

ENHANCING WOMEN'S SAFETY IN METROPOLITAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT



Women's Safety in Urban Mobility:
An Integrated Action Plan for Cluj Metropolitan Area

URBACT



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FOREWORD

From Vulnerability to Safety: Rewriting the World's Oldest Story

As I reflected on what to say in the opening of this document, I was tempted to follow the classic path: thanking our international and local partners, presenting the timetable, and discussing the technical importance of the FEMACT-Cities project. These are all true and necessary things. However, I feel we need to mark something deeper than the completion of a project. So, I would like to tell you a short story instead.

It is, perhaps, the oldest story in the world. Researchers say that the legend of the Pleiades, the seven daughters of Atlas, has been told for over one hundred thousand years. The legend says that these young women had no protection because their father, Atlas, was far too busy holding the world on his shoulders. Thus, the seven vulnerable girls were chased and harassed by the hunter Orion. To save them, Zeus transformed them into a cluster of stars in the sky—the Pleiades.

Why is this story relevant for Cluj-Napoca today? Because if we look beyond the brightness of the stars, we see a sad and persistent reality: humanity's oldest story is one about vulnerability and a lack of protection. It is the story of women left alone in the face of danger because those who should have protected them were "too busy" holding the world on their shoulders.

Dear all, the Integrated Action Plan you have before you is our answer to this story. Our mission is to ensure that the future stories of Cluj will no longer be about "hunting" and fear.

Although Cluj-Napoca is, statistically, one of the safest cities in Romania, we know from discussions with you - with young students, with women commuting to work - that the feeling of safety is not always the same as the reality shown in statistics. We know that in public transport, in crowds, harassment still happens, often under the eyes of witnesses who do not know how to react.

We do not want our Atlas - the city, the administration, the community - to be so busy with economic development or large infrastructure that it forgets to offer protection. Therefore, this plan proposes concrete measures, not just words: awareness campaigns in



buses and trams, so that harassment is no longer invisible; training for drivers and control staff, so they know how to intervene and help; preparing young people and the community to no longer be passive witnesses, but active supporters; a clear system through which victims know where to ask for help and are believed.

Our mission is to create those systems and support networks that Atlas could not offer his daughters. We want women to be safe here and now - not transformed into myths on the skyline, but protected in their daily lives: on the bus home, on the way to university, or to work.

I invite you to read this plan not as a bureaucratic file, but as a shared commitment to transform vulnerability into safety and fear into freedom.

With appreciation,
Emese Olah, Deputy Mayor of Cluj-Napoca

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emese', is placed over a faint, circular watermark or seal.

SECTION 1: Context, Needs and Vision

The main challenge this project aims to tackle is women's safety across different contexts and for various groups of women, together with a low level of awareness of women's rights across the Cluj Metropolitan Area. This challenge reflects persistent and interconnected gaps in how safety risks affecting women are understood, prevented, and addressed at metropolitan level, as well as in how women access information regarding their rights and available protection mechanisms. As such, it shapes both the identification of needs and the formulation of a shared vision, grounded in the objective of strengthening women's safety and promoting a more inclusive and gender-sensitive metropolitan environment.

1.1. Cluj Metropolitan Area - an overview

The Cluj Metropolitan Area covers a surface of 1,364 square kilometres, accounting for approximately 24% of the total territory of Cluj County. It comprises 19 local administrative units and hosts a total population of 411,130 inhabitants, according to provisional data

from the 2021 Population and Housing Census. Of this total, 286,598 residents live in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca, which, by population size, ranks as the second most populous city in Romania. The demographic structure of Cluj-Napoca reflects both the metropolitan concentration of population and broader national trends. According to the 2021 Census, the city's population is characterized by a slight gender imbalance, with women representing the majority of residents. Specifically, of the 286,598 inhabitants, 151,830 are female and 134,768 are male. This demographic profile is particularly relevant in the context of urban planning and social policy, as it underscores the importance of addressing gender-specific needs, including those related to safety, access to services, and participation in urban life.

Over the past decade, the resident population of the Cluj Metropolitan Area has recorded sustained growth, increasing by more than 12% between 2010 and 2020, with an average annual growth rate of approximately 1.2%. This demographic evolution has been accompanied by a pronounced intensification of suburbanization processes, which have progressively reshaped settlement patterns across the metropolitan area. The suburbanization trend is particularly visible



in the communes adjacent to the municipality of Cluj-Napoca, many of which have developed into functional dormitory settlements serving the urban core, despite administrative boundaries that have remained unchanged since 1968. This transformation has been driven by a combination of structural and preference-based factors, including comparatively lower housing and land prices, the availability of large areas suitable for new residential developments, and a growing demand for residential environments offering closer proximity to nature.

These spatial and demographic dynamics have led to increased daily mobility between suburban localities and the city of Cluj-Napoca, placing additional demands on metropolitan infrastructure and public service provision. As a result, they underline the importance of coordinated planning approaches that take into account not only growth and accessibility, but also the quality, inclusiveness, and responsiveness of urban and metropolitan environments to the needs of different population groups.

According to the Integrated Urban Development Strategy (2021–2030), Cluj County experienced significant economic growth between 2014 and 2017, with nominal GDP increasing by 44% (in lei), substantially above the national average growth rate of 28% and the 31% recorded in the Bucharest-Ilfov region. This performance positioned Cluj County among the leading growth poles at national level, ranking second overall. Economic expansion was primarily driven by the strong dynamics of high value-added sectors, notably information technology (+93%), business and professional services (+75%), cultural, recreational, personal and household services (+53%), as well as trade, transport and hospitality (+50%). The IT sector in particular has become a structural pillar of the local economy, accounting for approximately 14% of Cluj County's economic output, surpassing its share at metropolitan level and reaching a contribution comparable to that of trade, while also emerging as the area's main export-generating sector. As a result of these developments, GDP per capita in the Cluj Metropolitan Area, adjusted for purchasing power, has risen above the European Union average, reaching 103% (EU average = 100), according to Eurostat data. While this strong economic performance reflects increased competitiveness and attractiveness, it also shapes patterns of urban development, labor market participation, and daily mobility, underscoring the importance of ensuring that the benefits of growth are accompanied by inclusive and responsive urban environments capable of meeting the diverse needs of the metropolitan population.

Cluj-Napoca is the second largest university centre in Romania and one of the country's most significant hubs for higher education, research, and innovation. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, Cluj County ranks third nationwide in terms of the share of university graduates, with 24.6% of the population holding a higher education degree, after Bucharest and Ilfov County. This strong educational profile underpins the city's role as a major attractor of young people from across the country and beyond, contributing to sustained demographic vitality and a highly skilled metropolitan labor force.

Babeş-Bolyai University (BBU) is one of Romania's most prestigious universities, with a mission focused on academic excellence, cultural diversity, and the advancement of knowledge across disciplines. The university comprises 21 faculties and offers a broad and diversified academic portfolio, including 240 bachelor's programs in 42 fields of study, 294 master's programs in 36 fields, and 28 doctoral schools. Teaching and research activities are delivered through three study lines—Romanian, Hungarian, and German—reflecting both the multicultural character of Cluj-Napoca and its longstanding academic traditions. In addition to Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca hosts other leading higher education institutions, notably the "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy, a nationally and internationally recognized center for medical education and research, as well as the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, which plays a key role in engineering, applied sciences, and technological development.

Together, these universities shape a distinctive metropolitan profile characterized by a large student population, high levels of daily and seasonal mobility, and an active use of public spaces and public transport systems. This concentration of young people contributes to the city's economic dynamism and cultural vitality, while also generating specific needs in terms of housing, mobility, access to services, and the quality and safety of urban environments, particularly in areas with high student presence.

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Cluj-Napoca is also a major provider of health services at regional level, benefiting from a well-developed and diversified healthcare infrastructure. The city hosts a total of 26 hospitals, of which 12 are public, alongside a network of specialized outpatient facilities, including five specialized outpatient clinics—four of them public—and 11 integrated outpatient units operating within public hospitals. This infrastructure is complemented by 26 medical centres and a range of private polyclinics, ensuring broad coverage of both general and specialised healthcare services. Primary healthcare provision is supported by an extensive network of 161 family medicine practices, as well as 112 general practitioners' offices distributed across the city. In addition, Cluj-Napoca offers dedicated dental services for children and young people, with 21 dental surgeries specifically serving pre-school children, pupils, and students. The scale and diversity of this healthcare system reflect the city's role as a metropolitan service hub, responding not only to the needs of its resident population but also to those of surrounding localities. At the same time, effective access to health services, including timely and appropriate responses in situations involving vulnerability or exposure to risk, remains closely linked to broader issues of accessibility, coordination, and awareness within the metropolitan area, underscoring the importance of integrated approaches to public service provision.

Cluj-Napoca benefits from an extensive and high-performance public transport system, which has progressively expanded in recent years to serve not only the urban core but also the first ring of localities within the Cluj Metropolitan Area. The metropolitan system currently comprises approximately 60 urban

lines within Cluj-Napoca and 26 connecting routes to surrounding communes, functioning under a common operational framework that integrates schedules and service nodes. In 2019, this system recorded around 192 million passenger journeys—equivalent to over 500,000 trips per day—with approximately 17 million of these trips occurring within the metropolitan area, a figure that has shown sustained growth over time. The vehicle fleet has undergone successive stages of modernization, making Cluj-Napoca a national leader in sustainable urban mobility. The city was the first in Romania to deploy electric buses on a wide scale and has invested significantly—supported by both European and local funding—towards electrifying and upgrading its public transport fleet, including buses, trolleybuses and trams. Over half of the current fleet is already electric or electrified, and ongoing procurement programs aim for a fully zero-emission fleet in the medium term, complemented by charging infrastructure and smart ticketing systems. Modernization has also extended to passenger facilities, with many stations equipped with electronic information panels, improved shelters and contactless ticketing options. The expansion and quality improvements in public transport are part of coordinated mobility planning at metropolitan level, including the Cluj Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) and related strategies that promote access, connectivity and environmental performance across the CMA. These investments enhance accessibility for a diverse user base (students, workers, and peri-urban residents alike) and contribute to more equitable and inclusive mobility options, thereby supporting broader social objectives related to access to education, services, employment and urban safety.

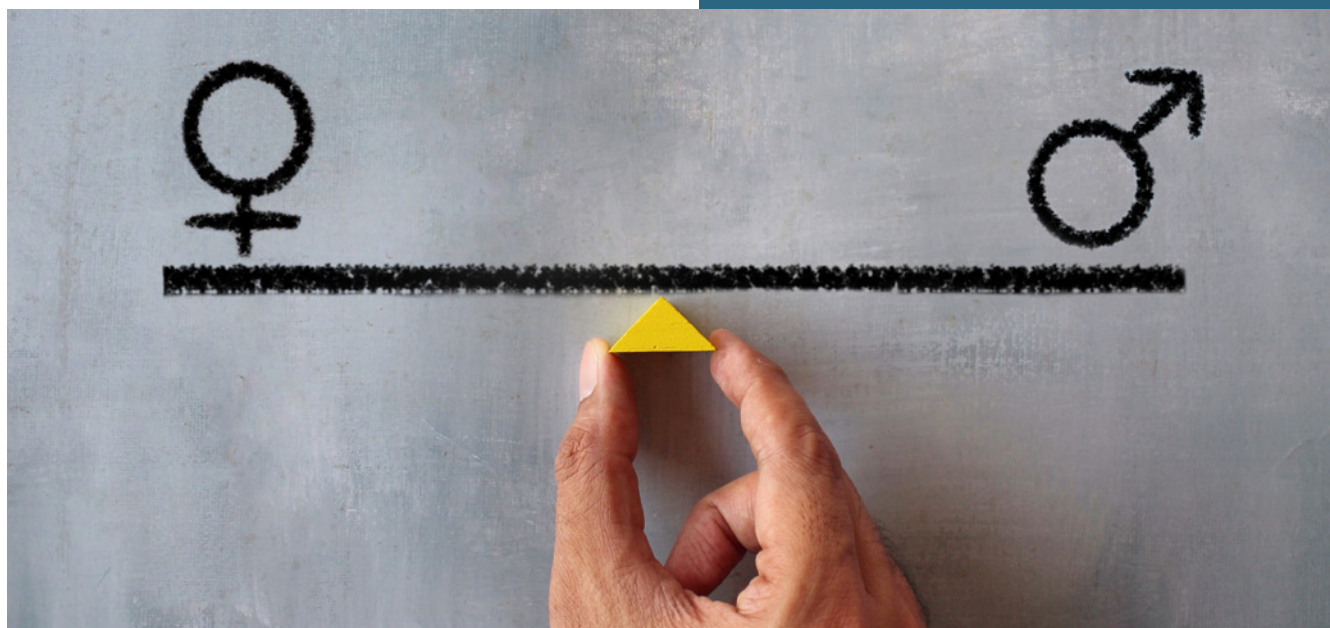


44% GDP growth

in Cluj County between 2014 and 2017, substantially above the national average growth rate of 28%

24.6%

of the population holding a higher education in Cluj County



1.2. Gender equality and women's safety in Romania

Recent evidence confirms that Romania continues to record a comparatively low level of gender equality within the European Union, despite measurable progress over the past decade. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Romania scores 57.0 points out of 100 in the Gender Equality Index 2025, placing it 23rd among EU Member States, well below the EU average score of 63.4. Although this represents an improvement compared to previous years—Romania's overall score has increased by more than seven points since 2015—the country remains positioned in the lower tier of EU performance on gender equality.

EIGE data further indicate that progress has been uneven across domains. While improvements have been registered in areas such as decision-making and education, Romania continues to display structural weaknesses in key domains, including health and access to power, where gender gaps remain pronounced. These disparities reflect persistent inequalities in women's access to resources, representation, and protection, and underline the need for sustained and targeted policy interventions. Overall, the data suggest that recent gains have not yet translated into a comprehensive or balanced advancement across all dimensions of gender equality. At the same time, international analyses consistently highlight that closing gender gaps represents a significant opportunity for economic and social development.

