	22.629.431,00	22.057.144,00	2.500.000,00	89.035.655,00	336.030.984,71	510.730.797,90	65,79%
Botoșani	64.847.948	12.000.000	63.194.643	11.765.762	6.995.000	124.554.471	283.357.824	935.577.297	30,29%
Brăila	81.156.800,00	58.263.583,80	19.575.060,00	16.754.000,00	2.007.400,00	6.621.307,00	184.378.150,80	405.163.211,00	45,51%
Brașov	29.137.976,00	0	49.222.669,00	0	0	16.105.702,00	94.466.347,00	311.691.367	30,31%
Bucharest	800.859.140,60	402.717.746,98	768.352.564,00	676.126.494,76	3.568.000,00	6.035.191.692,28	8.686.815.638,62	59.842.059.409,30	14,52%
Buzău	67.500.000,00	51.200.000,00	97.350.000,00	24.400.000,00	600.000,00	291.633.815,00	532.683.815,00	932.027.941,00	57,15%
Călărași	33.605.000,00	41.285.000,00	20.536.964,00	28.000.000,00	7.900.000,00	30.295.000,00	161.621.964,00	1.147.921.964,00	14,08%
Cluj-Napoca	172.000.000,00	500.000,00	258.500.000,00	1.000.000,00	0	153.600.000,00	585.600.000,00	1.063.500.000,00	55,06%
Constanța	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Craiova	49.031.200,00	0	44.685.000,00	18.395.000,00	0	174.250.000,00	286.361.200,00	902.118.450	31,74%
Deva	49.062.994,38	40.000	9.746.998,49	1.495.000	0	89.730.275,22	150.075.268	425.529.064	35,27%
Drobeta TS	97.241.017,11	145.000.000,00	47.300.000,00	3.500.000,00	0	209.800.000,00	502.841.017,10	729.969.345	68,89%
Focșani	26.305.000,00	0	118.000.000,00	200.000,00	0	67.820.000,00	212.325.000,00	475.535.000	44,65%
Galați	196.739.959,00	177.461.023,00	39.640.000,00	41.313.541,00	4.300.000,00	548.707.002,00	1.008.161.525,00	3.123.687.783	32,27%
Giurgiu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Iași	93.078.700,00	64.250.000,00	4.000.000,00	97.239.425,95	0	139.417.435,52	397.985.561,47	3.672.848.672	10,84%
Miercurea Ciuc	22.500.000,00	0	200.000,00	0	82.455.000,00	82.455.000,00	105.155.000,00	737.807.813	14,25%
Oradea	190.000,00	653.061,22	57.603.815,00	174.646.107	0	230.721.163,35	463.814.147	2.042.368.546	22,71%
Piatra Neamț	48.615.000,00	17.400.000,00	4.300.000,00	25.412.000,00	1.910.000,00	321.442.586,20	418.879.586,20	523.805.289,60	79,97%
Pitești	18.500.000,00	0,00	183.149.000,00	24.224.892,07	37.069.418,91	184.517.716,68	447.461.027,66	1.717.954.345,00	26,05%
Ploiești	243.363.980,00	25.878.619,00	19.162.169,12	5.495.510,00	6.032.653,00	81.382.193,00	381.315.124,12	702.621.496,73	54,27%
Râmnicu Vâlcea	20.120.000	12.000.000,00	19.800.000,00	24.800.000	0	45.717.945	122.737.945,80	258.976.853	47,39%
Resita	9.574.523,00	0	41.946.075,02	3.460.000,00	0,00	55.569.536,00	110.550.134,02	387.658.057	28,52%
Satu Mare	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	n/a
Sf Gheorghe	29.311.331,00	0	29.236.000	0	0	69.485.000	128.032.331	2.881.237.500	4,44%
Sibiu	174.861.000,00	83.612.000,00	47.665.265,00	50.780.000,00	7.000.000,00	89.575.000,00	453.493.265,00	2.666.209.608	17,01%
Slatina	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	n/a
Slobozia	17.000.000,00	0	8.130.000	8.300.000	2.000.000,00	43.900.000	79.330.000	394.359.468	20,12%
Suceava	135.122.420,00	8.000.000,00	15.760.000,00	11.880.000,00	0	62.585.000,00	333.347.420	593.297.420	56,19%
Târgoviște	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00%
Târgu-Mureș	54.369.000,00	11.707.903,00	44.365.899,00	685.395,00	0	84.082.416,00	195.210.613,00	811.598.111,00	24,05%
Târgu-Jiu	53.800.000,00	12.952.000,00	27.510.000,00	10.000.000,00	47.510.000,00	43.500.000,00	195.272.000,00	715.902.255	27,28%
Timișoara	52.560.653,00	59.258.497,15	242.402.484,51	0	13.265,31	299.533.351,60	653.768.251,57	2.579.945.943,00	25,34%
Tulcea	19.850.000,00	103.500.000,00	91.600.000,00	21.300.000,00	0	53.100.000,00	289.350.000,00	712.480.000,00	40,61%
Vaslui	11.800.000,00	0	12.000.000,00	4.000.000,00	0	20.000.000,00	47.800.000,00	275.570.000,00	17,35%
Zalău	4.100.000,00	0	7.400.000,00	0	0	60.000.000,00	71.500.000,00	220.355.379,00	32,45%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.280.551.494,06</b>	<b>1.304.725.833,8</b>	<b>2.668.810.675,54</b>	<b>1.319.856.679,9</b>	<b>140.725.737,22</b>	<b>10.483.268.231,45</b>	<b>19.197.938.652,00</b>	<b>95.403.033.741,98</b>	<b>20,12%</b>
<b>TOTAL without Bucharest</b>	<b>2.479.692.353,46</b>	<b>902.008.086,88</b>	<b>1.900.458.111,54</b>	<b>643.730.185,16</b>	<b>137.157.737,22</b>	<b>4.448.076.539,17</b>	<b>10.511.123.013,00</b>	<b>35.560.974.333,08</b>	<b>29,56%</b>

**Figure 1** - Cities with the highest and lowest shares of green projects in the total project portfolio (%)



The average percentage of green investment in the municipalities analysed is 20,12%, with a minimum of less than 5% in Sfântu Gheorghe and maximum levels of 80% in Piatra Neamț, 69% in Drobeta Turnu Severin or 66% in Bistrița. However, beyond the estimated values in the local strategies, there is also a clustering of projects around a very limited number of objectives, as well as an oversizing of some project portfolios that significantly exceed the financial capacity of local administrations. In the absence of clear prioritisation of these portfolios, the choice of investment projects becomes more of a contextual one, based on available calls and often a purely political decision.

**Figure 2** - Percentage allocation per component (% total strategy and % total green projects, including Bucharest)



**Figure 3 - Percentage allocation per component (% total strategy and % total green projects, excluding Bucharest)**

	29,56% total strategy	100% green projects
C1 - Air	6,97%	23,59%
C2 - Water	2,54%	8,58%
C3 - Urban biodiversity	5,34%	18,08%
C4 - Circular economy and waste	1,81%	6,12%
C5 - Noise pollution	0,39%	1,30%
C6 - Energy efficiency	12,51%	42,32%

**What stands out is the prioritisation of a high number of projects under Component 6 - Energy Efficiency, both in terms of total estimated value and number of projects.** Most of the investment portfolios are dominated by a very large number of projects designed mainly around increasing energy efficiency in public and residential buildings and (to a lesser extent) green energy production. The estimated value of these potential investments is ca. 10.5 billion (including Bucharest) and approx. 4.5 billion (excluding Bucharest). In the first scenario, it represents 54,61% of the total forecast, and in the case of county municipalities, excluding Bucharest, almost 42,32%. They dominate the project portfolios, both in terms of estimated values and number of projects.

**Component 1 - Air Quality has an allocated investment potential of approx. 3.28 billion (including Bucharest) and €2.48 billion (excluding Bucharest), which represents only 17% of the total project portfolio(including Bucharest) or 23.59%(excluding Bucharest).** There is a high number of projects for electric mobility and public transport, i.e., pedestrianisation and alternative/ velo transport schemes. There is almost no planned investment in air pollution maps to increase the number of air quality monitoring stations (and the transparency of this data) and increase understanding of pollution sources at the level of each city/ neighbourhood/ street. The two categories mentioned initially represent over 90% of the total number of potential projects.

