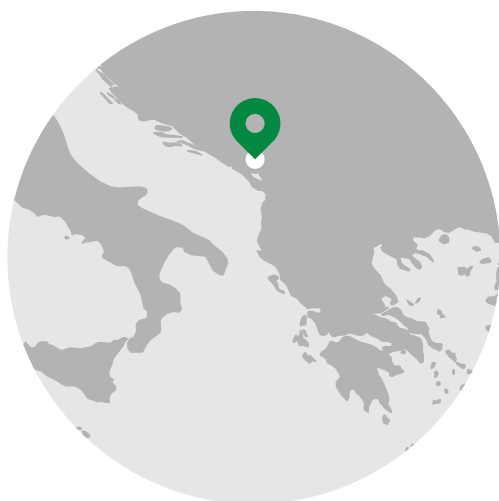


Greener and cooler home for the people of Podgorica

PODGORICA PLANS TO PILOT NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS LIKE GREEN ROOFS TO TACKLE EXTREME HEAT, CUT EMISSIONS, AND IMPROVE RESIDENTS' QUALITY OF LIFE.



Podgorica, Montenegro



180,000



Category of climate action:

- Green buildings
- Greening of urban areas
- Sustainable cooling
- Energy efficiency & small renewables

Bringing nature back to the city's rooftops

Podgorica is increasingly exposed to heatwaves, droughts, heavy rainfall, and flooding, with rapid urbanisation intensifying the heat island effect. Summers can be unbearable for residents, especially older people, outdoor workers, and socially vulnerable groups. “Even at midnight, there can be 30°C heat, and winters are becoming shorter and milder,” Branka Knežević, Podgorica's Secretary for Sustainable Development, said.

Despite strong climate commitments, including a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2016) and Biodiversity Action Plan (2017), the city has yet to pilot green roofs or façades. Although these solutions have been discussed and proposed in policy, they have never been tested in practice. Yet they could help address Podgorica's most pressing climate challenges – cooling overheated concrete buildings, reducing energy costs, absorbing stormwater, and adding greenery in dense urban areas. By showcasing examples on the ground, pilots would provide valuable insights on the benefits and opportunities for refinement in future, narrowing the gap between strategic ambition, and convincing both citizens and decision-makers to support implementation.



Today, our concrete buildings are simply hot, hard surfaces – we need to bring nature onto our rooftops and into our spaces.

— Branka Knežević
*Deputy Secretary for Sustainable Development,
City of Podgorica*

From strong strategy to missing groundwork

Robust and detailed studies often help unlock investments and attract co-financing opportunities from both national programmes and international donors. Yet, despite having clear policy frameworks to guide its vision, the city still faced a gap between strategy and the practical steps to implementation. Key technical assessments were required to assess the feasibility of green roofs and façades, in addition to pilot sites being identified. A financial analysis was also needed to demonstrate the economic viability of the proposed nature-based solutions.



Uncovering the possibilities from policy to pilot sites

With Gap Fund support, Podgorica moved from broad ambition to a structured, technical plan. The journey began with a pre-feasibility study, which, for the first time, assessed the idea of green roofs and façades on public buildings to identify what was technically possible. Engineers and planners assessed at three public buildings covering around 1268 m² of rooftop area.



The study mapped two open spaces, totalling about 160 square metres, where sealed asphalt surfaces could be broken up and replaced with greenery. This work provided not only the locations but also a clear vision of how residents might experience cooler, more comfortable neighbourhoods.

For each building and site, the team developed precise investment costs, alongside cost-benefit analysis that quantified the gains of having green roofs and façades to cut cooling demand.

Turning data and design into a citywide model

The EIB-Gap Fund helped Podgorica think beyond ideas. A financial model was prepared that tested scaling scenarios across the city's building stock. It showed how a city-wide programme could greatly cut annual CO₂ emissions, while giving decision-makers a practical roadmap for phasing and replication.

For Deputy Secretary Branka Knežević, this clarity was transformative:



It wasn't a bulky report full of generalities. It gave us concrete data, costs, and steps to move forward. And it strengthened communication across departments, which was an unexpected but important benefit.

By taking Podgorica through each stage – feasibility, costs, models for scaling – the Gap Fund turned a long-standing idea into a portfolio of investment-ready options.



Inspiring the city's green roof revolution

Podgorica plans to include at least one pilot location from the study in its 2026 municipal budget, using its own resources to demonstrate commitment and kick-start implementation. This local allocation will also strengthen the city's eligibility to apply for national co-financing programmes, which often require municipalities to set aside their own funds as show of commitment. The city is also integrating the green roof concept into its EU Mission 100 Climate-Neutral Cities plan and its Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP), making the approach part of official policy and more attractive to external funders.

By starting with visible public building pilots, the city hopes to inspire residents and private developers to follow suit, scaling the benefits across Podgorica.



© frimufilms on Freepik