According to estimates cited by the World Bank and based on McKinsey's regional analysis for Central and Eastern Europe, eliminating gender inequality could generate an additional 8.7% increase in Romania's GDP by 2030. This projected gain is associated with higher female labor-force participation, improved access to quality employment, increased productivity, and greater representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles. These findings position gender equality not only as a fundamental rights issue, but also as a strategic lever for sustainable economic growth and territorial competitiveness. Taken together, these data underscore a dual reality: Romania faces persistent structural challenges in advancing gender equality, while simultaneously holding substantial untapped potential for social and economic progress. This context reinforces the importance of integrated, evidence-based and territorially sensitive approaches aimed at improving women's safety, access to rights, and full participation in public life, particularly at local and metropolitan levels where policy implementation directly shapes everyday experiences.

In Romania, gender-based and domestic violence continues to constitute a structural and persistent social problem, characterized by high prevalence, territorial disparities and severe outcomes, despite the existence of an established legal and institutional framework. Recent data from 2023, 2024 and 2025 indicate sustained pressure on prevention, protection and justice systems, alongside limited progress in reducing the severity and recurrence of violence.

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In 2023, Romanian authorities recorded more than 108,000 cases of gender-based and domestic violence, representing an increase of approximately 4.8% compared to 2022. The territorial distribution of reported cases highlights a pronounced rural dimension, with over half of all police interventions registered in rural areas, reflecting structural vulnerabilities related to access to services, social isolation and economic dependency. Physical violence remained the most frequently reported form of abuse, with nearly 36,000 cases involving beatings or other violent acts, indicating a high level of severity and immediate risk to victims. During the same year, police officers issued more than 12,000 provisional protection orders, while fewer than half were subsequently confirmed by courts as protection orders, revealing persistent gaps between emergency intervention and sustained judicial protection. In parallel, prosecutorial data show that only 170 individuals were brought to trial for gender-based violence offences, underscoring a significant disparity between the scale of violence and the level of criminal accountability. In 2024, police interventions related to domestic violence remained at similarly high levels, exceeding 120,000 recorded

interventions nationwide. Patterns observed in the previous year persisted, including a near-equal distribution between urban and rural areas and continued reliance on provisional protection orders as the primary emergency response mechanism. While legislative and procedural instruments were further developed, including the expansion of electronic monitoring measures for perpetrators, implementation remained uneven. A substantial number of victims declined the use of electronic monitoring, pointing to ongoing concerns related to fear of retaliation, lack of trust in enforcement mechanisms and broader socio-economic constraints. Preliminary data for 2025 confirm the persistence of the phenomenon. In the first half of the year alone, police intervened in over 61,000 cases of domestic violence, with an almost equal split between urban and rural localities. The number of provisional protection orders remained high, and the

continued gap between police-issued measures and court-confirmed orders indicates enduring challenges in ensuring continuity of protection. Although certain categories of recorded offences showed marginal decreases compared to the same period in previous years, the overall volume of interventions suggests that gender-based violence remains a widespread and deeply rooted reality affecting women across Romania.

A particularly severe dimension of gender-based violence is represented by lethal violence against women, commonly referred to as femicide. Romania does not maintain an official, comprehensive national femicide register; however, investigative journalism and civil society monitoring provide critical insight into the scale of the problem. According to the Snoop investigative project, which systematically documents cases of women killed as a result of gender-based violence, at least 51 femicides were recorded in Romania in 2025 alone. These cases predominantly involve women killed by current or former intimate partners or family members and frequently occur following prolonged exposure to violence and repeated institutional contact. The findings point to a pattern in which lethal outcomes are often preceded by warning signs, reported incidents or protection measures that failed to prevent escalation. Femicides in Romania cannot be understood as isolated or exceptional events; rather, they represent the extreme end of a continuum of gender-based violence. The recurrence of such cases highlights systemic shortcomings in early risk assessment, enforcement of protection orders, inter-institutional coordination and victim-centered intervention. The absence of an official femicide monitoring mechanism further complicates evidence-based policymaking and limits the capacity to design targeted prevention strategies.

International monitoring bodies have consistently drawn attention to these structural challenges. The GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report for Romania underscores persistent gaps in the effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention, particularly in relation to prevention, protection and access to justice. The report places specific emphasis on the intersectional discrimination faced by women and girls from Roma communities, who experience heightened exposure to violence alongside significant barriers to reporting and accessing support services. GREVIO stresses the obligation to implement all Convention measures without discrimination on any of the grounds listed in Article 4(3), including ethnicity, social origin, disability and place of residence. Taken together, data from the 2023–2025 period reveal that gender-based violence in Romania remains a systemic

Gender-based violence in Romania remains a systemic phenomenon, marked by high incidence, territorial inequalities and a persistent risk of lethal outcomes for women.

phenomenon, marked by high incidence, territorial inequalities and a persistent risk of lethal outcomes for women. While legal instruments and institutional mechanisms are in place, their impact is constrained by fragmentation, uneven implementation and limited victim-centered coordination. This context underscores the urgent need for integrated, data-driven and territorially sensitive interventions that prioritize prevention, early risk identification and the effective protection of women, particularly at local and metropolitan levels where public policies most directly shape everyday safety and access to rights.

In Cluj County, official law enforcement data reflect a notable increase in domestic violence incidents in recent reporting periods, with implications for both urban and rural safety contexts. According to the Cluj County Police Inspectorate, during the first eight months of 2024, police officers intervened in 1,730 cases of domestic violence, of which 1,111 occurred in urban localities and 619 in rural areas. Over the same period, the number of criminal offences related to domestic violence increased by 16.32%, rising from 1,066 cases in the corresponding interval of 2023 to 1,240 in 2024. The most common offences recorded were assault and other forms of physical violence (59.35% of total cases), followed by failure to comply with protection order measures (15.81%) and threats (8.87%), indicating that physical harm and breaches of protective measures remain dominant features of reported violence. These patterns point to both an increased incidence of higher-severity cases and ongoing challenges in ensuring preventive compliance and longer-term safety. Preliminary official reporting for 2025 suggests that domestic violence remains prevalent in the county. A local press synthesis of police activity for the first seven months of 2025 indicates that, in this period, police were notified of 755 domestic violence offences, of which 417 were recorded as assault or other violent acts, 97 as threats, and 104 as offences under the domestic violence law (Law 217/2003). In this period, authorities issued 228 provisional protection orders and 196 confirmed protection orders, underscoring continued institutional engagement with protective mechanisms at county level.

The consistency of these figures with broader national patterns highlights structural issues in both reporting and systemic response: the county's interventions involve a significant share of violent physical offences, and a substantial number of protection measures are administered, indicating frequent interaction between victims and policing/justice systems. At the same time, the persistence of breaches of protection orders and the continued high incidence of threats suggest ongoing enforcement and compliance challenges. While localized femicide data specifically for Cluj are limited in official releases, available regional reporting points to multiple femicidal incidents reported in the county context in 2025, with examples of intimate partner killings and severe domestic homicides making national headlines and underlining the lethal risks inherent in unresolved cases of gender-based violence. As noted in broader analyses of violence over the period 2021–2025, Romania registered hundreds of femicides, including dozens in 2025 alone, with women killed by current or former partners or family members, highlighting the extreme end of the violence continuum and the need for integrated risk assessment and prevention.

Taken together, these county-level data for 2023, 2024 and 2025 confirm that Cluj County continues to experience high and in some periods increasing volumes of domestic violence incidents, with physical assault as the predominant offence category, significant use of protection measures, and ongoing enforcement challenges. These patterns reinforce the importance of strengthening early risk identification, ensuring compliance with protective measures, enhancing cross-sectorial collaboration, and supporting victim-centered services at both urban and rural levels.

1.3. Legal background protecting women's rights

Gender equality in Romania is underpinned by a comprehensive legal framework composed of constitutional provisions, national legislation and binding European and international norms. This framework establishes the principle of equal rights and equal treatment between women and men across all areas of social, economic, political and public life, while mandating public authorities to actively promote substantive equality.

At the constitutional level, the **Constitution of Romania** guarantees equality before the law and public authorities and explicitly prohibits discrimination on any grounds, including sex. This constitutional principle

provides the normative foundation for all subsequent legislation and policies related to gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

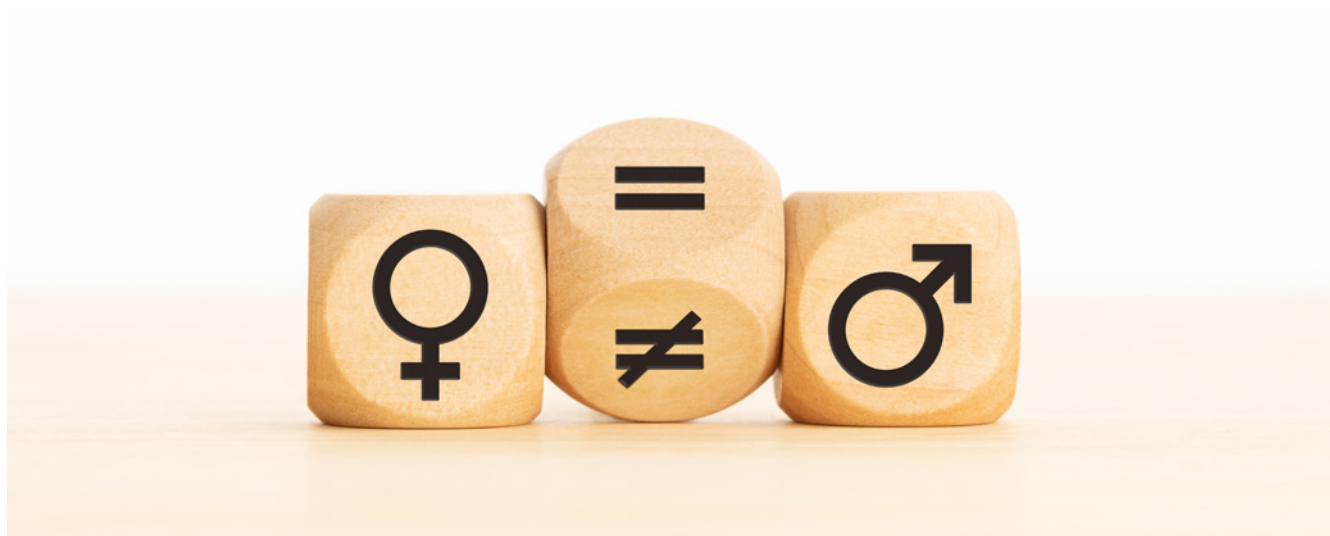
The cornerstone of national legislation in this field is **Law No. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men**. This law regulates equality between women and men in key areas such as education, employment, working conditions, remuneration, social protection, health, family life and participation in decision-making. It establishes obligations for public authorities, employers and service providers to prevent and eliminate gender-based discrimination and to adopt measures aimed at achieving de facto equality. The law also provides the legal basis for gender mainstreaming, requiring the integration of a gender perspective into public policies, programs and actions.

Complementing this framework, **Government Ordinance No. 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination** offers a comprehensive definition of discrimination, including direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimization. Although not limited to sex-based discrimination, the ordinance is a key instrument for enforcing gender equality across multiple domains and establishes institutional mechanisms for investigation and sanctioning, notably through the National Council for Combating Discrimination.

Further strengthening the policy dimension of gender equality, **Law No. 12/2018 on the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment between women and men** reinforces the state's responsibility to actively promote gender equality policies. The law regulates measures aimed at increasing women's participation in economic, social and political life, addressing structural inequalities and supporting balanced representation in decision-making processes. It also emphasizes the role of public institutions in monitoring, coordinating and evaluating gender equality measures.

In the area of employment and labor relations, **Law No. 53/2003 (the Labor Code)** provides explicit guarantees of equal treatment for women and men with regard to access to employment, working conditions, remuneration, professional development and dismissal. The Labor Code prohibits discrimination based on sex and includes specific provisions related to maternity, parental leave and work-life balance, contributing to the reduction of gender gaps in the labor market and the reconciliation of professional and family life.

Gender equality in access to healthcare and health-related rights is addressed through **Law No. 95/2006 on health reform**, which regulates access to health



services and includes provisions relevant to women's health, reproductive health and the protection of pregnant women and mothers. These measures link gender equality to broader public health and social inclusion objectives.

Romania's national framework is further shaped by **European Union legislation** on gender equality, including directives on equal treatment in employment and occupation, equal pay, access to goods and services, and work-life balance for parents and carers. As an EU Member State, Romania is required to transpose and implement these directives, ensuring alignment with EU-wide standards and objectives on gender equality.

Overall, Romania's legal framework provides a solid normative basis for gender equality and equal opportunities between women and men. However, while legislative provisions are largely aligned with European standards, persistent challenges remain in translating formal equality into substantive equality in practice. These challenges relate primarily to implementation, institutional capacity, monitoring, awareness and the integration of gender equality considerations into sectorial policies at national, regional and local levels.

Romania has developed a multi-layered legal framework to prevent and combat gender-based violence, combining criminal, civil, administrative and procedural legislation with binding international commitments. This framework addresses violence occurring in private and public spheres and encompasses domestic violence, sexual violence, harassment, exploitation, trafficking and other gender-based harms. It establishes obligations related to prevention, victim protection, prosecution of perpetrators and inter-institutional cooperation.

At the core of national legislation is **Law No. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence**, which constitutes the primary legal instrument governing civil protection measures and institutional responsibilities in cases of domestic abuse. The law defines domestic violence broadly, covering physical, psychological, sexual, economic and social violence, and recognizes a wide range of victims, including spouses, former partners, cohabitants and family members. Through successive amendments, the law has significantly strengthened victim protection by introducing provisional protection orders issued directly by the police, expanding access to shelters and specialized services, and formalizing risk assessment procedures. These developments reflect a shift toward early intervention and immediate victim safety.

Judicial competence and institutional arrangements related to protection measures are regulated by **Law No. 304/2004 on judicial organization**, which establishes the role of courts in issuing and enforcing protection orders and ensures procedural clarity within the justice system. Protection orders represent a key preventive instrument, enabling courts to impose restraining measures, eviction from the shared residence, bans on contact and other restrictions designed to prevent recurrence and escalation of violence.