**Component 2 - Water has an allocated investment potential of approx. EUR 1.3 billion (including Bucharest) and EUR 0.9 billion (excluding Bucharest).** However, the number of projects is very limited despite significant funding from the current EU funds, and most of them focus only on the rehabilitation and extension of the water and wastewater supply system, a historical backlog even at urban level in Romania. We foresee much higher financial allocations than those included in the development strategies.

**Component 3 - Urban Biodiversity has an investment potential of ca. EUR 2.68 billion (including Bucharest) and EUR 1.9 billion (excluding Bucharest).** In the case of C3, it was almost impossible to differentiate the green component in case of infrastructure works (e.g., green street alignments), indicating that the amount might be higher than in reality. Unfortunately, as we have indicated, the level of detail of the project is sometimes very limited. The most common projects in this category are those related to increasing the number of green spaces and urban regeneration of certain areas, but they are not based on detailed indicators (most of them only include an increase in green space per inhabitant).

**Component 4 - Circular economy and waste management** has a potential allocation of only €1.32 billion (including Bucharest) and €0.64 billion (excluding Bucharest). It is also the component where we have identified the fewest projects (except for waste management and treatment). Very few strategies included a project portfolio on waste reduction or product reuse initiatives. Most projects focused on improving the local waste management system and extending the separate collection system, other historical infrastructure backlogs at urban level.

**Component 5 - Noise Pollution** is also the one with the least financial allocations, mainly due to the way we have constructed the selection of projects, but also to the lack of local administrations' aptitude to propose solutions to the significant urban problem of noise pollution. However, there are a relatively large number of administrations that have proposed to develop maps and stations for noise monitoring, which is currently lacking in almost every city in Romania.

We were only able to identify a very small number of municipalities with specific projects in this category, with very few administrations proposing to produce noise maps (and almost no administrations linking these projects to clear measurement indicators). With only €140.7 million potentially allocated and a low number of projects, a change of approach (*similar to component 4*) is needed on a very problematic urban environmental index.

*The analysis does not include a breakdown of the costs of green projects at the level of the sectoral municipalities in Bucharest because, in theory, they are included in Bucharest' SIDU 2021-2030. We say "in theory" because the responses received from the district municipalities indicated numerous inconsistencies in the coordination of this strategy at the level of the entire city, and some municipalities have developed other strategies more or less complementary to Bucharest' SIDU 2021-2030. From the data obtained, a breakdown of the green component could only be made at the level of the municipalities of the 2nd, 5th and 6th districts, but since it was difficult to correlate the data and to avoid duplicating Bucharest-based projects, we decided to only use data from the city-wide strategy.*

### 3. How realistic (from a financial standpoint) are the local development strategies

Romania's main municipalities will be able to allocate an amount of EUR 19.1 billion to capital investments between 2023-2030, of which about EUR 7 billion in Bucharest alone. However, the project portfolios include much higher estimated investments, affected in many cases by limited prioritisation and a focus of investments on a few themes. This indicates the need for a sustained effort to prioritise these project portfolios in the coming period, in line of course with the opportunities offered by the non-reimbursable European funds for the period 2023-2030.

City	Total value of projects included in the strategy	Total value of priority projects included in the strategy		Total strategy vs. total potential investment
Alba Iulia	176.495.985	176.495.985	148.360.689,00	118,96%
Alexandria	407.270.407	-	81.890.317,00	497,34%
Arad	971.864.628,20	-	428.421.864,00	226,85%
Bacău	1.146.894.436,36	-	288.183.387,00	397,97%
Baia Mare	n/a	n/a	235.920.414,00	n/a
Bistrița	510.730.797,90	-	199.024.487,00	256,62%
Botoșani	935.577.297	152.000.000	162.662.583,00	575,16%
Brăila	405.163.211,00	-	275.947.394,00	146,83%
Brașov	311.691.367	311.691.367	657.664.754,00	47,39%
București	59.842.059.409,30	-	2.805.253.669,00	2133,21%
Buzău	932.027.941,00	-	203.728.111,00	457,49%
Călărași	1.147.921.964,00	-	104.499.244,00	1098,50%
Cluj-Napoca	1.063.500.000,00	797.400.000,00	913.438.244,00	116,43%
Constanța	n/a	n/a	747.873.577,00	n/a
Craiova	902.118.450,00	902.118.450,00	472.941.033,00	190,75%
Deva	425.529.064	-	151.171.722,00	281,49%
Drobeta Turnu Severin	729.969.345	-	207.339.322,00	352,07%
Focșani	475.535.000	-	179.122.277,00	265,48%
Galați	3.123.687.783	245.287.665,13	445.620.829,00	700,97%
Giurgiu	0	0	127.695.985,00	n/a
Iași	3.672.848.572	n/a	940.528.021,00	390,51%
Miercurea Ciuc	737.807.813	737.807.813,00	103.569.167,00	712,38%
Oradea	2.042.368.546	791.775.749	548.345.754,00	372,46%
Piatra Neamț	523.805.289,60	281.657.360	125.596.558,00	417,05%
Pitești	1.717.954.345,00	241.302.731	266.786.895,00	643,94%
Ploiești	702.621.496,73	-	388.120.285,00	181,03%
Râmnicu Vâlcea	258.976.853	n/a	209.634.145,00	123,54%
Reșița	387.658.057	n/a	176.292.309,00	219,90%
Satu Mare	n/a	n/a	235.113.171,00	n/a
Sector 1	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	427.045.923,00	
Sector 2	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	794.503.702,00	
Sector 3	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	939.286.728,00	
Sector 4	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	815.447.793,00	
Sector 5	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	466.405.691,00	
Sector 6	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	Inc. SIDU Bucharest	748.300.642,00	
Sfântul Gheorghe	2.881.237.500	57.572.000	122.181.976,00	2358,15%
Sibiu	2.666.209.608	-	540.014.309,00	493,73%
Slatina	n/a	n/a	199.566.453,00	n/a
Slobozia	394.359.468	394.359.468	64.513.424,00	611,28%
Suceava	593.297.420	418.607.420	226.402.571,00	262,05%
Târgoviște	0	0	242.523.314,00	0,00%
Târgu-Mureș	811.598.111,00	97.200.000	255.017.344,00	318,25%
Târgu-Jiu	715.902.255	715.902.255	157.950.488,00	453,24%
Timișoara	2.579.945.943,00	-	922.892.671,00	279,55%
Tulcea	712.480.000,00	-	136.197.812,00	523,12%
Vaslui	275.570.000,00	-	126.148.780,00	218,45%
Zalău	220.355.379,00	50.065.300	126.295.351,00	174,48%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95.403.033.741,98</b>		<b>19.141.441.179,00</b>	<b>498,41%</b>
<b>TOTAL without Bucharest</b>	<b>35.560.974.332,68</b>		<b>12.145.197.031,00</b>	<b>292,80%</b>

1 - The calculation relates exclusively to the local budget of local government.

**The investment potential of the county capital municipalities amounts to approximately EUR 19.1 billion for the period 2023-2030** taking into account the trend in local budget expenditure over the last 6 years (2017-2022) and the allocation of a significant percentage of 30% to capital investments from own funds and co-financing of European projects. The allocation of at least 30% to capital investments is considered a good practice indicator and in line with several tools for analysing the financial health of local governments such as the *World Bank's Municipal Finance Self-Assessment*.

*In Romania, however, for the analysed period (2017-2022), the financial allocation was approx. 20%, which implies that the scenario used by us is an optimistic one to support the investment potential in the most important municipalities.*

**We would also point out that this percentage varies quite a lot between the municipalities we analysed, so, ideally, financial planning should be included in development strategies and based on realistic data.** Also, municipalities that allocate significant budgets to capital expenditures (e.g. Oradea City Hall, Bistrita City Hall) or that have large variations in recent years between revenues and expenditures (e.g. District 1 City Hall) may have higher investment budgets, while most local governments will allocate below the figures forecast in our chosen scenario. Unfortunately, less than 1 in 10 strategies includes a chapter dedicated to financial planning for the period covered by the strategy.

**We have encountered many challenges in compiling project portfolios quantitatively (as explained in a previous chapter), but it is evident from our analysis that investment portfolios are rarely coupled with a realistic estimate of the financial potential of municipalities.** In almost all cases analysed, project portfolios significantly exceed financial resources and there is rarely a clear prioritisation of what the municipality is undertaking. And, more often than not, municipalities do not even have aggregated total amounts per investment objective or priority, and the ability of a third-party actor to track these portfolios is very limited.

