

MUNICIPALITIES ON THE ROAD TO EU ACCESSION

Environment & Communal Services

Taking Stock, Looking Ahead

WATER

WASTE

AIR

Municipalities and Cities on the Road to EU Accession

24 September 2026



From EU Acquis to Local Services

The accession process reaches citizens through municipal planning, infrastructure and everyday services.



The key shift: from legal alignment to practical implementation.

Taking Stock: Progress Is Already Visible

Examples from municipalities and cantons show that implementation is possible — but uneven.

Waste | Prozor-Rama

Separate collection, eco-park and closure of an outdated landfill.

Waste | Tuzla Canton

Regional waste-management approach serving multiple municipalities.

Wastewater | Sarajevo / Butla

Large-scale functioning biological wastewater treatment plant.

Wastewater | 30+ municipalities

WATSAN/WBIF-supported programmes: roughly 20–25 WWTPs constructed or rehabilitated.

Air & energy | Sarajevo Canton

Deep retrofit programme: 32 public buildings; energy consumption reductions reported up to 50%.

Flood risk | FBiH

Flood Risk Management Plans adopted for the 2024–2029 cycle.



The Gaps Are Now Moving from Legislation to Implementation

Infrastructure

Wastewater coverage remains incomplete; many landfills still do not meet EU standards.

Service performance

Water losses average around 50%, exceeding 70% in some areas.

Data & monitoring

Water quality, emerging pollutants and some air pollutants still face monitoring gaps.

Governance

Responsibilities are fragmented across state, entity, cantonal and municipal levels.

Capacity

Smaller municipalities often lack specialised staff, project-preparation capacity and co-financing.

**So the question is no longer only
“Are the rules in place?”**

It is:

“Can we implement, finance, operate and monitor them?”

This Is an Investment Challenge — and a Capacity Challenge

Environmental accession is infrastructure-heavy, but infrastructure only works when projects and institutions are ready.

€12 bn

estimated environmental investment
need over 20 years

Water & wastewater



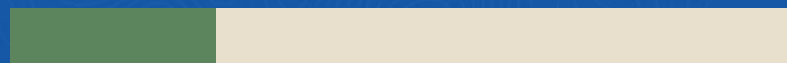
54%

Air pollution



29%

Solid waste



14%

The real readiness test

Can municipalities prepare projects, secure co-financing, procure, implement and operate them sustainably?



What Will Change for Municipalities?

EU accession affects the way services are planned, financed, procured and monitored — not only the infrastructure.

1 Higher service standards

- More demanding wastewater treatment
- Risk-based drinking-water safety
- Expanded waste separation and recovery
- Stronger air-quality monitoring
- Climate resilience integrated into planning

2 Stronger financial discipline

- Asset management and maintenance
- Better cost recovery and billing
- Reduced network losses
- Transparent subsidies and compensation
- Long-term operating costs considered

3 More complex compliance

- Public procurement / in-house rules
- State aid & SGEI
- Environmental assessment and participation
- Monitoring, reporting and documentation

Example: municipal tariffs often do not cover basic operating costs, leaving budgets to bridge the gap.



Some Challenges Are Too Big for One Municipality

Regional and intermunicipal solutions can create economies of scale and stronger technical capacity.

REGIONAL WASTE

Six active regional sanitary landfills currently serve 36 municipalities.

The strategic direction is toward regional systems rather than one landfill per municipality.

RIVER BASINS & FLOODS

Flood-risk measures are hydrologically connected and increasingly require coordination across municipal boundaries and river-basin districts.

SHARED INFRASTRUCTURE

Wastewater, water supply and other major infrastructure often need investment and technical capacity beyond the scale of an individual municipality.

Cooperation is not an administrative add-on. It is an implementation mechanism.



What Should Municipalities Do Now?

A practical readiness agenda for the next 12–24 months.

1

Map

EU obligations, local responsibilities and current gaps.

2

Cost

Quantify investment and operating needs — including the utility.

3

Pipeline

Turn priorities into mature, fundable projects.

4

Finance

Identify grants, loans, own resources and co-financing.

5

Strengthen

Improve utility performance, data and specialised capacity.

6

Comply

Build procurement, State aid, environmental assessment and reporting capacity.



What Should Happen Next — Collectively?

Municipal readiness depends on action at several levels.

Municipalities & cities

Build project pipelines; strengthen utilities; improve data; plan realistic financing.

AMCs

Practical guidance, templates, training, thematic working groups and knowledge exchange; support smaller municipalities.

Higher levels

Clear responsibilities; coordinated implementation plans; realistic transition periods linked to investment needs.

EU & development partners

Finance and strengthen project preparation, technical assistance and institutional capacity.

The objective: move from isolated projects to a coordinated implementation pipeline.



FROM TAKING STOCK TO TAKING ACTION

KNOW

What is coming?
Where are the gaps?

PREPARE

What will it cost?
Which projects must be
ready?

COOPERATE

What cannot be solved
alone?

EU accession is not a future event for municipalities.

It is a preparation process that starts before the obligations become enforceable.