Criminal accountability for gender-based violence is ensured through the **Criminal Code (Law No. 286/2009)**, which criminalizes a wide spectrum of offences relevant to violence against women. These include bodily harm, threats, domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, unlawful deprivation of liberty and trafficking in human beings. The Criminal Code introduces **aggravating circumstances** when offences are committed

against family members or when they are motivated by discrimination based on sex. Harassment and stalking provisions explicitly cover repeated behaviors that cause fear or distress, including acts occurring in public spaces. Sexual offences are criminalized regardless of location, extending protection to violence occurring in streets, public transport and other public environments.

Victims' rights and procedural safeguards are regulated by **Law No. 135/2010 on the Criminal Procedure Code**, which incorporates specific protections for victims of crime. These include measures to prevent intimidation and secondary victimization, the possibility of conducting hearings under special conditions, access to information and support services, and the right to protection throughout criminal proceedings. These safeguards are particularly relevant in cases of sexual violence and domestic abuse, where power imbalances and fear of retaliation often undermine access to justice.

Romania's legal framework is significantly reinforced by international obligations arising from the **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention)**, ratified through **Law No. 30/2016**. The Convention establishes a comprehensive approach structured around prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies, and requires states to adopt gender-sensitive, victim-centered and non-discriminatory responses. It also mandates coordinated policies, data collection, training of professionals and adequate funding for support services. The Istanbul Convention has served as a key reference point for legislative reforms and policy development in Romania.

Specific forms of gender-based exploitation are addressed through **Law No. 678/2001 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings**, which regulates prevention, investigation, prosecution and victim support. The law explicitly recognizes that women and girls are disproportionately affected by trafficking and establishes specialized protection measures, including access to shelters, counseling, medical care and legal support.

Gender-based violence in professional environments is regulated by **Law No. 112/2020 on preventing and combating sexual harassment and moral harassment at work**, which imposes binding obligations on employers to prevent harassment, adopt internal procedures, investigate complaints and protect victims from retaliation. This law addresses power asymmetries in the workplace and contributes to safer and more equitable working conditions.

Additional safeguards for victims of sexual violence are provided by **Law No. 167/2020 on the protection of victims of sexual crimes**, which focuses on preventing re-victimization and ensuring access to specialized psychological, medical and legal support. The law introduces victim-centered procedural measures and emphasizes recovery and long-term support.

The broader victim-rights framework is consolidated through **Law No. 211/2004 on measures to ensure the protection of victims of crime**, which guarantees access to information, psychological counseling, legal support and financial compensation for victims of serious offences, including victims of gender-based violence.

Certain forms of harassment and aggressive behavior in public spaces are addressed through **Law No. 61/1991 on public order and peace**, which allows administrative sanctions for conduct such as verbal aggression, indecent behavior and disturbances of public order. While not specific to gender-based violence, this law provides complementary tools for addressing low-threshold forms of harassment that disproportionately affect women's safety in everyday public environments.

In addition, Romania's legal framework is shaped by **European Union law**, including directives on victims' rights, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, protection orders and cross-border recognition of protection measures. These instruments reinforce minimum standards for victim protection and procedural guarantees and require national authorities to ensure effective implementation.

Taken together, Romania's legal framework for preventing and combating gender-based violence is extensive and broadly aligned with European and international standards. It addresses violence across private and public spheres, provides multiple layers of protection and establishes mechanisms for accountability. However, as consistently highlighted by international monitoring bodies and national assessments, the principal challenges lie not in the absence of legislation, but in implementation, enforcement, coordination and accessibility. Fragmentation across institutions, uneven territorial coverage and gaps between legal provisions and lived experiences continue to limit the effectiveness of the framework, underscoring the need for integrated, victim-centered and territorially responsive approaches.

1.4. National and local strategies and institutional mechanisms

Romania has developed a structured set of national strategies and policy instruments aimed at advancing gender equality and addressing gender-based disparities in a coordinated and systematic manner. These strategies provide overarching policy direction, define priority areas of intervention and establish responsibilities across public institutions, in line with European Union standards and international commitments.

The **National Strategy for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men for the period 2022–2027** constitutes the central policy framework guiding governmental action in the field of gender equality. The strategy sets out medium- and long-term objectives aimed at reducing gender gaps in key domains such as employment, education, decision-making, health and social participation. It promotes the principle of gender mainstreaming across public policies and emphasizes the responsibility of public authorities to address structural inequalities and discriminatory practices affecting women and men.

The strategic framework is operationalized through the **National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men 2022–2027**, which translates strategic objectives into concrete measures, actions and indicators. The Action Plan assigns responsibilities to line ministries and public institutions, establishes

timelines and monitoring mechanisms, and provides a basis for evaluating progress. It addresses cross-cutting themes such as institutional capacity-building, data collection and analysis, awareness-raising, training of professionals and inter-institutional coordination, thereby supporting the effective implementation of gender equality commitments at national and local levels.

In parallel, the **National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence for the period 2022–2027** provides a comprehensive framework for coordinated action in the field of violence prevention and response. While focused specifically on domestic and gender-based violence, the strategy complements gender equality policies by addressing underlying structural risk factors, strengthening victim protection and support mechanisms, and promoting cooperation among relevant institutions. It emphasizes prevention, early intervention, protection of victims, prosecution of perpetrators and the development of integrated policies, in accordance with Romania's obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).

The institutional context relevant to women's safety and gender equality in the Cluj Metropolitan Area is characterized by a multi-level and multi-sector governance framework, in which responsibilities are distributed across local, communal, county, metropolitan and national institutions. These actors operate within distinct legal mandates and sectorial competences, with no single authority exercising overarching control over the field. As a result, policy design and implementation rely on cooperation, alignment and coordination across institutions rather than hierarchical governance structures.

At local level, the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca is responsible for the provision of urban public services, including urban planning, public transport, public order and local social services. Within the municipal administration, the Direction of Social and Medical Assistance plays a central role in delivering social services, including counseling, social work and referral services for vulnerable individuals and groups. It represents a key access point to local support mechanisms, including in situations involving exposure to violence or social risk.

At the level of the surrounding communes, Public Social Work Services are responsible for delivering basic social services and for identifying vulnerable persons at community level. These services operate in close proximity to local populations and often constitute the first institutional contact in cases of social vulnerability or safety-related concerns.



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At county level, the General Directorate of Social Work and Child Protection Cluj is responsible for coordinating and delivering specialised social services across the county, including services addressing domestic and gender-based violence. It provides specialised counselling, protection measures and access to shelters, and ensures compliance with national legislation and quality standards in the field of social protection.

Law enforcement responsibilities are exercised by the Cluj County Police Inspectorate and the Local Police, which are mandated to maintain public order, intervene in cases of harassment or violence, enforce protection orders and apply criminal and administrative legislation. These institutions operate within national legal frameworks and collaborate with judicial authorities, social services and healthcare providers in cases involving gender-based violence.

The local public transport operator is responsible for the planning, operation and management of public transport services within Cluj-Napoca and across metropolitan routes. Its mandate includes fleet management, infrastructure maintenance, passenger information systems and staff training. As public transport constitutes a shared urban space used intensively by diverse population groups, the transport operator is a key institutional actor in relation to the quality, accessibility and functioning of everyday urban environments.

At national level, the policy framework for gender equality is developed and overseen by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which is responsible for the design, coordination and monitoring of national strategies and action plans.

The judicial system, including courts and public prosecutors' offices, is responsible for issuing and enforcing protection orders and prosecuting offences related to gender-based violence, in line with national legislation and Romania's international commitments, including the Istanbul Convention.

Healthcare institutions, including hospitals, emergency units and forensic services contribute to the identification, documentation and response to cases of violence, while universities, research institutions and non-governmental organizations provide complementary expertise through research, training, advocacy, awareness-raising and service provision. NGOs, in particular, often play a critical role in piloting innovative approaches and addressing gaps in public service provision.

As a major academic and cultural center, Cluj-Napoca was among the first three university centers in Romania to place gender studies on the academic agenda in the post-communist period following 1989. In the early 1990s, the city witnessed the establishment of an Interdisciplinary Group in Gender Studies, which brought together academics from a range of disciplines, including European studies, psychology, sociology and social work. The Group played an important role in advancing early research and academic debate on gender equality and gender relations in Romania, initiating several research projects, publications and academic events. One of the Group's most notable contributions was the proposal and implementation of a postgraduate training program leading to a certificate in "Gender, Culture and Society", reflecting an interdisciplinary and critical approach to gender issues. This academic trajectory was further consolidated in 2003, when Babeş-Bolyai University launched a master's program entitled "Gender, Differences and Inequalities", positioning Cluj-Napoca as a national reference point for advanced academic training in gender studies. Despite their pioneering role and academic relevance, both the Interdisciplinary Group in Gender Studies and the master's program are no longer active, reflecting broader institutional and funding challenges affecting the sustainability of gender-focused academic initiatives over time.

Beyond the academic sphere, efforts to foster professional collaboration on gender-based violence (GBV) have been intermittent. In 2012, a Local Group of Professionals working on Gender-Based Violence was established with the aim of strengthening cooperation among practitioners and promoting complementary interventions in the field. Although this initiative contributed to dialogue and knowledge exchange, it remained short-lived and did not evolve into a permanent coordination structure. Over time, research activity on gender equality in Cluj has diminished, with fewer dedicated academic projects compared to the early post-1989 period. In contrast, intervention-oriented projects addressing gender-based violence have continued to be implemented,

As a major academic and cultural center, Cluj-Napoca was among the first three university centers in Romania to place gender studies on the academic agenda in the post-communist period following 1989.

primarily driven by external funding opportunities, notably through European Union programs, the South-East Europe (SEE) Program and the Norway Grants. These funding mechanisms have played a decisive role in shaping the scope, duration and thematic focus of GBV-related interventions at local level, often resulting in project-based rather than systemic approaches.

The Municipality of Cluj-Napoca has gradually assumed a more active role in this field. Since 2008, the municipality has implemented and, in some cases, directly financed projects addressing gender equality and gender-based violence, signaling an increased level of institutional engagement. More recently, local authorities have announced plans for the establishment of a dedicated shelter for victims of gender-based violence, representing a significant step towards strengthening local protection and support infrastructure and moving from project-based interventions towards more permanent service provision.

At the metropolitan level, the Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association functions as a framework for inter-municipal cooperation and integrated strategic planning, bringing together 19 local authorities within the Cluj Metropolitan Area. While CMA IDA does not exercise operational authority over sectoral institutions, it plays a recognized role in supporting social inclusion, territorial cohesion and integrated development, areas that are directly relevant to women's safety in everyday urban and metropolitan contexts.

Through its mandate, CMA IDA supports the elaboration and alignment of metropolitan strategies, facilitates structured dialogue among local authorities and key stakeholders, and promotes coordinated approaches to challenges that extend beyond administrative boundaries. In the field of women's safety, this role is particularly important given the functional interdependencies within the metropolitan area, including daily mobility, access to services and the use of shared public spaces. CMA IDA provides a platform through which local authorities can exchange practices, identify common risks and work towards more consistent responses to safety-related issues affecting women across the metropolitan territory.

Within this broader strategic framework, the Cluj Integrated Urban Development Strategy (SIDU) 2021–2030 establishes clear policy commitments relevant to women's safety and protection. One of SIDU's key objectives is the development of social services infrastructure and the improvement of living conditions for vulnerable groups, explicitly including victims of

gender-based and domestic violence. By recognizing gender-based violence as a structural urban and social issue, the strategy links safety considerations to wider objectives related to social inclusion and quality of life. SIDU further outlines a set of concrete measures aimed at strengthening protection and prevention mechanisms. These include the establishment of a dedicated shelter for victims of domestic violence, the provision of protected housing solutions to support victims' longer-term safety and recovery, and the implementation of educational actions in schools addressing negotiation skills, conflict resolution and the prevention of violence. In addition, the strategy foresees awareness-raising campaigns designed to promote non-violence in gender relations, compliance with legal norms and increased awareness of victims' rights and access to justice.

Together, these strategic priorities position women's safety as an integral component of urban and metropolitan development rather than a stand-alone social issue. Their effective implementation, however, requires sustained cooperation between local authorities, social services, law enforcement, educational institutions and civil society actors. In this context, CMA IDA's role as a facilitator of dialogue and integrated planning contributes to ensuring that safety-related objectives are approached in a coherent and territorially sensitive manner across the metropolitan area.