**With an investment potential of just over €19 billion, the total value of project portfolios substantially exceeds this capacity, even with a relatively high number of municipalities having portfolios without cost estimates or without an updated strategy.** This points to the need for a sustained effort to prioritise these portfolios, in line, of course, with the opportunities offered by the European non-reimbursable funds for the period 2023-2030.

If we exclude Bucharest, since its strategy is very poorly correlated with the district city halls' strategies (*they are now trying to correlate these documents*), the investment potential for the remaining municipalities is approx. EUR 12.1 billion, while there are strategies of an almost triple value (approx. EUR 35.6 billion). There are, however, significant differences between municipalities, as shown in the previous table, with a relatively small number of strategies correlated with the financial potential of the municipality and limited prioritisation.

**Figure 4 - Differences between project portfolio and investment potential**

Project portfolio (incl. Bucharest)	<b>95.403.033.741,98</b>	Project portfolio (excl. Bucharest)	<b>35.560.974.332,68</b>
Investment potential (incl. Bucharest)	<b>19.141.441.179,00</b>	Investment potential (excl. Bucharest)	<b>12.145.197.031,00</b>

**Without a clear prioritisation of the projects and realistic cost estimates, there are significant gaps between the actual investment capacity of municipalities and the portfolio of projects included in the strategy.** These differences exceed 2000%, indicating that significant adjustments are needed within portfolios, while (sometimes) the prioritisation mechanisms included in most strategies are difficult to follow or are not finalised.

**We also point out that in about half of our requests for data on priority projects, we were told that this prioritisation either did not exist or would be done at a later date, or that all projects were considered priorities (even though they sometimes exceeded the investment potential 7-10 times).** In many other cases, we simply did not receive a reply, indicating in fact a limited ownership of the portfolios by the departments in charge in these municipalities.

**However, we also have positive examples of local strategies that reflect both the prioritisation of projects, their correlation with investment potential, and clear differentiation between the beneficiaries of each investment.** Perhaps the strategy that can serve as an example of good practice is that of the municipality of Cluj-Napoca concerning the components included in our analysis. It features clear differentiation of project beneficiaries, their list of projects is easy to follow, it includes clear priority projects, correlated with financial planning, and the indicators allow for relatively straightforward analysis. Sibiu, Oradea and Bistrita also have strategies that can serve as examples of good practice.

## 4. Some milestone conclusions

**Ahead of decades that will favour green investments, Romania's major cities are not integrating a dedicated approach to reflect this shift in their strategic planning.** Historical infrastructure backlogs - *especially as regards energy and transport* - in large cities and a timid approach to greening and pollution reduction processes, *particularly with regard to urban mobility*, both limit large-scale investments in all components and determine a focus on more easily achievable targets. This is visible in the accelerated pace of investments in energy efficiency projects, especially for residential and non-residential buildings (notably schools) which cover a significant part of the project portfolios, while there are no major projects targeting *non-road infrastructure, urban biodiversity, noise pollution or waste management*.

**It is difficult to estimate the impact of investment portfolios on environmental indicators in large cities without data sets that can be tracked over the medium to long term.**

Development strategies provide a limited framework and some of the answers can be found in the SUMP or SECAP, but it becomes extremely complicated for an external actor to track all these strategic documents. It is becoming imperative to develop a *roadmap*, which would allow the public to follow the developments much more easily.

What we have estimated as the green component in the development strategies (20.12% including Bucharest, 29.56% excluding Bucharest) can and should be significantly improved in the coming period, which will lead to new prioritisation of projects (and even new projects) by adjusting the development strategies.

In terms of financial allocations, **very few local development strategies include financial planning that identifies the potential for investment over a (longer) period.** This situation can partly be explained as a continuation of the rather chaotic way in which short- and medium-term financial planning is carried out by local governments (*through the legal requirement to estimate income/ expenditure over a 3-year timeframe*), but also of the frequent changes in the *Local Public Finance Law* and the volatility of resources at local level. However, by following a historical trend in public expenditure and adjusting for the ability to access available external non-reimbursable funding, such estimates are more than feasible, and some local governments do include them.

**Financial planning is necessary and its linkage to the investment portfolio can support a more realistic approach to local development strategies.** Within county capitals (except Bucharest), development strategies include estimated costs 292% above investment potential, while many administrations do not have breakdowns by projects. If we include Bucharest, the gap increases to 498%.

**Moreover, there are significant differences between estimates (over 2000%),** and a recurring problem is the absence of prioritized projects. Although there are mechanisms in almost all strategies for prioritization according to a number of criteria, the centralisation of this list is no longer public, and it is very difficult to monitor, both from within the administration and especially by external actors: NGOs, civic groups or mere citizens. Not infrequently, the list of priority projects also significantly exceeds the municipality's investment capacity.

**In the case of many development strategies, we were unable to calculate from public sources the estimated value of the list of priority projects and the municipalities refused to provide us with the estimated values for these priority projects.** In some cases, the municipality also replied that there was no priority list of projects, even though the value of the projects significantly exceeded the municipality's financial capacity. It is extremely difficult for any external actor to monitor these project portfolios due to the chaotic manner in which the information is structured.

## Textbox model for strategies: Paris

**Paris has strategic documents that are easy to follow, with clear objectives, briefly explained.** The minimalism of these documents has the advantage of increasing the transparency and communication that Paris City Hall is responsible for, as citizens have the information they need to participate in the drafting of these strategies through forums (such as those for climate targets) and participatory budgeting.

The image shows a page from the 'Stratégie de résilience de Paris' (Paris Resilience Strategy). The page is titled 'Action 15' and features a green header with the Paris City Hall logo. The main heading is 'Mobiliser la logique « intégrée », l'innovation, et développer la nature en ville pour faire de l'espace public un vecteur d'inclusion sociale et de bien-être'. Below this, there are several columns of text, including a section titled 'Inspiration : Rotterdam, Pays-Bas' which includes a photograph of a modern urban square. The page also contains icons for accessibility and a small '78' in the bottom left corner.



## Leuven and the plan for a circular economy

The circular economy component is almost absent in project portfolios and strategies. Initiatives such as those proposed in Leuven's circular plan need to be collected and included as priorities.



Working together on repairs in MAAKbar © MAAKbar

In Leuven a host of initiatives are already up and running.

- In recent years, a network of **repair cafés** has been initiated by active members of the public.
- Members of the public can come together to repair items in **MAAKbar**, where they have access to a tool lending service.
- In the **social economy** a circular economy has been built from the bottom up, through recycling shops and places like 'Velo' and 'Wonen en Werken'. SPIT, for example, is one of the biggest reuse-of-goods centres in Flanders.
- Students have access to **FabLab Leuven**: a library of user-friendly machinery with which almost anything can be made from wood or plastic.

## 5. Involving citizens in setting priorities in local development strategies

**Most local development strategies indicate tools for citizen consultation, but this key chapter on community participation in strategy development is often treated very superficially.** Not many details are provided about the consultation process, its duration, or its results. A limited number of participation tools are included (in most cases only online questionnaires and thematic working groups) which almost never succeed in creating greater public participation in the drafting of the strategies, with limited access by citizens.

**Two public consultation tools are present in almost all strategies: online questionnaires and thematic working groups.** In addition, only a limited number of local authorities have used dedicated platforms to collect proposals, have organised neighbourhood workshops or have held extensive public consultations.

**Online questionnaires are the most common form of consultation with residents. They include questions on what the municipality should do and an assessment of satisfaction with several local policies and services.** However, the way these surveys are promoted is ineffective, as they are generally only published on the institution's website, and in the best cases the number of responses does not exceed a few hundred people. There are, however, strategies that include only a few dozen responses which indicates a significant failure to consult the public.

**Thematic working groups are also common consultation tools in strategies.** They are carried out on topics considered relevant by the public administration, from mobility to health or administrative capacity. The groups are, in theory, made up of the relevant stakeholders for each working group (and with mixed participation) and often include an open call for participation.

**Like other European cities, some municipalities have proposed online consultation methods through dedicated platforms.** These have been aimed at active participation in the development of the strategy and in some cases online platforms are still used mainly for participatory budgeting programmes.

**The following table shows the main public consultation tools used by the main cities in Romania.** What stands out is the very limited detail on how these instruments influence the objectives and vision of local governments. (Too) many local strategies do not include details of how these consultations were carried out and, more importantly, what their impact was. Moreover, we noticed copy-pasting from one strategy to another of so-called forms of public consultation (e.g., Drobeta Turnu Severin, Targu Jiu, Sector 5 City Hall), which raises questions about whether they took place.