1.5. Perceived safety in public

While aggregate crime statistics and official safety indicators may position Cluj-Napoca as a comparatively safe urban environment, such measures often fail to capture the gendered dimensions of insecurity experienced in everyday life. For women in particular, the perception of safety frequently diverges from statistical representations of crime, as it is shaped not only by recorded incidents but also by anticipatory fear, repeated exposure to harassment and the constant need for self-protection in public space. Even in contexts characterized by relatively low levels of reported violent crime, women continue to face specific and recurrent risks linked to sexual harassment, intimidation and unwanted attention. These experiences, while often underreported and rarely reflected in crime statistics, generate a persistent sense of vulnerability. The cumulative physical and psychological burden of sustained vigilance—such as monitoring surroundings, altering routes, adjusting travel times or avoiding certain places altogether—can significantly undermine women's sense of safety, autonomy and freedom of

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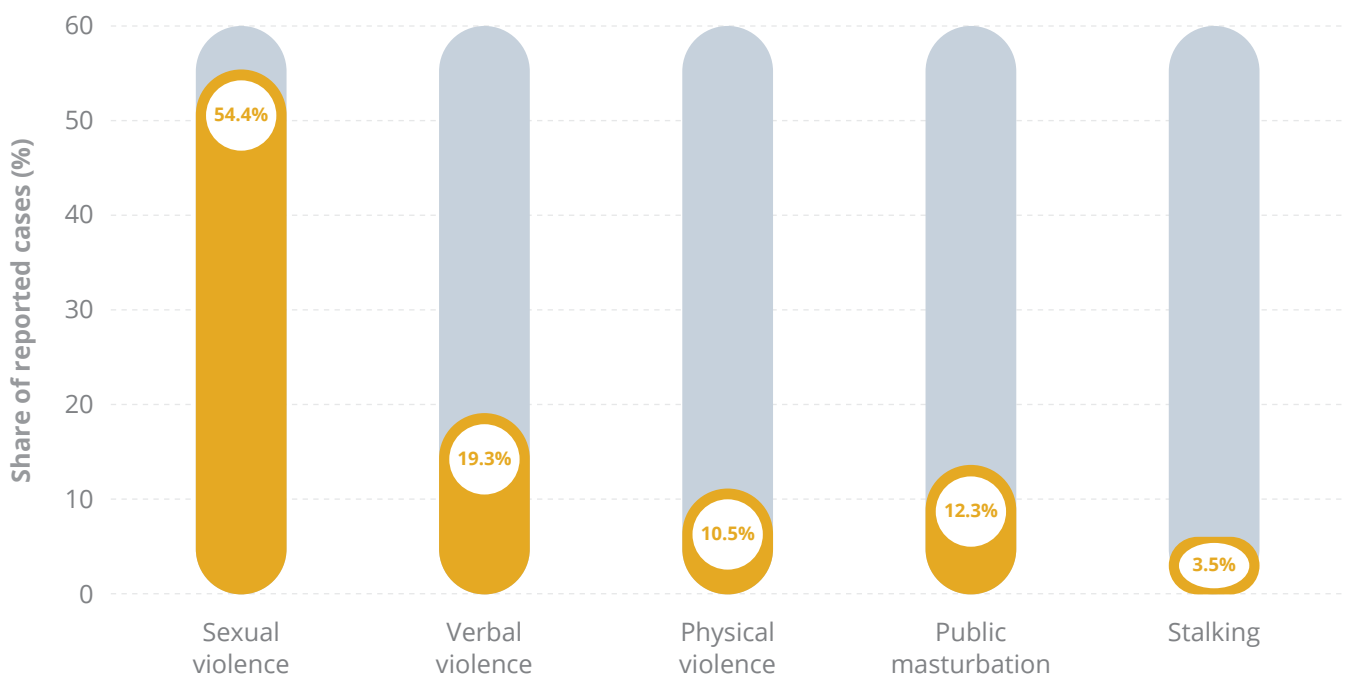
movement. Over time, this continuous state of alertness may outweigh the reassurance provided by objective safety measures or infrastructural improvements. This divergence between statistical safety and lived experience highlights a critical limitation of traditional safety assessments, which tend to prioritize recorded crime over perceived safety and everyday experiences of risk. For women, safety is not defined solely by the absence of severe crime, but by the degree to which public spaces allow for unrestrained participation without fear of harassment or harm. As long as gender-specific threats remain present in daily urban routines, perceptions of insecurity persist, regardless of favorable crime statistics. Consequently, the gap between perceived and recorded safety continues to generate significant concerns regarding personal security, particularly in relation to mobility, use of public transport and access to shared urban spaces. Addressing this gap requires a more nuanced understanding of safety that integrates gender-sensitive perspectives, acknowledges the impact of everyday harassment and recognizes that feeling safe is as critical as being safe in the construction of inclusive and equitable urban environments.

In comparison to other major cities in Romania, Cluj-Napoca is recognized as a relatively safe urban environment. However, it is important to acknowledge

that, like any city, it presents certain public safety risks, particularly for women. According to data from Numbeo, Cluj-Napoca was identified as the safest city in Romania at the beginning of 2024, showcasing superior safety scores relative to other large cities in the country. This reputation can be attributed to several factors, including low crime rates, a considerable number of police patrols, active community involvement, and robust infrastructure. Nevertheless, some women report feelings of insecurity during nighttime or in isolated locations, such as parks or inadequately lit neighborhoods. These incidents are frequently underreported, and when they are reported, many women express dissatisfaction with the responsiveness of the system. This perceived lack of efficacy in law enforcement fosters a sense of distrust and vulnerability among women, particularly those who traverse these areas alone at night. Over the past several decades, numerous cases of sexual harassment and assault in public spaces have been documented in Cluj-Napoca.

The results obtained by CMA IDA from the analysis of incidents reported through the SafeCity application between 2022 and 2025 revealed persistent and structurally embedded patterns of insecurity affecting women's everyday mobility and use of public space in Cluj-Napoca.

Distribution of Reported Gender-Based Violence Incidents (Cluj-Napoca, SafeCity App Data)

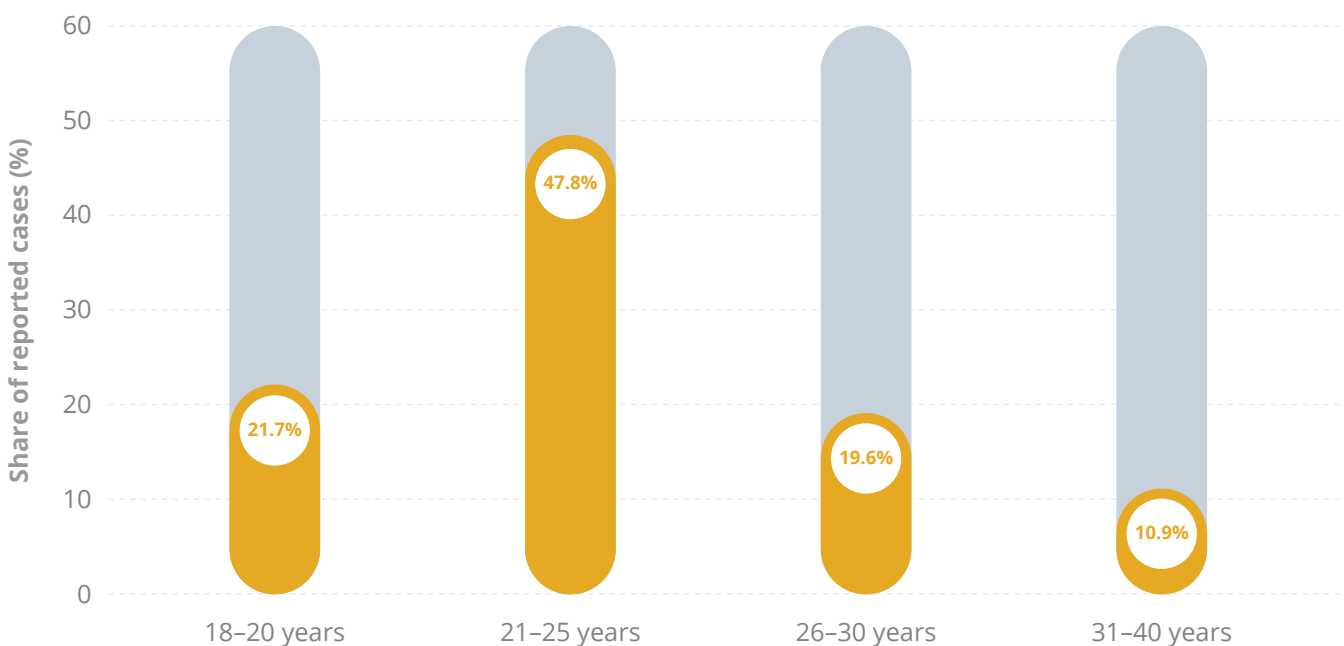


A total of 46 incidents of harassment and violence were documented, offering a detailed picture of how safety risks manifested along daily mobility routes, in shared urban environments and in spaces associated with transit, circulation and social interaction. The findings demonstrated that women's safety challenges were closely intertwined with patterns of movement, access and presence in the city, rather than being confined to isolated or exceptional situations. The analysis showed a clear predominance of sexual harassment and sexual violence, which accounted for approximately 67% of all reported incidents. These incidents included non-consensual touching, indecent exposure, sexualized verbal harassment, stalking behaviors and public masturbation. In a significant number of cases, sexualized acts were combined with verbal aggression or physical intimidation, indicating that harassment in public space frequently unfolded as a sequence of escalating behaviors rather than as a single isolated act. These results highlighted that women's safety was most frequently compromised during routine activities such as commuting, walking through central areas, waiting at transport stops or using public transport, where proximity, crowding and anonymity created conditions for intrusive and abusive behavior.

The results indicated that repeated exposure along daily mobility routes accumulated over time, shaping women's perceptions of risk and influencing their decisions regarding when, how and where to move within the city.

The profile of affected persons pointed to a strongly gendered exposure to insecurity. Of the 46 reported incidents, 45 involved women and one involved a non-binary person. Victims' ages ranged from 18 to 40 years, with a pronounced concentration among young women aged 20–26. This group was characterized by high daily mobility, intensive use of public transport and frequent movement across different parts of the city for education, employment and social activities. The results indicated that repeated exposure along daily mobility routes accumulated over time, shaping women's perceptions of risk and influencing their decisions regarding when, how and where to move within the city. The reported incidents generated

Distribution of Reported Incidents by Age Group (Cluj-Napoca, SafeCity App Data)



substantial psychological and emotional impacts that directly affected mobility behavior. Victims consistently described fear, shock, anxiety, disgust and helplessness, as well as an inability to react during the incident. Beyond the immediate experience, many reported longer-term behavioral adaptations, including avoiding specific routes, transport modes or locations, limiting evening or night-time travel, changing schedules and maintaining heightened vigilance in public space. These adaptations illustrated how safety concerns constrained women's freedom of movement and reduced their effective access to urban opportunities, thereby linking safety directly to broader issues of mobility justice and urban inclusion.

A recurrent and particularly significant result concerned the social environment in which the incidents occurred. Many were reported in crowded or highly frequented locations, including buses, trams, bus stops, transit areas, parks, central squares and commercial or leisure zones. In numerous cases, victims indicated that other people were present, appeared aware of the situation and, in some instances, visibly observed the incident. Nevertheless, no intervention or support was offered in the vast majority of cases. This widespread bystander inaction amplified feelings of vulnerability and isolation and contributed to a perception that harassment was socially tolerated in shared urban spaces. The absence of informal social control and collective responsibility emerged as a critical factor undermining women's sense of safety during everyday mobility.

Overall, the results revealed consistent patterns of gendered insecurity that directly shaped women's mobility and experience of public space in Cluj-Napoca.

From a spatial perspective, the incidents were concentrated in central areas and along major mobility corridors, including transport nodes, pedestrian routes and areas with intense daily flows. These findings challenged the assumption that women's insecurity was primarily linked to peripheral, poorly lit or isolated spaces. Instead, the results demonstrated that risks were embedded in ordinary, routinely used environments associated with movement and accessibility. This spatial pattern underscored that

safety issues were systemic and closely connected to the design, management and social use of public space.

Information regarding perpetrators, as reported by victims, suggested a range of profiles, including older men associated with indecent exposure or unwanted physical contact, younger men or adolescents linked to verbal harassment or group intimidation, etc. Despite this diversity, the behaviors described shared common features: lack of consent, sexualized intrusion and the exertion of power over victims within public space. These characteristics reinforced the interpretation that the reported incidents reflected gendered power dynamics operating within everyday mobility contexts rather than random or situational disorder.

Overall, the results revealed consistent patterns of gendered insecurity that directly shaped women's mobility and experience of public space in Cluj-Napoca. Sexual harassment emerged as the dominant threat, with significant psychological consequences, frequent bystander inaction and a strong spatial association with everyday routes and high-traffic areas. Although based on a limited number of reports, the consistency and convergence of findings provided robust qualitative and quantitative evidence of structural vulnerabilities affecting women's safety. The results highlighted a clear discrepancy between formal perceptions of urban safety and women's lived experiences, demonstrating that safety, mobility and access to the city were deeply interconnected and unequally distributed.

While local authorities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are diligently addressing these concerns, additional measures are required to effectively prevent and combat such acts. The demand for support services for victims of sexual assault and harassment often surpasses the available resources, resulting in extended wait times and inadequate responses. Furthermore, there exists a critical need for specialized training for law enforcement personnel and legal professionals in managing cases of gender-based violence. Consequently, many women may feel unsupported by the overarching system, adversely affecting their sense of safety. Although NGOs and local authorities are actively working to combat gender-based violence, notable gaps persist in public awareness campaigns, education, and preventive measures. Many women, particularly younger individuals, may lack sufficient knowledge regarding self-protection in vulnerable situations or may be unaware of their legal rights. This informational deficit can engender feelings of helplessness, deterring women from taking proactive measures or seeking necessary support.



Reports from Cluj-Napoca indicated recurrent experiences of verbal harassment, unwanted physical contact and sexually inappropriate behavior by fellow passengers. Such incidents were most frequently associated with periods of high passenger density, particularly during peak commuting hours

1.6. Safety and public transportation

The safety of women using public transportation in Cluj-Napoca emerged as a particularly sensitive and complex dimension of urban safety, reflecting broader patterns observed in many European and global cities. Despite Cluj-Napoca's reputation as one of the safest cities in Romania according to aggregate crime indicators, women's experiences while commuting revealed persistent vulnerabilities that were closely linked to gender-specific risks, everyday mobility patterns and the social dynamics of shared transit spaces. Public transportation represented a critical setting in which women encountered harassment and felt exposed to potential threats. Reports from Cluj-Napoca indicated recurrent experiences of verbal harassment, unwanted physical contact and sexually inappropriate behavior by fellow passengers. Such incidents were most frequently associated with periods of high passenger density, particularly during peak commuting hours, when overcrowding reduced personal space and limited women's ability to distance themselves from perpetrators. In these conditions, the

physical configuration of buses and trams, combined with crowding and movement, created environments in which harassment could occur discreetly and with limited immediate consequences for those responsible.

At the same time, these incidents often remained underreported. Many women reported uncertainty regarding available reporting mechanisms, doubts about whether their experiences would be taken seriously, or discomfort in drawing attention to themselves in already stressful situations. The absence of clear, visible and user-friendly reporting pathways contributed to a perception that harassment on public transport was a normalized or unavoidable aspect of daily commuting. This lack of reporting further reinforced the discrepancy between official safety

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data and women's lived experiences. The cumulative effect of such encounters extended beyond individual incidents. Repeated exposure to harassment generated feelings of insecurity, discomfort and hyper-vigilance, influencing women's decisions about when and how to use public transportation. In particular, concerns about safety led some women to avoid certain routes, travel times or modes of transport, especially during late evening hours or when vehicles were sparsely occupied. Conversely, periods of intense overcrowding also increased perceived risk, as close physical proximity heightened the likelihood of unwanted contact and limited opportunities for intervention or escape. As a result, women faced a paradoxical situation in which both emptiness and overcrowding produced distinct but equally significant safety concerns.

The spatial context of public transportation infrastructure further shaped these perceptions of insecurity. Despite recent investments and improvements in Cluj-Napoca's public transport system, certain bus and tram stops—particularly in peripheral or suburban areas—remained inadequately illuminated or insufficiently visible at night. Poor lighting, limited passive surveillance and reduced pedestrian activity contributed to heightened anxiety among women waiting for public transport after dark. In these environments, concerns extended beyond harassment to include fears of theft, assault or other forms of opportunistic crime, reinforcing avoidance behaviors and restricting mobility. Late-night travel presented an additional layer of vulnerability. After

sunset, reduced passenger numbers and diminished social presence intensified women's sense of exposure, particularly on routes serving less populated areas. The perception of limited surveillance—both formal and informal—heightened fears of being targeted, even in a city generally perceived as safe. These experiences underscored that women's safety in public transportation was shaped not only by infrastructure and service frequency, but also by social dynamics, time of day and the broader urban environment.

Across these contexts, the role of public transportation personnel emerged as a critical yet underdeveloped element of women's safety. There remained a clear need for enhanced training and awareness among bus and tram drivers, inspectors and other frontline staff to recognize, prevent and respond effectively to harassment and inappropriate behavior. The absence of visible, confident and gender-sensitive intervention mechanisms contributed to a perception of institutional passivity, further discouraging reporting and reinforcing feelings of vulnerability. Overall, women's experiences on public transportation in Cluj-Napoca illustrated how safety risks were embedded in everyday mobility practices and shaped by a combination of spatial, temporal and social factors. These findings reinforced the conclusion that ensuring women's safety in public transport requires approaches that go beyond infrastructure and crime prevention, addressing perceptions of safety, social norms, institutional responsiveness and the everyday realities of women's movement through the city.

Concerns about safety led some women to avoid certain routes, travel times or modes of transport, especially during late evening hours or when vehicles were sparsely occupied.



1.7. Cluj Metropolitan Area Urban Local Group

The Cluj Urban Local Group (ULG) revitalized the former Local Group of Professionals working on Gender-Based Violence, re-establishing a structured and permanent platform for dialogue, coordination and co-creation among key local and county-level institutions and stakeholders. The renewed ULG brought together 13 members, representing the main institutional mechanisms, service providers and professional communities relevant to women's safety and gender-based violence in Cluj-Napoca and the wider metropolitan area. The composition of the ULG reflected the local institutional architecture governing gender equality, social protection, public safety and urban development.

Local public authorities, including representatives of the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, played a central role in anchoring discussions within existing policy frameworks and strategic documents, such as the Integrated Urban Development Strategy. Their participation ensured institutional continuity, facilitated access to decision-making processes and supported the alignment of ULG discussions with ongoing and planned municipal interventions.

Local and county-level social work and protection services, including structures operating under the Directorate of Social Assistance and Medical Services at municipal level and the General Directorate of Social Work and Child Protection at county level, contributed

practical expertise on victim identification, referral pathways, case management and access to specialized services. These institutions provided essential input on the functioning and limitations of existing support mechanisms, highlighting gaps in coverage, coordination challenges and barriers faced by women in accessing support.

Law enforcement institutions, represented by the local police and county police structures, participated as key members of the ULG, contributing insight into reporting mechanisms, intervention protocols and the enforcement of protection measures. Their involvement enabled constructive dialogue on the interface between policing, victim support services and civil society, while also supporting a shared understanding of the constraints and responsibilities of law enforcement in addressing harassment and violence in public spaces and public transport.

Health and medical services, as decentralized public institutions, contributed perspectives on the medical consequences of violence, access to emergency and specialized care, forensic evidence, and the need for coordination between healthcare providers and social services. Their participation reinforced the understanding of gender-based violence as both a social and public health issue.

Babeş-Bolyai University played a critical analytical and reflective role within the ULG. Drawing on expertise in gender studies, sociology, social work, psychology and urban studies, university representatives supported the interpretation of evidence, facilitating also access



to students for consultations and research. Non-governmental organizations, many of which provide direct support to survivors of gender-based violence, brought a strong victim-centered and advocacy-oriented perspective. NGOs highlighted lived experiences, systemic barriers to reporting, trust deficits in institutions and the long-term social and psychological impacts of harassment and violence. Their presence ensured that the voices and needs of affected women remained central to ULG deliberations and that institutional perspectives were continuously confronted with on-the-ground realities.

The inclusion of independent professionals, particularly architects, added a crucial spatial and design-oriented dimension. These members contributed expertise on urban form, lighting, visibility, spatial configuration and the gendered use of public space. Their input enabled the group to explore how planning, design and infrastructure—especially in relation to public transport, pedestrian routes and waiting areas—can either mitigate or exacerbate perceptions of insecurity. ULG meetings functioned as structured spaces for inter-institutional dialogue and mutual learning, where each member contributed distinct but complementary knowledge and competencies. The diversity of institutional mandates allowed for the examination of women's safety from legal, social, spatial, operational and experiential perspectives simultaneously. This complementarity proved particularly valuable in joint analyses of local data, where institutional statistics, victim narratives, service-level insights and spatial observations were integrated into a shared understanding of local challenges.

Through the revival and consolidation of this multi-actor structure, the Cluj ULG moved beyond fragmented or sector-specific approaches and reinforced horizontal cooperation among local institutional mechanisms. The renewed Local Group of Professionals on Gender-Based Violence thus functioned not only as a consultative body, but as a platform for coordinated governance, contributing to a more integrated, evidence-based and territorially sensitive approach to women's safety and gender-based violence at local and metropolitan levels.

The first meeting of the Cluj Urban Local Group (ULG) took place on 2 November, in the context of the partner visit, and marked the formal launch of the local co-creation process underpinning the Integrated Action Plan. The meeting combined institutional exchange with a short analytical workshop, designed to establish a shared understanding of key challenges related to women's safety, gender equality and access to opportunities at local and metropolitan level.

The workshop was structured around a SWOT analysis, which enabled participants to collectively assess existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to the thematic focus of the project. This initial analytical exercise served to surface both systemic gaps and untapped potential across institutional, social and spatial dimensions. Following the SWOT discussion, participants engaged in a prioritization exercise using dot voting, identifying the issues they considered most urgent and strategically relevant to be addressed through the IAP process. The prioritised themes were subsequently used as the basis for a structured brainstorming session focused on identifying possible directions for action.

The prioritization process highlighted five interconnected thematic areas that were perceived as critical leverage points for improving women's safety and advancing gender equality at local level. A first major priority concerned the lack of integrated, local-level data and mapping on safety and gender-based violence. Participants emphasized the fragmentation of existing data sources and the absence of a comprehensive picture capturing both reported and unreported incidents. Discussions pointed to the need for participatory reporting tools, spatial mapping of perceived safety and insecurity, and improved data integration across institutions such as local authorities, police, social services, medical and forensic institutions, as well as civil society organizations. Particular attention was paid to the importance of understanding *where violence occurs, which groups are most affected, and what different institutions currently know*, in order to inform evidence-based interventions.

Closely linked to this, participants identified a structural lack of resources for interdisciplinary research and integrated action design. The discussion underscored the need to bring together expertise from public administration, law enforcement, social and medical services, academia and civil society in order to jointly analyze data and design sustainable interventions. Ideas emerging from this theme included strengthening inter-institutional dialogue, raising awareness within the medical sector regarding its role in addressing gender-based violence, and exploring the development of integrated response mechanisms, such as specialized centers for sexual violence emergencies.

A third priority area related to unequal access to the labor market and public institutions, particularly for young women and persons with disabilities. Participants highlighted workplace safety, harassment prevention and reintegration after career interruptions as key challenges. Proposed directions included the development of safe spaces within workplaces, clearer procedures for preventing and addressing harassment, gender-sensitive recruitment practices, inclusivity training for employers and assertiveness training aimed at empowering women in professional environments.

The lack of systematic education on gender-based violence in schools emerged as another critical concern. Participants emphasized the importance of early intervention, stronger student-teacher relationships and clear reporting protocols for cases involving children and adolescents. Discussions pointed to the need for integrating gender-based violence topics into civic education curricula, strengthening teacher training and involving qualified external experts to support prevention and response efforts within educational settings.

Finally, participants identified deeply rooted patriarchal norms and power relations as an overarching structural factor influencing all other challenges. This theme generated discussion on the role of mass media in shaping social attitudes, the need for sustained public communication campaigns promoting gender equality, and the importance of addressing stereotypes and power imbalances across institutions. Ideas included awareness-raising initiatives, role-reversal workshops, engagement with faith-based actors and initiatives aimed at reframing feminism as a shared pursuit of equality rather than a zero-sum conflict.

Overall, the first ULG meeting established a shared analytical foundation for the Integrated Action Plan and confirmed the relevance of adopting an integrated, evidence-based and multi-sectorial approach. The prioritized themes reflected both immediate safety concerns and deeper structural issues, providing a coherent starting point for the subsequent stages of the IAP process, including data consolidation, stakeholder engagement and the co-design of targeted actions.

The ULG meeting held on 26 January 2024 represented a key milestone in the local co-creation process, allowing for an in-depth exploration of safety-related challenges and the joint identification of potential solutions. Building on the analytical groundwork established during the previous meetings, this session focused on translating identified needs into concrete



directions for action, with particular attention to women's safety in public space, public transport and the workplace.

During the meeting, participants examined a series of interconnected themes related to safety and inclusion and proposed a range of solutions aimed at prevention, protection and institutional responsiveness. These included the development of a digital application for reporting incidents, participatory mapping of locations perceived as safe or unsafe, the creation of city safety maps differentiated by age groups, and measures addressing safety in professional environments, such as the introduction of a "safe room" concept in workplaces, the implementation of harassment prevention procedures, and the provision of inclusivity and awareness training for companies. In parallel, the project's local objectives were presented and discussed, alongside an outline of a metropolitan-wide approach to promoting gender equality. Participants also explored the structure of a dedicated action plan for women's safety, and several pilot actions were proposed as initial steps towards implementation.

To deepen the discussion and encourage more targeted reflection, participants were divided into three working groups. Each group was tasked with addressing a common set of guiding questions: identifying where women feel most unsafe within the metropolitan area; determining which groups of women are most affected; assessing the current state of efforts to address these issues; outlining what improvements are needed and what partners can realistically contribute; and proposing concrete pilot initiatives that could be tested in the short term. This

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group-based approach facilitated focused dialogue and enabled participants to draw on their institutional, professional and lived experience.

The solutions proposed during the group work reflected a strong emphasis on prevention, early intervention and improved responsiveness across sectors. In the context of public transport, participants suggested the installation of a dedicated emergency button in vehicles, allowing passengers to discreetly signal situations of aggression or perceived danger. Complementary measures included the broadcasting of informational videos on buses and trams, aimed at educating passengers on how to react when experiencing or witnessing harassment, and the installation of illuminated signage systems at bus and tram stops to improve visibility, recognition and perceived safety, particularly during evening hours.

Additional proposals focused on strengthening the human dimension of safety systems. These included

targeted training for public transport drivers, as well as for security personnel in nightlife venues such as clubs, bars and pubs, to ensure that staff is equipped to identify abuse, intervene appropriately and support victims in reaching a safe destination. Participants also highlighted the importance of specialized training for health professionals who receive disclosures of abuse, in order to improve initial responses, referral pathways and victim support.

Digital and institutional solutions were also emphasized. Participants proposed enhancing existing platforms, such as the Bolt for Women application, by integrating additional safety features for women travelling alone. Simplifying and clarifying referral mechanisms for gender-based violence cases emerged as another priority, with the aim of reducing fragmentation and ensuring faster access to support services. Discussions with employers regarding existing workplace harassment procedures were identified as a necessary

The solutions proposed during the group work reflected a strong emphasis on prevention, early intervention and improved responsiveness across sectors.

step towards improving institutional accountability and prevention in professional environments.

Overall, the 26 January 2024 ULG meeting and the accompanying student consultations reinforced the value of a participatory, multi-level and multi-sectorial approach to women's safety. The diversity of proposed solutions reflected a shared understanding that safety cannot be addressed through isolated measures, but requires coordinated action across public transport systems, urban infrastructure, workplaces, health services, law enforcement and education. These discussions contributed directly to shaping the strategic direction and pilot actions of the Integrated Action Plan, grounding them in both institutional expertise and lived experience.

In parallel to the ULG process, two student consultations organized by CMA IDA provided additional insights into the safety concerns of young people, particularly young women. Two student consultations organized in May and June 2024 provided in-depth qualitative insight into how young people—particularly young women—experience safety and insecurity in Cluj-Napoca and across the Cluj Metropolitan Area. The consultations engaged a total of 59 students, predominantly women, and created a structured space for sharing lived experiences, perceived risks and proposed solutions related to safety in everyday environments.

Across both consultations, students consistently highlighted that perceived safety in Cluj-Napoca is highly contextual and uneven, varying significantly depending on location, time of day, level of crowding and the presence or absence of surveillance. While some participants described the city as generally safe, this perception was repeatedly contradicted by concrete personal experiences of harassment, intimidation and abuse, particularly in spaces associated with daily mobility and student life. A recurring theme concerned student campuses, which were described as spaces of *apparent* safety due to their density and familiarity, yet simultaneously identified as sites where harassment and abuse frequently occurred. Female students reported being stared at, verbally harassed, whistled at, grabbed or touched without consent within campus

areas. Particularly alarming were references to a recent case involving a stalker who followed, harassed and sexually intimidated students, including entering student dormitories. These accounts underscored that crowding alone does not guarantee safety and may, in some cases, facilitate anonymity for perpetrators.