In many other cases – such as in Giurgiu, Piatra Neamt, Focșani, Buzău, Slobozia - there are no details about these tools (e.g., for online consultations - period of application, number of respondents, impact). Where details are provided, there are some cities with only a few dozen people answering the online questionnaires (in Râmnicu Vâlcea there were only 77 responses). In the case of other strategies (e.g., Galati) the strategy emphasizes the use of questionnaires after the publication of the interim version of the strategy. However, it is not available on the webpage of the City Hall or of the Regional Development Agency.

**The confusion continues at working group level, where the presence of stakeholders or details of the discussions are very rarely indicated.** In most cases, the strategies only mention that discussions were held, without any further details. The online tools used are not properly detailed (such as proposals received via social media platforms or dedicated websites). In some cases, the chapter on public participation in the development of the strategy was simply left blank.

**However, we also have some good practice examples.** There are cities that have carried out numerous public consultations on a wide variety of topics (e.g. Sector 2 City Hall with workshops at neighbourhood level, Sfântu Gheorghe, etc.), online questionnaires with a high number of respondents and a structuring of the data obtained (e.g. Bistrița, Sibiu), representative surveys (e.g. Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Reșița), use of dedicated platforms or participatory budgeting programmes to substantiate the development strategy (e.g. Alba Iulia).

**Nonetheless, more public involvement is needed in the implementation of strategies.** In addition to the above, all development strategies have observed the procedure on transparency in decision-making, which includes a public consultation phase and public feedback. Details of this stage are almost completely missing, and it is unclear what feedback was received from the public (if any). Again, the major vulnerability is the format of the strategies, which is very difficult to follow, and poor communication. Even with the best intentions, it will be difficult for a third party to provide consistent feedback in the absence of a simplified version of these documents.

## Public consultation tools

City/ Town	Questionnaires or opinion polls	Public consultations, working groups, other consultation tools
<b>Alba Iulia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>online Community Barometer tool by applying questionnaires - <i>barometrucomunitar.apulum.ro</i>, concerning the following areas</li> <li>1. Energy and Urban Planning</li> <li>2. Community Involvement and Economic Life</li> <li>3. Tourism, City Marketing and Heritage Components</li> </ul> <p>A total of 648 valid responses were recorded for the three questionnaires.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of an <b>Urban Advisory Group</b> grouped into 6 specialist committees: <i>society, economy, urban planning, energy, tourism and marketing, culture, and heritage</i>.</li> <li>Online public consultations and debates (three mentioned in the document)</li> <li>Dedicated working group for the <i>sustainable energy component</i>.</li> <li>Use the participatory budgeting programme to include projects in the development strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Alexandria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online population questionnaire, available for 48 days, filled out by 476 people, approx. 1% of the resident population. The number of responses per question ranged from 174 to 474.</li> <li>Online questionnaire dedicated to the business environment, available for 48 days, with a maximum of 26 respondents.</li> </ul>	n/a
<b>Arad</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online population questionnaire, available for approximately 3 weeks, with 155 respondents.</li> <li>Online questionnaire dedicated to the business environment, available for approximately 3 weeks, with 36 respondents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 thematic working groups: Education, Economic development, Urban mobility, Culture, heritage and leisure, Environment and climate change.</li> </ul>
<b>Bacău</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online population questionnaire, available for approximately 10 weeks, with 235 respondents.</li> <li>Online questionnaire dedicated to the business environment, available for approximately 10 weeks, with 33 respondents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 thematic working groups: Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Leisure, Social and Community Development, Environment and Infrastructure, Administrative Capacity and Metropolitan Cooperation.</li> </ul>
<b>Baia Mare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online questionnaire dedicated to the civil society, economic environment, institutional environment and non-governmental organisations with a total of 152 responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured meetings (working groups) with local government representatives (<i>no further details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Bistrița</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online population questionnaire, available for 98 days, filled out by 1,032 people. (<i>quota sampling, but without ensuring representativeness. However, unlike many other questionnaires that are part of strategies, this one seems to be based on real population-level data that actually helps public decision-making</i>).</li> <li>Online questionnaire dedicated to business, available for 115 days, with 36 business representatives participating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Working groups: Economy and education; Culture, tourism, leisure, heritage; Environment and public utilities; Mobility; Administrative capacity.</li> <li>Working groups with citizens to identify challenges and opportunities for development in housing areas (2 such working groups were organised).</li> </ul>
<b>Botoșani</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online population questionnaire, completed by 267 citizens, approx. 0.22% of the registered resident population in July 2021.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 working groups: Economy and sustainable development; Social and marginalised areas; Environment and climate change; Education and youth; Infrastructure and urban development.</li> </ul>
<b>Brăila</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaire dedicated to business, civil society, and public administration with a total of 166 respondents, mostly from the public administration side (122).</li> </ul>	n/a

<b>Braşov</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion survey, in the form of a questionnaire disseminated online, respectively a study on the perception of citizens in the Brasov Metropolitan Area, with 655 respondents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisation of two thematic consultations to validate the assumptions of the diagnostic analysis, as well as to identify problems and challenges at sectoral level and propose/prioritise solutions or project ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>Bucureşti</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sociological research (June-July 2019); questionnaire-based survey used as exclusive method of data collection. Seven independent surveys were conducted in Bucharest, totalling 10,205 questionnaires applied.</li> <li>Twelve data collection instruments were used in the 7 opinion surveys, i.e. 12 types of questionnaires addressing specific issues at target group level. The sampling used for this survey was random, stadial, stratified by census district, gender and age.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sectoral consultation meetings and debates on Culture, Education, Energy, Environment, Climate Change, Mobility, Heritage and Housing, Sport, Tourism, Investment/Business Environment.</li> <li>Organising thematic focus groups.</li> <li>Collecting feedback via social media platforms - Facebook page entitled "Eşti Bucureşti" - (<i>inactive after completion of the report</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Buzău</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online population questionnaire (<i>no further details specified</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working meetings (<i>no further details specified</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Călăraşi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public consultation (21 July - 15 September 2021) with 130 respondents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 working groups: Economic Development, Culture and Heritage, Urban Development and Public Administration, Social Cohesion and Human Capital, Infrastructure, Mobility and Environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Cluj-Napoca</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion poll for prioritising specific objectives and development priorities in the Integrated Strategy for Urban Development (ISUD). According to the authors, although the sample was relatively small (406 people), it was still representative of the structure of the metropolitan population.</li> <li>Online survey to prioritise specific objectives and development priorities in the ISUD (632 respondents) - not representative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 sectoral debates on the following topics: urban regeneration, Green Cluj, educational infrastructure, well-being of young people in ZMC, economy, research, development, mobility, housing, Metropolitan Cluj.</li> </ul>
<b>Constanţa</b>	-	-
<b>Craiova</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using data from the <i>Urban Barometer on Quality of Life</i> in Craiova (400 respondents), without other dedicated consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 online consultations with over 300 participants - local authorities, civil society, practitioners and academia, private sector.</li> <li>Use of the Facebook platform to collect proposals (150 proposals).</li> <li>Collection of proposals using the <i>citadini.ro</i> website (62 proposals).</li> </ul>
<b>Deva</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online questionnaire dedicated to the entire population (15 August - 16 October 2022) with 322 valid answers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thematic consultations dedicated to representatives of public institutions, the private sector, and non-profit organisations (<i>no further details</i>).</li> <li>3 working groups with participation exclusively from the public sphere.</li> </ul>
<b>Drobeta Turnu-Severin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sociological survey based on a questionnaire addressed to 1,000 local stakeholders representing public institutions, the private sector and civil society, using a set of relevant questions (<i>without further details</i>).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 workshops on Economy, Infrastructure, Transport, Health, Education, Culture, Social, Public Administration, Environment and Climate Change, Smart city (<i>no further details</i>)</li> <li>5 working groups: Economy and sustainable development; Social and marginalised areas; Environment and climate change; Education and youth; Infrastructure and urban development.</li> </ul>
<b>Focşani</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public opinion survey (<i>no further details</i>)</li> <li>Interviews with experts and stakeholders (<i>no further details</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sectoral focus groups (<i>no other details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Galaţi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online questionnaire after the publication of the interim version of the strategy (<i>no further details, and the results of the questionnaire do not appear in the updated version on the page of the municipality of Galati or the South-East RDA</i>).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Working groups: Economy, Infrastructure and Environment, Health, Education and Culture, Social, Local Public Administration.</li> </ul>