Public transportation and mobility-related spaces emerged as major sources of insecurity. Students described repeated experiences of sexual harassment on buses and trams, including indecent exposure, obscene gestures, unwanted physical contact and being followed after exiting vehicles. Train stations, bus stations and trains themselves were repeatedly identified as high-risk environments, associated with harassment, intimidation, forced solicitation of money and exposure to sexual acts such as public masturbation. These spaces were perceived as particularly unsafe due to limited surveillance, poor lighting, transient populations and weak immediate response mechanisms.

The consultations also revealed that street harassment was a common and normalized experience, involving offensive comments, name-calling and persistent unwanted attention. Such experiences contributed to a pervasive sense of unease and reinforced the need for constant vigilance, particularly during evening and night-time hours or in poorly lit areas.

Several students, especially those engaged in fieldwork or employment alongside their studies, reported work-related safety risks, including situations in which they were isolated with clients, prevented from leaving private premises or subjected to physical abuse. These accounts highlighted the intersection between gender, age, professional vulnerability and lack of adequate institutional safety protocols.

In response to these risks, students described a range of self-protection strategies, including carrying self-defence sprays, avoiding certain areas or times, and attempting to travel accompanied whenever possible. While such strategies were seen as necessary, they were also perceived as burdensome and indicative of a broader failure to ensure safe environments. Participants expressed interest in structured self-defence training, greater use of digital tools such as safety-reporting applications, and clearer institutional guidance on risk prevention.

When invited to propose solutions, students from both consultations converged around a set of priority interventions. These included more regular and visible police patrols in areas perceived as high-risk, increased video surveillance and monitoring, improved public lighting, and clearer crisis intervention protocols.

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Participants also emphasized the importance of awareness-raising campaigns on safety and reporting mechanisms, as well as the need for support services not only for survivors, but also for perpetrators, recognizing the importance of prevention and behavioral change.

Overall, the student consultations revealed a significant gap between formal narratives of urban safety and the lived experiences of young people, particularly young women. Safety was understood not merely as the absence of crime, but as the ability to move freely without fear of harassment, intimidation or abuse. The findings reinforced the importance of addressing women's safety as a systemic issue embedded in everyday mobility, student life and public space, and demonstrated the added value of participatory engagement in uncovering dimensions of insecurity that remain largely invisible in official statistics.

During the ULG meeting held on 10 July 2024, participants consolidated the outcomes of the previous analytical and participatory stages and agreed on a set of core intervention lines to be further developed within the Integrated Action Plan. The discussion focused on translating identified needs and evidence into structured, actionable directions, with a strong emphasis on prevention, early intervention and institutional responsiveness in relation to women's safety in public space and public transport.

One of the central lines of intervention identified was the development of bystander training programs targeting passengers, witnesses and members of the wider public. Participants recognized that repeated patterns of bystander inaction had significantly contributed to women's feelings of vulnerability and isolation in public spaces and on public transport. Bystander training was therefore seen as a critical tool for shifting social norms, strengthening collective responsibility and empowering individuals to recognize problematic behavior, intervene safely and support victims. Such programs were

envisaged as adaptable to different contexts, including public transport, educational environments and public events, and as complementary to formal institutional responses.

A second major intervention line concerned the creation of accessible and user-friendly reporting contexts and digital portals for signaling abuse. Building on earlier discussions around data gaps and underreporting, participants emphasized the need for clear, visible and trusted mechanisms through which victims and witnesses can report incidents of harassment or violence. These mechanisms were understood not only as tools for individual reporting, but also as means to improve data collection, identify risk hotspots and inform targeted interventions. The group stressed that reporting platforms should be designed with a victim-centered approach, ensuring confidentiality, ease of use and clear links to support and referral services.

The training of employees of the Local Transport Company and other frontline professions emerged as another priority intervention. Participants highlighted the strategic position of transport staff, security personnel and other public-facing professionals as first points of contact in situations involving harassment or abuse. Training was therefore considered essential to equip these professionals with the skills to identify incidents, respond appropriately, de-escalate situations, support victims and activate referral mechanisms when necessary. This line of intervention was framed as a means to strengthen institutional accountability and increase women's confidence in public transport systems.

Closely related to this, the group identified the need for specialized training focused on recognizing and operationalizing different forms of abuse. Participants noted that many forms of harassment and violence remain poorly understood, minimized or misclassified, both by the public and by professionals. Training aimed



at clarifying definitions, recognizing early warning signs and understanding the continuum of abuse was seen as a prerequisite for effective prevention and response. This intervention line was designed to support consistent understanding across institutions and to ensure that existing legal and procedural frameworks are applied in practice.

Overall, the 10 July 2024 ULG meeting marked a transition from problem analysis to solution-oriented planning. The agreed intervention lines reflected a shared understanding that improving women's safety requires not only infrastructural or enforcement measures, but also social change, institutional capacity-building and accessible reporting mechanisms. These conclusions provided a clear and structured foundation for the subsequent development of the Integrated Action Plan and the design of pilot actions at local and metropolitan levels.

During the ULG meeting held on 12 September 2024, participants focused on consolidating the intervention logic of the local action and identifying a limited number of priority actions to be tested at metropolitan level within the Cluj Metropolitan Area. The discussion marked an important step towards operationalization, shifting the emphasis from conceptual design to practical testing

and learning, while maintaining alignment with the broader objectives of improving women's safety and advancing gender equality.

A first priority action identified for testing was the implementation of a prevention and awareness-raising campaign in public transportation, explicitly focused on the safety of women and girls. Building on evidence gathered through participatory research, ULG discussions and student consultations, participants acknowledged public transport as a recurrent setting for harassment and insecurity. The proposed campaign was conceived as a multi-channel intervention, targeting both users and staff of public transport systems, with the aim of increasing awareness of unacceptable behaviors, promoting zero tolerance towards harassment and encouraging supportive bystander responses. The campaign was also seen as a means to challenge the social normalization of harassment and to reinforce the message that women's safety in public transport is a shared responsibility.

The development and testing of a bystander training methodology, followed by the delivery of pilot training sessions, constituted a second core action. Participants emphasized that bystander inaction had emerged as a consistent pattern contributing to women's

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vulnerability in public space. Bystander training was therefore identified as a key preventive tool capable of empowering passengers, witnesses and community members to recognize risk situations, intervene safely and support victims. The action was framed as both a capacity-building and cultural change initiative, aiming to strengthen collective responsibility and foster safer social environments, particularly in mobility-related settings.

A third priority action focused on developing and testing a clear procedure and referral pathway for girls and women facing safety-threatening incidents. Participants highlighted the fragmentation and lack of clarity currently characterizing support mechanisms, which often discourage reporting and delay access to support. The proposed action aimed to map existing services, clarify institutional roles and define step-by-step pathways from first disclosure or reporting to specialized support. This action was designed to improve coordination among local authorities, social and medical services, law enforcement and civil society organizations, while ensuring a victim-centered, accessible and trauma-informed approach.

Finally, participants identified the need to advance the mainstreaming of gender equality in public policies across the Cluj Metropolitan Area as a transversal action underpinning all other interventions. Rather than being treated as a standalone theme, gender equality was framed as a cross-cutting principle to be integrated into urban planning, mobility policies, social services, public safety strategies and local development initiatives. Testing this action involved exploring practical tools for gender mainstreaming, strengthening institutional awareness and fostering inter-municipal dialogue to ensure coherent approaches across the metropolitan territory.

Overall, the 12 September 2024 ULG meeting clarified the scope and direction of the local action by identifying a focused set of interventions to be tested in real-life conditions. These actions reflected a shared understanding that improving women's safety requires a combination of preventive communication, social

empowerment, institutional coordination and policy integration. The meeting thus provided a concrete operational framework for the next phase of the Integrated Action Plan, linking evidence, stakeholder engagement and strategic objectives to actionable and testable measures at metropolitan level.

During the ULG meeting held on 13 December 2024, participants agreed on a consolidated set of concrete actions to be tested and implemented within the local action framework in the Cluj Metropolitan Area. The meeting marked a transition from planning to execution, refining previously identified intervention lines into operational actions with defined objectives, partners and timelines.

A first major action focused on the implementation of a prevention and awareness-raising campaign in public transportation, explicitly targeting the safety of women and girls. In partnership with the local public transport company, the campaign aimed to address the widespread yet often normalized forms of abuse experienced by women in buses and trams. The primary objective of the campaign was twofold: to raise awareness among passengers regarding the forms of harassment and abuse occurring in public transport, and to inform them about concrete and accessible response options. These included calling the single emergency number 112, contacting the local police, and engaging in safe and supportive bystander behaviours.

A key component of the campaign involved educating passengers on their potential role as bystanders in situations of harassment, using recognised intervention techniques such as addressing the victim through neutral questions to provide support, asking questions designed to disrupt the aggressor's behaviour, helping the victim identify a safe space, and contributing to the development of an immediate safety plan. The campaign was scheduled to be implemented between 14 February and 8 March 2025, strategically aligning with Valentine's Day and Women's Month to maximise visibility and social resonance. Collaboration with a professional advertising company was foreseen to develop a dedicated video campaign to be broadcast

CLUJ URBAN LOCAL GROUP MEETINGS

2 NOVEMBER 2023

The meeting combined institutional exchange with a short analytical workshop, designed to establish a shared understanding of key challenges related to women's safety, gender equality and access to opportunities at local and metropolitan level.

26 JANUARY 2024

A key milestone in the local co-creation process, allowing for an in-depth exploration of safety-related challenges and the joint identification of potential solutions

MAY & JUNE 2024

Student consultations organized by CMA IDA provided in-depth qualitative insight into how young people—particularly young women—experience safety and insecurity in Cluj-Napoca and across the Cluj Metropolitan Area.

on monitors within public transport vehicles. Particular attention was paid to defining clear objectives, messages and target groups to ensure the effectiveness and impact of the campaign.

The second agreed action concerned the development and delivery of a bystander training methodology. Participants agreed that a structured and context-sensitive training program would be developed and delivered to key target groups, including public transport drivers, local police officers and students. These trainings were designed to strengthen the capacity of frontline professionals and community members to recognize harassment, intervene safely and support victims. To facilitate institutional engagement, a dedicated meeting with the Deputy Mayor was planned, with the aim of securing the involvement of relevant service heads and ensuring organizational support for training delivery. In parallel, Ms. Monica Graff assumed responsibility for facilitating bystander trainings among students from different academic fields, thereby extending the intervention to young people as active users of public space and public transport.

A third action focused on the development of a clear procedure and referral pathway for supporting girls and women facing safety-threatening incidents. Participants acknowledged the absence of a coherent and accessible intervention protocol linking witnesses, victims, public transport staff and law enforcement. In response, the group committed to jointly developing a procedure that would define roles, responsibilities and steps to be taken in situations of aggression or harassment. This referral pathway was intended to involve all relevant institutions and actors, ensuring a coordinated, victim-centered and timely response, and reducing confusion or inaction during critical moments.

The fourth action addressed the broader objective of promoting gender equality across the Cluj Metropolitan Area, complementing safety-focused interventions with cultural and policy-oriented initiatives. The group proposed organizing a guided feminist tour of the city,

A key component of the campaign involved educating passengers on their potential role as bystanders in situations of harassment, using recognised intervention techniques.

inspired by the Krakow model, aimed at making women's contributions to Cluj's history and development more visible. Until the tour's implementation, a detailed documentation process was planned to collect and present information on notable women from various fields who have shaped the city's social, cultural and economic life. The tour was intended to coincide with Women's Month in March, enhancing its symbolic and public impact.

In addition, the group explored the development of an audio component for the tour, potentially financed through a project funded by the National Cultural Fund Administration, thereby ensuring sustainability and accessibility. In parallel, as part of broader efforts to mainstream gender equality into public policy, the group planned to organize meetings and interviews with women mayors and deputy mayors from the Cluj Metropolitan Area. These exchanges aimed to capture local perspectives on gender equality challenges and priorities and to inform future policy discussions and institutional practices.

Overall, the 13 December 2024 ULG meeting represented a decisive step in operationalizing the local action by defining a coherent package of test actions combining prevention, capacity-building, institutional coordination and cultural change. The agreed actions reflected a shared understanding that women's safety and gender equality must be addressed through both targeted interventions and broader policy and cultural initiatives, reinforcing each other within an integrated metropolitan approach.

10 JULY 2024

Participants consolidated the outcomes of the previous analytical and participatory stages and agreed on a set of core intervention lines to be further developed within the Integrated Action Plan

12 SEPTEMBER 2024

Focused on consolidating the intervention logic of the local action and identifying a limited number of priority actions to be tested at metropolitan level within the Cluj Metropolitan Area.

13 DECEMBER 2024

Participants agreed on a consolidated set of concrete actions to be tested and implemented within the local action framework in the Cluj Metropolitan Area.

SECTION 2: OVERALL LOGIC AND INTEGRATED APPROACH

2.1. Overarching objective and strategic objectives

The overarching objective of the Integrated Action Plan is to create a safe, caring and inclusive metropolitan area for women from all walks of life by transforming public transportation into a safer and more responsive environment, addressing the structural, social and spatial factors that shape women's safety and mobility, reducing gender-based vulnerabilities in public space, and strengthening women's sense of safety, autonomy and belonging across the Cluj Metropolitan Area.



The Integrated Action Plan for the Cluj Metropolitan Area is grounded in an integrated, evidence-based and gender-responsive intervention logic that addresses women's safety in public transportation as a structural urban policy challenge rather than an isolated security issue. The approach adopted recognizes that women's (un)safety in mobility is shaped by the interaction of behavioral norms, institutional responses, spatial design and access to support services, and therefore requires coordinated action across multiple policy domains, institutional levels and actor groups.

The intervention logic builds on the diagnostic phase carried out within the FEMACT-Cities network, which combined qualitative research with public transport users (in particular students and young women), institutional analysis involving frontline professionals, and behavioral insights related to bystander passivity and under-reporting. This analysis demonstrated that, despite Cluj-Napoca's overall reputation as a safe city, women's daily mobility is significantly constrained by experiences of harassment, uncertainty regarding institutional responses, and the absence of predictable and visible safety mechanisms in public transport settings. Consequently, the IAP adopts a preventive, capacity-building and system-strengthening logic, aiming to reduce gender-based vulnerabilities while

increasing institutional accountability and community engagement.

In order to operationalize the overarching vision of a safe and inclusive metropolitan mobility system for women, the Integrated Action Plan is structured around five interrelated strategic objectives. These objectives are mutually reinforcing and collectively contribute to systemic change.

To increase women's actual and perceived safety in public transportation across the Cluj Metropolitan Area by reducing tolerance for harassment and violence and by strengthening predictability and trust in institutional responses. This objective responds directly to evidence showing that women's sense of insecurity persists even in contexts of relatively low recorded crime, due to repeated exposure to harassment, lack of intervention by bystanders and uncertainty regarding available support mechanisms.

To strengthen the capacity of key institutional and frontline actors to prevent, recognize and respond effectively to gender-based harassment and violence in public transport settings. This objective reflects the finding that transport staff, police officers and other professionals often lack specific training, shared procedures and a trauma-informed understanding

INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1

INCREASE WOMEN'S ACTUAL AND PERCEIVED SAFETY IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

across the Cluj Metropolitan Area by reducing tolerance for harassment and violence and by strengthening predictability and trust in institutional responses.

2

STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF KEY INSTITUTIONAL AND FRONTLINE ACTORS

to prevent, recognize and respond effectively to gender-based harassment and violence in public transport settings.

3

EMPOWER PUBLIC TRANSPORT USERS

particularly women and young people, to act safely and confidently as active bystanders and rights-holders in situations of harassment or threat.

4

ESTABLISH A COHERENT, VICTIM-CENTERED AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL REFERRAL PATHWAY

for incidents occurring in public transport ensuring that responses are coordinated, timely and aligned with principles of dignity, confidentiality and non-discrimination

5

EMBED GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S SAFETY

within broader metropolitan governance, public discourse and urban culture, thereby ensuring the sustainability and transformative potential of the interventions

of gender-based violence, which limits their ability to intervene consistently and appropriately.

To empower public transport users, particularly women and young people, to act safely and confidently as active bystanders and rights-holders in situations of harassment or threat. This objective builds on the recognition that social passivity and the bystander effect play a significant role in the persistence of gender-based harassment in crowded public spaces, and that behavioral change requires both skills development and normative shifts.

To establish a coherent, victim-centered and inter-institutional referral pathway for incidents occurring in public transport, ensuring that responses are coordinated, timely and aligned with principles of dignity, confidentiality and non-discrimination. This objective addresses structural fragmentation between transport operators, police, social services and specialized support organizations, which has previously resulted in inconsistent responses and secondary victimizations.

To embed gender equality and women's safety within broader metropolitan governance, public discourse and urban culture, thereby ensuring the sustainability and transformative potential of the interventions. This

objective acknowledges that safety measures alone are insufficient without parallel efforts to challenge gender stereotypes, increase the visibility of women's contributions to urban life and mainstream gender perspectives into public policies.

2.2. Areas of intervention and integrated approach

To achieve these strategic objectives, the Integrated Action Plan operates across several mutually reinforcing areas of intervention, reflecting the URBACT principle of integration across sectors, actors and policy domains.

A first area of intervention focuses on prevention and awareness-raising in public transportation. This includes metropolitan-scale campaigns implemented directly within buses and trams, using visual and audio materials to clarify what constitutes harassment, communicate zero tolerance for abusive behavior, and inform passengers about available response options. These actions aim to increase visibility of the issue, disrupt the normalization of harassment and reinforce shared responsibility for safety.

A second area of intervention addresses capacity-building and professional training. Building on the testing actions already implemented, structured training programs are developed and delivered for public transport drivers, ticket inspectors, local and national police officers, as well as for students and young users of public transport. These trainings are grounded in trauma-informed and gender-sensitive methodologies, equipping participants with practical skills for recognizing abuse, de-escalating situations, intervening safely and supporting victims. The differentiated design of the trainings ensures relevance to each professional role while reinforcing a shared institutional language and approach.

A third area of intervention concerns community engagement and bystander empowerment. Through targeted bystander training sessions, particularly with women users and students, the Plan seeks to transform passive witnessing into informed, safe and supportive action. This dimension directly addresses behavioral patterns identified during consultations, where fear of escalation and lack of clarity regarding appropriate intervention prevented collective responses to harassment.

A fourth area of intervention is dedicated to institutional coordination and procedural clarity, materialized through the development of a metropolitan referral pathway and operational protocol. This pathway defines roles, responsibilities and communication flows between public transport operators, police services, social work structures and specialized NGOs. By formalizing these procedures, the Plan aims to reduce response times, prevent institutional gaps and ensure continuity of care for victims.

A fifth area of intervention targets cultural change and policy mainstreaming, linking women's safety in transport to broader gender equality objectives. Actions such as the feminist city tour, documentation of women's contributions to Cluj's history, and the coordination of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" situate transport safety within a wider narrative of rights, representation and urban citizenship. This dimension strengthens societal ownership of the issue and reinforces alignment with international frameworks and campaigns.

2.3. Tested Action

As part of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) co-production process, a testing action was implemented to explore the feasibility, relevance and impact of a targeted awareness-raising campaign

on women's safety in public transportation within the Cluj Metropolitan Area. This testing action was deliberately designed as a pilot-scale intervention, intended not to deliver structural change in itself, but to generate learning, validate assumptions and inform the strategic and operational design of the final IAP actions. The testing action consisted of the conceptualization, coordination and limited implementation of safety-focused messages within selected public transport contexts, in close collaboration with key institutional actors. The initiative was developed and coordinated by the Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (CMA IDA), with the involvement of the City Hall, the public transportation company, and representatives of local law enforcement. An external advertising company was consulted to ensure clarity, accessibility and appropriateness of the messages.

The action targeted users of public transportation, with a specific focus on women and girls as primary beneficiaries, while also addressing the wider travelling public as potential bystanders. The intervention was implemented in means of public transport and selected bus and tram stations, using existing communication infrastructure such as screens and poster boards.

The primary purpose of the testing action was to examine whether visibility-based, non-intrusive communication tools could contribute to increased awareness of gender-based harassment in public transport, clarify acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, and strengthen passengers' perceived legitimacy to act as active bystanders. Rather than focusing on deterrence through sanction, the campaign emphasized recognition, shared responsibility and institutional presence.

The hypothesis underlying the testing action was that even a small-scale, time-limited awareness intervention, when strategically placed within everyday mobility environments, could produce meaningful shifts in perception. Specifically, the partners sought to test whether clear and accessible messages displayed in public transport could increase passengers' awareness of women's safety issues in mobility contexts, encourage bystander engagement by signaling institutional support and contribute to a greater sense of safety and legitimacy among women using public transport.

The testing action also aimed to assess institutional readiness and coordination capacity, including the ability of different actors (local administration, transport operators, police, CMA IDA) to collaborate around a shared safety objective, even in the absence of a fully formalized protocol.



The hypothesis underlying the testing action was that even a small-scale, time-limited awareness intervention, when strategically placed within everyday mobility environments, could produce meaningful shifts in perception.

The outputs of the testing action included the development and dissemination of safety-oriented messages within selected public transport environments, reaching a significant number of daily passengers. These messages took the form of visual materials, adapted to the constraints and rhythms of public transport use. While modest in scale, the intervention ensured direct exposure to a diverse metropolitan audience and allowed for observation of user reactions and informal feedback.

The results observed during and following the testing phase confirmed several of the initial assumptions. First, the visibility of women's safety messages in public transport was perceived as legitimate and necessary by both women users and institutional actors. Second, the presence of such messages contributed to a clearer public understanding that harassment is neither trivial nor tolerated, and that responsibility for addressing it does not rest solely with victims. Third, the testing action demonstrated that awareness-raising can function as an enabling condition for bystander engagement, especially when messages implicitly recognize passengers as potential allies rather than passive observers.

Equally important, the testing action revealed critical limitations. On its own, awareness-raising was insufficient to guarantee behavioral change or

effective intervention in real-time situations. This insight reinforced the need for complementary measures. As such, the testing action played a crucial diagnostic role, highlighting both the potential and the boundaries of communication-based interventions. The campaign validated public transport as a key entry point for addressing women's safety at metropolitan level, while also demonstrating that preventive communication must be embedded within a broader, integrated framework. In terms of co-creation, the testing action strengthened shared ownership among partners and enhanced trust between institutions that had not previously collaborated systematically on gender-based safety in mobility. The learning process facilitated within the ULG ensured that the testing results were not treated as isolated outcomes, but as evidence feeding into a more ambitious and sustainable action plan. In the long term, the testing action contributes to the overall vision of the Integrated Action Plan by laying the groundwork for safe and caring public transportation spaces across the Cluj Metropolitan Area. While limited in scope, it demonstrated that public transport can function not only as a mobility service, but also as a strategic space for social change, where norms, responsibilities and institutional commitments regarding women's safety become visible and collectively negotiated.

SECTION 3: ACTION PLANNING DETAILS

This section translates the intervention logic co-produced with the URBACT Local Group into a coherent and deliverable implementation package, articulated as a set of SMART actions capable of being operationalized across the Cluj Metropolitan Area. In accordance with URBACT requirements, each action is defined through clearly identified resources, verifiable and measurable outputs, and concrete short-term results that allow progress to be monitored in relation to the long-term vision of the Integrated Action Plan.



The action package is firmly grounded in the diagnosis developed through triangulated evidence and sustained stakeholder deliberation. This diagnosis demonstrated that women's safety in public transport within the metropolitan area is not the result of isolated incidents, but rather the outcome of interacting structural factors. These include behavioral dynamics such as the normalization of micro-aggressions and the persistent non-intervention of bystanders; institutional discontinuities manifested in fragmented responsibilities, unclear reporting mechanisms and uneven institutional responses; and operational constraints linked to limited real-time intervention capacity and insufficiently standardized preparedness among frontline staff.

In response, the proposed actions intentionally combine multiple and mutually reinforcing dimensions. Preventive communication and awareness-raising address the social norms that tolerate harassment and silence victims. Capacity-building actions target frontline actors—public transport staff, police officers and other relevant professionals—whose role is critical in shaping immediate responses and institutional credibility. Community empowerment measures, centered on bystander intervention approaches, aim to transform passive witnessing into collective responsibility for safety. System-level coordination is strengthened through the development and operationalization of a shared referral pathway, clarifying roles, responsibilities and escalation procedures across institutions. These measures are complemented by cultural and narrative interventions that promote gender equality, visibility and legitimacy

in public space, contributing to longer-term normative change.

The action package is strategically aligned with existing metropolitan and municipal policy frameworks. It directly contributes to the objectives of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy of Cluj-Napoca 2021–2030, particularly those related to the development of social services infrastructure, the improvement of living conditions for vulnerable groups, and the strengthening of coordinated, inter-institutional responses for victims of gender-based violence. At the same time, the actions are consistent with the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for the Cluj Metropolitan Area, which emphasizes inclusive, accessible and safe mobility for all users. By focusing on women's safety as an essential dimension of mobility quality, the Integrated Action Plan reinforces the understanding that mobility systems are not gender-neutral and that perceived and experienced safety directly influence transport choices, accessibility and participation in urban life.

While aligned with these broader strategic frameworks, the Integrated Action Plan maintains a clear and deliberate operational focus on women's safety in public transport as its primary entry point. This focus allows for targeted interventions with tangible and measurable impacts, while also generating transferable lessons for wider urban safety and gender equality policies.

Time-bound commitments are expressed as implementation windows relative to the adoption of the Integrated Action Plan, rather than fixed calendar dates.

This approach ensures flexibility in relation to administrative cycles, budgetary processes and institutional decision-making, while enabling systematic monitoring and evaluation. By structuring actions

around defined phases of implementation, the plan remains executable, resilient to contextual changes and capable of supporting continuous learning and adjustment throughout its lifecycle.

Action 1. Scale a metropolitan awareness and prevention campaign in public transportation

The action consists of rolling out, at metropolitan scale, a targeted communication intervention inside vehicles and at stops, aimed at clarifying what constitutes harassment and abuse in public transport, increasing visibility of institutional support options, and strengthening public understanding of safe response pathways.

Resources: The action requires a defined coordination core involving the Municipality, the public transportation company, the Cluj County Police, and CMA IDA as the strategic planning and facilitation body. Physical resources include access to means of transport and bus/tram stations as communication spaces (screens in vehicles where available, poster boards, station panels and other approved display surfaces), as well as technical specifications and placement permissions managed by the transport operator.

Deliverability: is ensured by planning the campaign production cycle to be completed within 8–12 weeks from formal launch (brief, production, approvals, deployment) and by setting a first deployment wave within 3–4 months after IAP adoption, followed by at least one reinforcement wave within 12 months (**Q1-Q4, 2026**)

Main outputs: The outputs are tangible and verifiable: a short audiovisual product (e.g., an animation film suitable for in-vehicle screens), a poster series and

adapted visual assets for stations, and an agreed dissemination plan specifying lines, vehicles and stops covered. Implementation evidence includes the number of transport units displaying the messages across the metropolitan network; the number of stations equipped with materials, and documented campaign reach through operator reporting and spot checks.

Results: This action contributes directly to the strategic objectives of (a) ensuring safer, gender-responsive public transportation, (b) strengthening protection and support pathways, and (c) increasing collective responsibility and public responsiveness. In the short term, the expected change is a measurable increase in passenger awareness and clarity regarding “what counts” as harassment and “what to do” when it occurs. Progress can be measured through brief intercept surveys in vehicles/stations (pre/post), digital feedback mechanisms, and institutional proxies such as increased informational requests, increased appropriately classified incident reports, and improved passenger confidence in response options.

Vision: The action supports the vision of creating safe and caring public transportation spaces across the Cluj Metropolitan Area by reducing normalization of harassment, strengthening perceived and actual institutional presence, and embedding women’s safety as a shared public standard rather than an individual burden.

Action 2. Specialised training for public transport drivers and controllers on prevention, safe intervention, documentation and victim-sensitive response in harassment/aggression situations

This action institutionalizes a structured competence baseline among frontline transport staff, recognizing their role as first responders in everyday mobility environments.