<b>Giurgiu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaire dedicated to the general population and the business sector (<i>no other details</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus groups: Education, Economy, Infrastructure, Social Development, Tourism (<i>no other details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Iași</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public consultation questionnaire, both online posted on vision4iasi.ro and physically distributed in 5 neighbourhoods in Iași: Nicolina, Tatarasi, Alexandru cel Bun, Pacurari, Frumoasa (<i>no other details</i>).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 Working groups: Economic Development and Tourism, Urban Development, Culture, Education, Health, Social Welfare, Youth and Sport.</li> </ul>
<b>Miercurea-Ciuc</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online/ printed questionnaire, bilingual format, dedicated to the general population, with a total number of 1,807 questionnaires processed (metropolitan area level) (<i>without other details</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisation of thematic meetings (<i>no further details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Oradea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online public consultation, structured on 4 areas of analysis (quality of life, public services, relationship with local government and development directions) conducted between 20 May 2021 and 30 June 2021, with a participation of 2,329 people (Oradea metropolitan area).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 working groups: Economic Development, Local Infrastructure, Health and Environment, Tourism, Culture and Sport and Education and Human Resource Development.</li> </ul>
<b>Piatra Neamț</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online questionnaire (<i>no other details</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Working groups: Economic, Infrastructure and Environment; Health, Education, Culture, Social, Public Administration.</li> </ul>
<b>Pitești</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online questionnaire with 1,309 responses, approx. 0.77% of the registered resident population in July 2021.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 working groups: Economy, Culture and Tourism, Infrastructure, Transport, Environment and Climate Change, Health, Education and Social and Public Administration.</li> <li>Public debate (<i>no further details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Ploiești</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online population questionnaire available for approximately 8 months, from 31/08/2021 to 04/05/2022. During this time the questionnaire was filled out by 266 people.</li> <li>Online questionnaire dedicated to the business environment available for completion for approximately 8 months from 31/08/2021 to 04/05/2022. During this time the questionnaire was completed by 34 people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 working groups dedicated to the representatives of the Municipality of Ploiesti and its subordinates of the Local Council, Economy, Business and Education, Environment and Public Utilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Râmnicu Vâlcea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online questionnaire, available from September to December 2021, with 77 responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 online sectoral working groups (9 and 10 December 2021): Educational, Social and Health Development, Economic Competitiveness, Urban Development and Mobility.</li> </ul>
<b>Reșița</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion survey on the quality of life in the municipality of Resita. The survey was conducted between November and December 2020 on a sample of 800 respondents (telephone interviews - CATI), a sample (simple random), statistically representative of the municipality of Resita. (limited level of detail)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 working groups: Local Economic Development and Tourism, Administrative Capacity, Social-Health, Urban and Community Development, Education and Youth.</li> <li>Two working meetings to define the vision, strategic profile, and strategic directions for development.</li> <li>Public debate (<i>without further details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Satu Mare</b>	-	-
<b>Sfântu Gheorghe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 online questionnaires - transport needs (601 questionnaires), cycling (800 responses), city development - general questionnaire (1,750 responses). Total 3,151 questionnaires.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 public consultations dedicated to specific areas or groups of citizens: culture, entrepreneurs, mobility, cyclists, special mobility needs, social, education, elderly, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Sibiu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online population questionnaire, available for completion for 8 weeks, with 2,226 respondents.</li> <li>Online business questionnaire, available for completion for 8 weeks, with 91 business respondents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 working groups: Education and Economy, Territorial Cooperation, Social Development, Health, Sport, Culture, Tourism, Sport, Leisure and Heritage, Consultation of Sibiu local council members.</li> </ul>
<b>Slatina</b>	-	-

<b>Slobozia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online questionnaire (<i>no details</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working groups (<i>no details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Suceava</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using data from the <i>Urban Barometer on Quality of Life</i> in Suceava (400 respondents), without another dedicated consultation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• online sessions, which brought together more than 150 stakeholders from Suceava (local authorities, civil society, local experts, and academia).</li> <li>• 4 thematic consultations.</li> <li>• Use of Facebook to collect proposals (70 proposals).</li> <li>• Collection of proposals using the <i>citadini.ro</i> website (7 proposals).</li> </ul>
<b>Târgoviște</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online questionnaire conducted on a representative sample (<i>no other details</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online meetings and working groups (<i>no further details</i>).</li> </ul>
<b>Târgu Mureș</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population survey was carried out by an online, self-administered questionnaire (CAWI) by 175 residents of Târgu Mureș municipality and an on-site questionnaire filled out by 1506 residents of Târgu Mureș municipality. Data collected between 11 October 2021 and 19 November 2021 (no further details).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 focus groups: Economy and Mobility, Social, Environment, Cultural and Public Administration.</li> </ul>
<b>Târgu-Jiu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sociological survey based on a questionnaire addressed to 1,000 local actors representing public institutions, the private sector and civil society, using a set of relevant questions (<i>no further details</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 workshops: Economy, Infrastructure, Transport, Health, Education, Culture, Social, Public Administration, Environment and Climate Change, Smart city (<i>no further details</i>)</li> <li>• 5 working groups: Economy and Sustainable Development, Social and Marginalised Areas, Environment and Climate Change; Education and Youth; Infrastructure and Urban Development. (<i>no further details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Timișoara</b>	-	-
<b>Tulcea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population questionnaire (<i>no other details</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working groups (<i>no other details</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Vaslui</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online population questionnaire with 170 respondents, available from January-February 2021</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 working groups: Education, Social and Health, Urban Development, Transport and Technical Infrastructure, Economic Competitiveness.</li> </ul>
<b>Zalău</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opinion survey conducted between October and November 2020 on a representative sample (simple random) in Zalău, 800 respondents (telephone interviews - CATI).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 working groups: Local Economic Development, Urban Development and Resilience, Digitisation and Innovation, Community Development and Smart Government.</li> </ul>
<b>City Hall of Sector 1</b>	-	-
<b>City Hall of Sector 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 thematic, zonal meetings with the inhabitants of Sector 2. The meetings took place from 27.06.2020 to 18.07.2022 and were held in public spaces in Sector 2.</li> <li>• Questionnaire dedicated to the inhabitants of Sector 2, available for completion for approx. 2 months and 2 weeks, number of respondents: 1031.</li> <li>• Questionnaire dedicated to the business environment, available for completion for approx. 2 months and 2 weeks, number of respondents: 116.</li> <li>• Questionnaire dedicated to the NGO environment, available for completion for approx. 2 months and 2 weeks, number of respondents: 38.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 working groups: Environment and Public Utilities, Culture, Sport and Leisure, Economy, Youth and Education, Health and Social Services, Mobility and Urban Development,</li> <li>• Public debate to present the development strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>City Hall of Sector 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online questionnaire for citizens (<i>no further details</i>)</li> </ul>	n/a

## City Hall of Sector 4

### City Hall of Sector 5

- Sociological survey based on a questionnaire addressed to a number of local actors representing public institutions, the private sector and civil society, by applying a set of relevant questions (*without further details*)
- Opinion survey with a sample size of 1067 persons, probability, multi-stage, stratified, face-to-face data collection method, at respondents' homes, 14 March - 3 April 2023
- 10 workshops on Economy, Infrastructure, Transport, Health, Education, Culture, Social, Public Administration, Environment and Climate Change, Smart city (*no further details*)
- 5 working groups: Economy and sustainable development; Social and marginalised areas; Environment and climate change; Education and youth; Infrastructure and urban development.

### City Hall of Sector 6

n/a

n/a

**At European level, many cities can offer examples of good practice in community involvement. Leuven (Belgium) is an example to follow, actively involving over 3,000 inhabitants in the strategy through an online platform.** Through the platform, they identified the five main areas of interest, 2331 ideas were proposed, and the local government responded to 2238 of them (96% of the total proposed projects). Leuven also has a roadmap for their green plan that anyone in the local community can participate in, including those responsible for each objective. The roadmap is produced by the NGO Leuven 2030 and has as its main objective the achievement of the 2030 climate targets.

**Barcelona uses an online platform called [www.decidim.barcelona](http://www.decidim.barcelona) both for proposals related to the municipal strategy and for citizens' initiatives separate from the strategy.** On the platform, once a proposal is uploaded, other citizens can have an online debate about it and support the initiative. Once a certain number of votes is reached, the proposal is forwarded to the local administration who vote and add ideas to the initiative, ultimately turning it into a project that can be added to the strategy. The initiator of the project can follow the progress of the project. Through this platform 39,049 residents participated and there were 230,000+ online interactions through proposals, debates, and votes, which helped shape the local strategy.

**MPGM Triángulo de Aiguablava y ámbito discontinuo para implantar un equipamiento en el Parc de Fornells**

Modificación del plan general metropolitano en el ámbito del Triángulo de Aiguablava para dar una so...

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FECHA DE INICIO	FECHA DE FINALIZACIÓN
30/01/2023	31/12/2023

CREADO EL 31/01/2023

▲ 32 SEGUIR

Fase actual:  
Debate ciudadano y contras...

**FINALIZADO EL PERÍODO DE ALEGACIONES**

**Transformem els patis**

Trabajamos conjuntamente para mejorar tanto los espacios físicos como las dinámicas y relaciones que...

FECHA DE INICIO	FECHA DE FINALIZACIÓN
01/09/2022	31/12/2023

CREADO EL 13/01/2023

▲ 25 SEGUIR

Fase actual:  
Evaluación

**PARTICIPA EN EL PROCESO TRANSFORMEM ELS PATIS**

**ASSEMBLEA CIUDADANA PEL CLIMA!**

La Asamblea Ciudadana por el Clima es un proceso deliberativo de 100 personas escogidas por sorteo e...

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FECHA DE INICIO	FECHA DE FINALIZACIÓN
24/06/2022	31/03/2024

CREADO EL 31/03/2022

▲ 80 SEGUIR

Fase actual:  
Votacion, exposición y reto.

**CONSULTEU LAS PROPUESTAS DE LA ASAMBLEA**

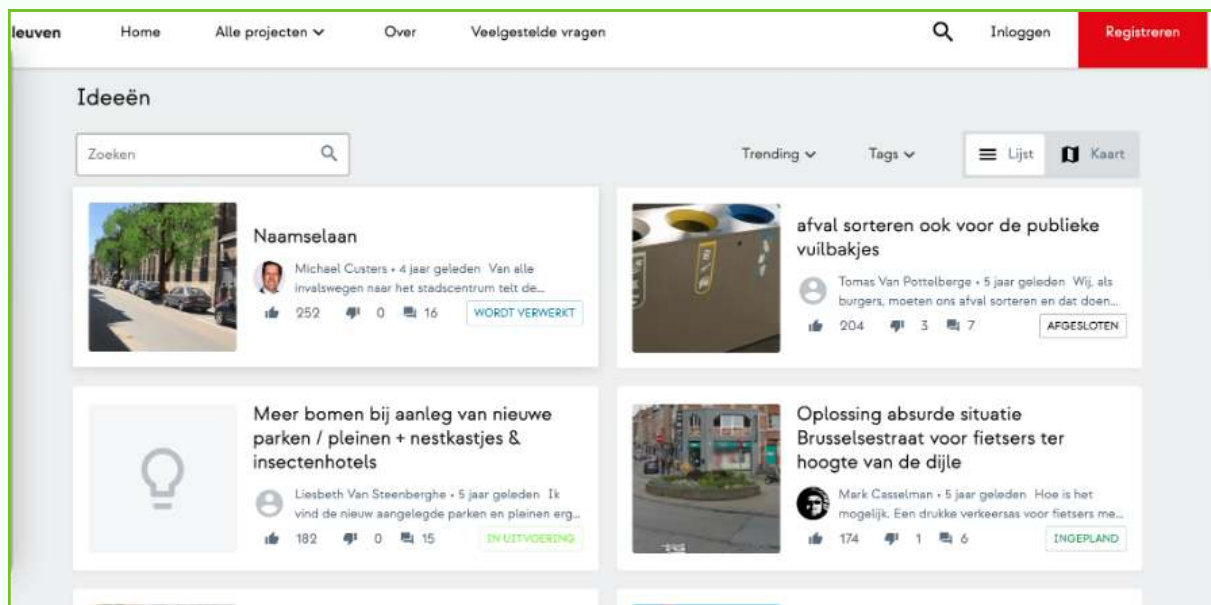
4 - <https://roadmap-en.leuven2030.be/introduction>

5 - <https://www.citizenlab.co/blog/civic-engagement/case-study-3000-citizens-contribute-to-leuven-multi-annual-plan/>

Similar projects are being tested in Romania (Timisoara being a successful example), but online platforms are used by local administrations at the project level for which they were created and then abandoned in most cases. They should be used specifically as laboratories for innovation and solution testing.

**The City of Paris has set up a Living Lab to work with citizens on the consultative side.** This is a centre through which major actors in the southern Paris area communicate with citizens and, with the support of the City Hall, propose projects for the development of the city. Similar projects are also being tested in Romania and in some municipalities with a lot of success (Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara).

Leuven created an online platform *Leuven, co-create it* through which citizens proposed initiatives for the city strategy 2020-2025. The platform was opened in 2019 and in a few weeks collected more than 2000 proposals, and more than 300 of them were included in the city strategy. Through this, local authorities have been able to collaborate more effectively with NGOs, economic actors, experts, and citizens. Residents could propose ideas, but also evaluate the most popular ideas on the platform and then follow the debates and decisions taken by the administration together with local experts. In addition, if some residents did not have access to the online platform, the City of Leuven sent letters that they could fill in with initiatives. Unlike other online platforms, *Leuven, co-create it* promoted transparency, with the local administration providing feedback on approximately every initiative published and constantly publishing updates on the progress of the proposal towards implementation.



Leuven's 2020-2025 strategy is also a model for other European cities. It is updated annually as projects are added/ removed, adapting to the needs and requirements of the inhabitants. The strategy is divided by objectives and considers both projects proposed by the administration and those proposed via the online platform. The total budget document is separate from the strategy and contains all the projects proposed in the strategy, with each project classified as priority or non-priority and falling under one of the city's broad objectives.

6 - <https://cdn.paris.fr/paris/2019/07/24/ebc807dec56112639d506469b3b67421.pdf>

7 - <http://www.dedale.info/annuaire/smartcity-living-lab.html>



## 6. Urgency of environmental quality indicators

**At the beginning of the documentation of this report, we asked for more data sets on environmental indicators in each city.** Unfortunately, all too often, indicators in development strategies are not only not linked to investment portfolios but are quasi-ignored in the drafting and subsequent monitoring of development strategies. This situation is also due to the very limited capacity of local administrations to base public policies on clear, time-trackable data, i.e. due to an assumed policy opacity.

**The data we requested** on (1) evolution of green space and existence of a Green Space Register, (2) data on selective garbage collection and, most importantly, waste traceability from collection to treatment, (3) surface area of pedestrian and non-car areas, (4) air quality data, (5) sustainable public transport, (6) street lighting, (7) car charging stations, and (8) number of retrofitted/energy-efficient public and residential buildings, **indicated numerous discrepancies in the responses or there was simply no reply.**

**Many municipalities simply have limited capacity to collect and analyse data on the state of the environment.** Data on air quality, noise pollution, green space areas or litter tracking are the most affected by the lack of capacity of local governments to track and analyse them regularly. They should also be the firsts to be included in strategic documents and linked to the investment portfolio, i.e., tracked over time and analysed how they can be improved.

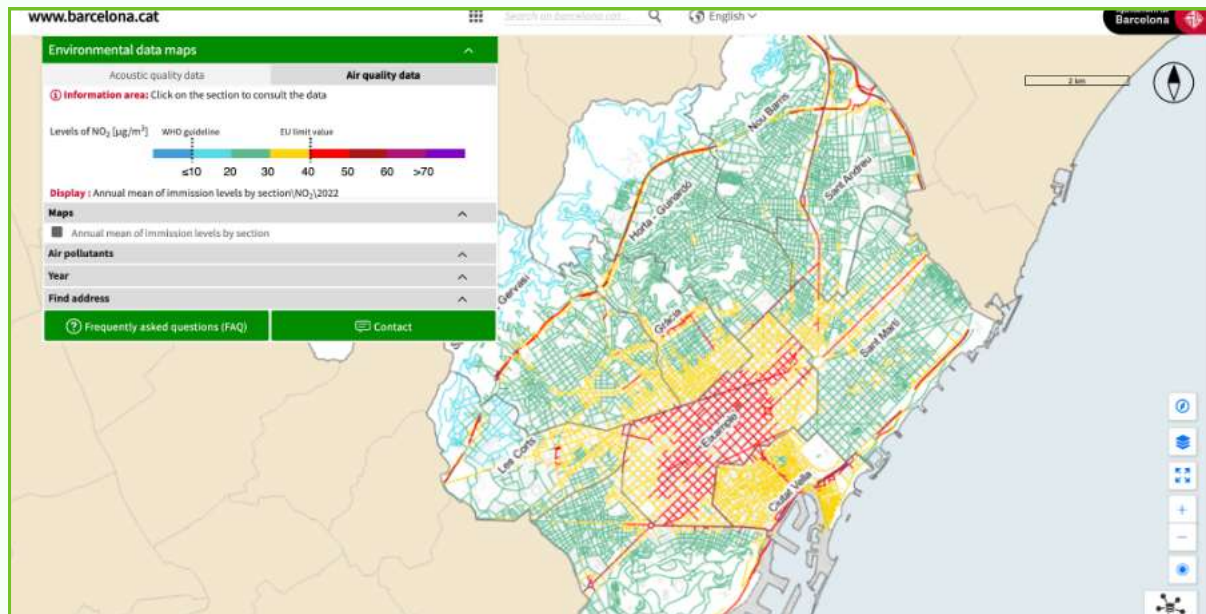
**What we propose is that local public authorities include in their strategic documents data on the following categories of indicators per component, as included in the Green City Accord initiative (and publish them in real time where appropriate, or to adjust them constantly).** We add to this list several other indicators, in particular for *Component 6 - Energy Efficiency*, which should be a starting point for climate neutrality roadmaps and the green vision of government.

**Ideally, all these indicators should be permanently updated on the official pages of municipalities and be available for public monitoring by third parties.** And if these indicators cannot be collected at the moment, priority should be given to building capacity at local level to collect them and ensure their evolution over time. In the absence of such data, it is difficult to estimate the impact of many public policies and public investments as designed by local governments.

Component	Green City Accord indicator proposals	Proposed additional indicators
C1 - Air	<p><b>PM2.5 concentration levels</b> (highest annual mean observed at (sub) urban background stations)</p> <p><b>Daily PM10 concentration levels</b> (highest number of days exceeding the WHO recommendation of 45 µg/m<sup>3</sup> per year at any (sub) urban or traffic stations)</p> <p><b>NO2 concentration levels</b> (highest annual mean observed at traffic stations)</p>	<p><b>Number of local public policies and decisions</b> adopted that are based on air quality data</p> <p><b>Public interactive map</b> for accessing all air quality data / annual public reporting of measures taken to improve air quality</p> <p><b>Percentage of electric / non-polluting public transport</b></p> <p><b>Percentage of evolution of old registered car fleet in the city and number of cars per resident</b> <b>Number of low-emission zones and their area</b></p>
C2 - Water	<p><b>Household water consumption</b> (litres/capita/day)</p> <p><b>Infrastructure Leakage Index (ILI)</b></p> <p><b>Percentage of urban wastewater meeting the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive</b> (on collection and secondary treatment)</p>	<p><b>Percentage of population/ households connected to drinking water and sewerage system</b></p>
C3 - Urban biodiversity	<p><b>Percentage of natural areas protected, restored, and restored and naturalised</b></p> <p><b>Percentage of tree canopy in the city</b></p> <p><b>Changes in the number of bird species in urban/ built-up areas in the city</b></p>	<p><b>Percentage of green space area in relation to the total area of the city</b></p> <p><b>Square metre of green space per inhabitant</b></p>
C4 - Circular economy and waste management	<p><b>Municipal waste generated per capita (tons)</b></p> <p><b>Municipal waste recycling rate (%)</b></p> <p><b>Municipal waste landfilled (%)</b></p>	<p><b>Interactive waste traceability map</b> / annual public reporting of waste traceability indicators (<i>collection by fractions - sorting-recycling-disposal</i>)</p> <p><b>Number of public / public-private partnership waste avoidance projects</b> (especially food) and waste avoidance rate at city level</p> <p><b>Number of public / public-private partnership projects for re-use of products (mainly electronics/ WEEE and textiles/footwear)</b></p>
C5 - Noise pollution	<p><b>Percentage of the population exposed to average day-evening-night noise levels</b> (Lden) ≥ 55 dB</p> <p><b>Percentage of population exposed to night-time noise</b> (Lnight) ≥ 50 dB</p> <p><b>Percentage of (adult) population with high sleep disturbance</b></p>	<p><b>Urban noise map</b> and real-time accessible data</p> <p><b>Number of local public policies and decisions</b> adopted that are based on noise pollution data</p> <p><b>Number of noise pollution sanctions</b></p>
C6 - Energy efficiency		<p><b>Number of residential and non-residential buildings thermally rehabilitated</b> (incl. nZeb buildings)</p> <p><b>Urban electricity consumption</b> (public/ private consumption data)</p> <p><b>Public expenditure on electricity and street lighting</b></p> <p><b>Heating agent production costs, heating network status indexes and heating subsidy costs</b></p> <p><b>Number of investment projects in green energy production</b> (and capacity)</p>

## Barcelona

Barcelona City Hall can be a role model for tracking and publishing environmental indicators on the official website. They have produced a map of air and noise pollution that residents can follow online, and if they want to track air quality in real time, they also have a special page dedicated to this with details of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration levels.



## Paris

**Tracking of indicators must be constant and based on an advanced monitoring programme.** In Paris, for example, air pollution indicators are monitored on a daily basis and the region's status page is updated regularly. The information must be presented in a form that is as accessible as possible to residents. This means that monitoring indicators is not enough - local government needs to help citizens understand why it is important to monitor these indicators in the first place.



## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

### 7.1 How we can improve local development strategies

#### Main actions:



#### **Local development strategies can play a key role in the sustainable development of cities.**

Unfortunately, in some cases they are under-used and fail to be the central element around which local governments build their investment portfolio and targets. The limitations lie both in their architecture and in the approach of public decision-makers who do not consider strategic planning and the pursuit of a multiannual investment plan as key elements of their mandates. In short, there is still a great deal of unpredictability in planning at local level, coupled with often ad hoc politically influenced decisions, which significantly affect the objectives of local development strategies.

#### **A better classification of the investments, coupled with medium and long-term indicators and targets, would provide local governments with a strong *evidence-based policy* component to help them evaluate and monitor the impact of the investments undertaken at regular intervals.**

According to our review, none of the local governments provide structured public presentation of how they follow their development strategy, of the extent of achievement of targets and indicators and its project portfolio. Nonetheless, there is internal monitoring of this process, particularly concerning the status of investment projects. Some local governments should change their fairly opaque approach. The accountability of local governments is dependent on increased transparency and on adequate system of monitoring and evaluation of these strategic documents.

#### **C1. Some local governments have limited ownership of their local development strategies.**

The purpose of local strategies is to help local governments plan their main medium to long term interventions and to monitor how they can improve the quality of life in the respective municipality. This is partly the result of a process which in some cases is impacted by the limited involvement of the local government (as a whole) in the development of the strategy. In addition, there is no coordinating unit that could effectively collect and integrate *internal feedback* and link it to the main objectives, measures, and targets.

The local government leadership also needs to have clear ownership of the main directions of the strategy, through public presentation of the strategy, participation in working meetings and by conveying the message within the administration.

## **C2. Greater emphasis should be placed on involving citizens and local resource actors in setting the priorities of development strategies.**

The participatory process is often deficient, with few available tools (in most cases online questionnaires or workshops). The decision-making transparency process, which should promote improvement and provide a framework for community feedback, is often ineffective.

The dialogue between authorities and communities on this issue is negatively impacted by hard-to-follow formats, insufficient number of public events, limited time available to develop these documents, and low civic involvement in many Romanian cities. The mere publication of the strategy on the official public administration website is useless without a structured approach that encourages receiving real feedback from the community.

## **C3. Local development strategies and other strategic documents at local level should be better correlated.**

The large number of strategic documents at local level (including on similar topics) leads both to discrepancies between the administration's objectives and to numerous overlaps in terms of objectives and measures. The Local Development Strategy plays a critical role in assembling these strategic directions, but further efforts are needed in tracking similar datasets to assess impact. In addition, strategic documents should be simplified.

## **C4. Local administrations should enhance their capacity to collect, monitor and evaluate a set of mandatory indicators at strategy level.**

Many local strategies are affected not only by the lack of a process for monitoring the indicators agreed, but also by the lack of clarity on the evolution of the indicators and the target, in particular when there are no baseline indicators, but only targets agreed for certain periods. There is a need to rapidly strengthen the capacity of local administrations to collect, publish and update sets of binding indicators for each strategic objective, and this needs to be done in a transparent way and with priority.

## **C5. There should be better correlation between the project portfolio and the targets and indicators assumed in the strategy.**

The two key sections are somewhat separate, although investment planning should be correlated with the assumed indicators to have an overview of the impact at local level.

## **C6. Monitoring and Evaluation.**

Although it is a key part of the success of any strategic document, the M&E component is often ignored, and, with the exception of internal reviews, there is no public accountability for the success or failure of the strategy.

Accountability of the local government to implement and follow up on the assumed strategy (and/ or to explain why the strategy no longer corresponds to the development vision and to adjust it regularly) is not possible without an M&E process (preferably carried out by a third-party). Moreover, there is no form of accountability at government level through constant publication and presentation of the status of achievement of the assumed targets, a significant limitation of these strategic documents.

## **C7. Transparency should be increased.**

It would be unfair of us to describe the process of developing local development strategies as being completely opaque, since that is not the case, but there is still much room for improvement in the current participatory approach, if the aim of the local governments is to work with the community in defining this strategy.

Third-party stakeholders have trouble following the implementation of local development strategies. In the absence of any pro-active approach by the administration – which could include publishing regular evaluations of the local strategy, indicating the responsible persons per strategic objective or coordinating unit of the strategy, updating data sets - it becomes difficult to track the extent of achievement.

*But it is not an impossible process, and we hope that there will be increased interest from civil society at local level to ask for data on implementation and achievement of the proposed targets and to put pressure on the issue.*

### **C8. Setting project portfolios.**

Project portfolios that should form the basis of investment policy over a multiannual period are influenced by numerous design limitations. Tracking hundreds of projects with a relatively high degree of detail, but with little aggregated data (priority list, values, assumed indicators) impacts the ability of an external actor to understand the vision of the local government, and a simplified version of them (objective/ measure/ main actions) should be included for the benefit of the public. Other difficulties arise due to:

- A lack of correlation with annual targets and indicators leading to a limited perspective on the impact of the projects undertaken.
- A lack of clear prioritisation of projects and their correlation with local government investment potential. Often project portfolios, including priority lists, are significantly larger than the financial capacity of the public administration, leading to a new selection process, independent of the initial prioritisation. And, also often, project portfolios do not even include a differentiation between priority projects and long lists of projects.
- Uncertainties regarding the beneficiaries of the projects and the entity that must implement them. Inclusion in strategies of projects managed by different institutions and lack of delineation between these beneficiaries.
- Random setting of the total value of project portfolios and projects with inconclusive descriptions. A lack of inclusion of the total value of the project portfolio by project type (priority projects/ long list of projects) strategic objective and by beneficiary.

## 7.2 A roadmap to climate neutrality and a green investment plan

**In preparing this report, we also tried to understand what Romanian cities are undertaking with respect to a possible green portfolio of investments that would lead to a climate neutral policy and an improvement in the quality of urban environmental indicators.** Local development strategies provide a clear direction in this regard, but a future extended analysis should include the large number of other somewhat more detailed strategic documents in this regard (Integrated Air Quality Plan, Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, etc.).

**In addition, for cities that have taken more steps in this direction, there is also the possibility of joining various European initiatives with similar objectives, whose requirements and roadmaps can serve as a model of good practice** (*Mission 100 Green Cities, Green City Accord or European Green Capital / European Green Leaf initiatives, etc.*). This report is also based on a *Green City Accord* classification.

**But this complex landscape also shows how difficult it is for the public to follow and understand what public administrations are taking on.** We therefore propose the publication of a *roadmap* or a comprehensive green plan in a simplified version for the general public, summarising the local government's vision on the subject. It should include the main targets, measures and projects promoted by the administration to achieve the objective of climate neutrality and improvement of the state of the environment and environmental indicators at urban level.

**A green investment roadmap/ plan<sup>10</sup> can play an important role in prioritising green investments for the period 2023-2030.** Running this kind of pilot exercise can support strategic planning and increase transparency at local level, but at the same time it can also provide the answer to a question that has been asked more and more often in recent years about the (green) development vision of cities.

**In Romania's case, it is very difficult to find the answer for its large cities.** Local governments can extract from the current strategic documents, based on a ranking methodology, green investments for the period 2023-2030. This new portfolio, coupled with a breakdown of the *environmental targets and indicators assumed by the local government*, can form the basis of a multiannual investment plan, better adapted to community needs and more transparent and easier to follow by the general public. An example that can be followed is that of the *municipality of Leuven*, in an even more simplified version, so as not to duplicate the work already done in the preparation of current strategic documents.

**It can also be a blueprint for local government to promote Europe-wide adherence to green initiatives** and an example of best practice on how green investment decisions include transparent decision-making mechanisms in which citizens play a key role.

Whichever option is chosen, a better understanding of what green investments are and of how to select and prioritise them is needed.

10 - What we mean by a green plan is a schematic, easy-to-follow document that includes the environmental indicators mentioned above (and/or additional ones depending on the specific local situation) and the main measures and projects undertaken by the local government to improve them. All of this is linked to the targets in the current strategic documents, but with the quality of documents intended for the public, with accessible language and subject to public consultation and subsequent monitoring and evaluation.

There are four key components that should define this approach:

- Complementarity with current strategic documents and improved definition of the extracted project portfolio (targets, indicators and objectives assumed);
- Structured consultations with the local community to define the vision and measures;
- Increased transparency through the identification of key management level responsibilities for each strategic objective and monitoring and evaluation indicators that will be presented to the public on a regular basis;
- A simplified and easy-to-follow version for the general public.

The classification methodology proposed in our documentation, coupled with a reasonable number of indicators on the environmental area (can be taken, adjusted and improved from European level initiatives such as the *Green Cities Accord*), can provide a high level of understanding to local government on the impact of investments in the current project portfolios.

**However, what is most important is the local government's ownership of this green plan.**

No matter what form the city's green plan takes or what it is called, without public ownership and transparency in monitoring and evaluating the actions of local governments, things will not work. Many policies that can improve environmental quality (especially around urban mobility, waste, and heating systems) will attract a potential loss of political capital. Others will perhaps come under pressure from third party actors who want looser rules (construction, waste, circular economy, noise pollution). But public ownership, transparency, and a clear tone from the top of the administration on the development vision is needed for the strategy to succeed and to maintain community support.



## 8. Annex - Detailing of project portfolio values at city level

City	Comments
Alba Iulia	The strategy includes cost estimates only for projects considered as a priority part of ROP Centre where they have predefined allocations.
Baia Mare	The development strategy (in particular the project portfolio) has a very difficult format to follow and the Baia Mare City Hall has not responded to countless requests for information on the estimated value of the portfolio.
Botoşani	The portfolio of priority projects includes potential ROP, AFM and NRRP submissions.
Braşov	The strategy includes estimates for the priority project portfolio only.
Bucharest	SIDU Bucharest also includes the project portfolio of the sectors and almost 3,000 projects.
Constanţa	Unpublished at the time of drafting this report
Craiova	In the case of SIDU Craiova 2021-2030 we used the priority list also for the value of the complete portfolio section, because the total value of the strategy is one that significantly exceeds the capacity of the Craiova municipality and the functional urban area, sitting at more than 12 billion EUR. But in this case too, the priority list is more than twice what we calculated as investment potential and almost three times the potential value calculated at SIDU level.
Galaţi	The strategy includes cost estimates only for projects considered as priority projects under the Regional Operational Programme.
Giurgiu	Cost estimates not included
Miercurea Ciuc	Cost estimates for priority projects only
Satu Mare	Unpublished at the time of drafting this report
Sfântu Gheorghe	*Strategy in progress, draft version, portfolio not finalised. Priority projects only for ROP 2021-2027
Slatina	Unpublished at the time of drafting this report
Slobozia	According to the local government's response, all projects are considered a priority.
Târgovişte	Strategy does not include cost estimates
Târgu-Jiu	According to the local government's response, all projects are considered a priority.
Timişoara	In progress, estimated portfolio version.

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