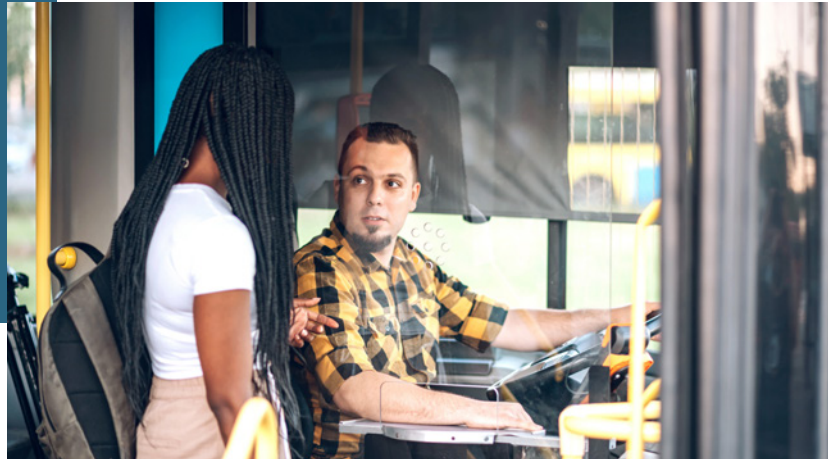
Resources: The action requires formal commitment from the transport operator’s leadership (Director-level endorsement), allocation of staff time for training participation, and provision of appropriate training space (operator facilities or municipal training venues). Human resources include a mixed trainer team combining GBV expertise (trauma-informed

and survivor-centred practice), operational transport management competence, and where relevant law enforcement input for procedural coherence. Training materials include role-play scripts, incident reporting templates, pocket-sized SOP cards, and guidance on evidence preservation and confidentiality.

Deliverability: (**Q4, 2025- Q1, 2026**).

Main outputs: Tangible outputs include the finalized training module adapted for drivers/controllers; a defined SOP package for staff (incident card, step-by-step protocol, contact lists); training completion

This action contributes to safer public transport and improved protection mechanisms by strengthening staff capability to recognize harassment patterns, respond safely, and trigger appropriate escalation and referral.



records (number of staff trained, cohorts delivered); and an internal operator note integrating the SOP into operational practice.

Results: This action contributes to safer public transport and improved protection mechanisms by strengthening staff capability to recognize harassment patterns, respond safely, and trigger appropriate escalation and referral. Short-term outcomes include increased staff self-efficacy (measured through pre/post knowledge and confidence tests), improved

consistency in incident documentation, increased preservation of relevant evidence (e.g., CCTV time-stamping requests), and clearer escalation behavior to police and support services.

Vision: The action advances the vision by embedding women's safety into the operational "infrastructure" of daily transport services—making safety predictable, procedurally supported and professionally delivered across the metropolitan network.

Action 3. Deliver specialised training for local police officers on victim-centred, trauma-informed response to harassment and aggression in public transportation settings, including evidence collection and coordination with transport staff.

This action addresses the enforcement and protection gap that arises when women do not report or when responses are inconsistent.

Resources: Key resources include leadership commitment from the Cluj County Police Inspectorate, designation of liaison officers for transport-related incidents, and operational time for police participation. Training requires GBV specialized expertise and scenario-based facilitation reflecting transport contexts (crowded vehicles, stations, high-flow environments) and coordination protocols with the transport operator. Material resources include standardized incident reporting fields aligned across institutions, templates for CCTV requests, and guidance for minimizing secondary victimization during first contact and statement-taking.

Deliverability: Q4, 2025.

Main outputs: Outputs include: police training sessions delivered; participant records; an agreed coordination note with the transport operator (contact

points, response thresholds, CCTV handling principles); and a common set of incident data fields to support monitoring.

Results: This action contributes to improved protection and support pathways and to institutional coordination. Short-term results include more consistent victim-centered responses, increased likelihood that reports are registered and processed appropriately, improved coordination with transport staff, and better quality of evidence capture in early stages (which is critical for accountability). Measurement can include pre/post training assessments, participant feedback, documented response protocols, and monitoring of response times or escalation consistency in selected pilot areas.

Vision: By professionalizing first response and strengthening trust, the action supports long-term change toward a metropolitan mobility system in which women perceive reporting as meaningful and institutional support as reliable.

Action 4. Deliver bystander trainings for students and women users of public transportation, strengthening safe intervention literacy and collective responsibility in everyday mobility contexts

This action extends safety from “institutional response” to “community capability,” acknowledging that many incidents occur in the presence of witnesses and that non-intervention is often driven by uncertainty and fear of escalation.

Resources: The action requires coordination by CMA IDA with universities and schools (for access to student cohorts), collaboration with civil society or specialized trainers to deliver evidence-based bystander methodologies (e.g., structured models for safe intervention), and access to venues suitable for interactive learning. Materials include scenario scripts adapted to Cluj transport realities, simple “what to do” guidance aligned with the referral pathway and evaluation tools for learning outcomes.

Deliverability: Q2, 2025- Q2, 2026.

Main outputs: Outputs include the delivered training sessions (count and attendance), a locally adapted bystander training toolkit, participant completion

confirmations, and an evaluation summary reporting changes in knowledge, confidence and intended behavior.

Results: The action contributes to objectives related to safer public transportation and strengthened collective responsibility. Short-term results include increased recognition of harassment dynamics, improved confidence to act safely, and increased likelihood of supportive behaviors (e.g., checking in with the victim, creating safe space, alerting staff/police appropriately). Measurement can rely on pre/post self-assessment instruments, scenario-based testing, and follow-up surveys assessing retained confidence and willingness to intervene.

Vision: The action supports the vision by shifting women’s safety from a private coping strategy to a shared public norm within metropolitan mobility—making solidarity, not silence, the default.

Action 5. Develop and institutionalise a metropolitan procedure and referral pathway for safety-threatening incidents affecting women in public transportation

This action creates the missing connective tissue between witnesses, victims, transport staff, police, and specialized services, ensuring predictability of roles and continuity of support.

Resources: Resources include an inter-institutional working group (transport operator, police, relevant social services including Metropolitan Center for Gender Equality and municipal social work, CMA IDA as facilitator, and selected NGOs with GBV expertise), legal/operational review capacity, and time allocated for drafting, validation and adoption. Core materials include a standardized incident severity classification, a formalized reporting flow, defined roles and responsibilities, standard communication steps, and trauma-informed principles. Physical resources include dissemination mechanisms (pocket SOP cards for staff, internal protocols, and accessible public-facing information aligned with the campaign).

Deliverability: Q4, 2025- Q2, 2026.

Main outputs: Outputs include: a formally agreed metropolitan referral pathway document; operational SOP tools (incident form, staff pocket card, contact lists, escalation matrix); and an implementation note specifying how institutions trigger and track referrals. Evidence of completion includes signed endorsement/minute approvals and dissemination records.

Results: This action directly contributes to improving protection and support for women and girls affected by incidents. Short-term results include reduced confusion during incidents, clearer responsibility allocation, improved continuity from reporting to support services, and stronger inter-institutional coordination. Measurement can include tracking the number of cases using the pathway, time-to-referral benchmarks in pilot cases, staff and victim feedback (anonymous, where appropriate), and qualitative review of coordination performance during periodic tabletop exercises.

Vision: The action supports the long-term vision by making safety and support systemic—turning ad hoc reactions into a coherent, victim-centred metropolitan response architecture.

Action 6. Implement a guided feminist tour and supporting documentation as a metropolitan gender-equality mainstreaming intervention linked to women's right to the city.

While not a transport-specific tool, this action reinforces the cultural and symbolic conditions that shape whether women are recognised as legitimate and visible city users.

Resources: Resources include coordination by CMA IDA. Financial resources are needed for research, content production and communication.

Deliverability: Q4, 2025- Q2, 2026.

Main outputs: Outputs include the documented collection of notable women and gender-relevant urban histories, a defined tour route and narrative script, and at least one delivered tour cycle with participation records.

Results: This action contributes primarily to mainstreaming gender equality and strengthening public understanding of women's lived experiences

in urban space, which indirectly supports safety by challenging normalization and exclusion. Short-term outcomes include increased public awareness, stronger legitimacy for gender-sensitive policy approaches, and improved stakeholder engagement around women's right to mobility and public space. Progress can be measured through participation levels, qualitative feedback, and visibility metrics (media/ social dissemination where appropriate).

Vision: The action strengthens the vision by anchoring women's safety and equality in a broader metropolitan narrative of inclusion, representation and belonging—supporting long-term cultural change that complements operational safety measures.

Action 7. Coordinate the metropolitan delivery of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" campaign as an annual prevention and visibility accelerator linked to women's safety in mobility

This action positions the metropolitan area as a consistent actor in international prevention cycles and reinforces continuity of awareness and service visibility.

Resources: Resources include a coordination lead (CMA IDA), institutional partners from the ULG (local authorities, transport operator, police, social services, NGOs, universities), communication capacity, and minimal funding for materials and event logistics. Integration with the transport environment requires access to campaign spaces (vehicles/stations) and alignment with the referral pathway messaging to ensure prevention content is paired with actionable support information.

Deliverability: is ensured by establishing the coordination calendar and partner commitments **at least 3 months in advance** of each annual campaign cycle, allowing consistent planning and risk-managed delivery (**Q4, 2025, Q4, 2026, Q4, 2027 etc.**).

Main outputs: Outputs include the annual metropolitan campaign plan, delivered events/activities (countable), dissemination materials, and documented partner engagement (co-hosting, endorsements, participation). Transport-linked outputs can include campaign messages displayed in vehicles/stations during the cycle.

Results: This action contributes to objectives related to prevention, awareness, empowerment and collective responsibility. Short-term results include increased visibility of support services, increased public literacy around GBV (including in mobility contexts), and stronger inter-institutional coordination through recurring joint delivery. Measurement can include participation counts, dissemination reach, and—where feasible—service contact trends during the campaign window (interpreted carefully and ethically).

Vision: The action supports the vision by institutionalizing prevention as a recurring metropolitan practice and by reinforcing a long-term shift toward safe, caring public transport spaces embedded in wider gender equality governance.

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

This section sets out the governance, operational, financial and monitoring arrangements that will enable the effective implementation of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) on women's safety in public transport across the Cluj Metropolitan Area. It provides a structured framework for delivery, clarifies institutional roles and responsibilities, and establishes mechanisms to ensure continuity, accountability, learning and impact beyond the lifetime of the URBACT network.

The implementation framework has been designed to reflect the integrated nature of the policy challenge addressed by the IAP. Women's safety in public transport is not a sectorial issue but one that sits at the intersection of mobility planning, public safety, social services, gender equality policies and urban governance. Accordingly, the framework combines political leadership, operational coordination, stakeholder engagement and evidence-based monitoring, ensuring that actions are not implemented in isolation but as part of a coherent metropolitan response.

4.1. Framework for delivery: roles, responsibilities and governance

The delivery of the IAP actions is based on a multi-level and multi-actor governance model, reflecting both the distribution of formal competences and the need for coordinated action across institutional boundaries.

At the political level, strategic oversight is ensured by the Cluj-Napoca Municipality, responsible for social policies, public safety and mobility. This role provides political legitimacy, facilitates inter-institutional coordination and supports the alignment of the IAP actions with municipal and metropolitan policy priorities, including the Integrated Urban Development Strategy and the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan.

At the metropolitan level, the Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association is the coordinator and facilitator of the IAP. CMA IDA



is responsible for overall coordination, convening partners, ensuring coherence between actions, supporting data collection and monitoring, and safeguarding the integrated and participatory approach developed through the URBACT Local Group (ULG). While CMA IDA does not exercise operational control over sectorial institutions, it plays a key role in aligning actions across local authorities and ensuring continuity beyond individual municipal mandates.

Operational responsibility for specific actions is distributed as follows. The public transport company (CTP Cluj-Napoca) is the primary implementing actor for actions related to awareness campaigns in vehicles and stations, staff training and operational procedures. The Local Police and the Cluj County Police Inspectorate are responsible for actions related to frontline response, victim-centered intervention and institutional cooperation within the referral pathway. Social services contribute to the development and implementation of referral mechanisms and victim support. Universities and student organizations support community-based actions, bystander training and participatory monitoring. Cultural institutions and civil society organizations contribute to gender equality mainstreaming actions, including public campaigns.

Decision-making during implementation follows a coordinated model. Strategic decisions are discussed within a steering group composed of CMA IDA, City Hall representatives and key institutional partners, while operational decisions are taken by the institutions responsible for each action, in line with agreed objectives and indicators. This structure ensures both flexibility and accountability.

4.2. Continuity of stakeholder engagement beyond the URBACT network

A central principle of the IAP is the continuation of the participatory governance model established through the URBACT Local Group. The ULG has functioned not only as a consultative body but as a space for co-production, testing and collective learning. This approach will be maintained beyond the formal end of the URBACT network.

Following the completion of the IAP, the ULG will transition into a permanent metropolitan working group on women's safety and gender equality in mobility. CMA IDA will continue to convene the group at regular intervals, with meetings focused on implementation progress, problem-solving, data review and adaptation of actions. The composition of the group will remain flexible, allowing for the inclusion of additional actors as new needs or opportunities arise.

This continued engagement is essential to prevent institutional fragmentation, ensure shared ownership of the actions and maintain a feedback loop between policy, practice and lived experience. It also supports the mainstreaming of gender-sensitive approaches into routine institutional practices, rather than limiting them to project-based interventions.

4.3. Resourcing and funding strategy

The implementation of the IAP actions relies on a combination of existing institutional resources and external funding opportunities. Some actions, such as the development of procedures, referral pathways and inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, primarily require staff time and organizational commitment rather than significant financial investment. Others, particularly training programs and communication campaigns, require dedicated financial resources.

Potential funding sources include municipal and metropolitan budgets, particularly those allocated to public transport, public safety, social services and gender equality initiatives. At national and European level, the actions are aligned with the objectives of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), especially in relation to social inclusion, capacity-building and gender equality, and with ERDF priorities related to sustainable mobility and urban resilience. Additional opportunities may arise through the European Urban Initiative, national funding programs or targeted calls addressing violence prevention and equality.

The IAP also encourages co-financing and partnerships, including collaboration with private sector actors (such as advertising companies), universities and civil society organizations, to maximize resources and ensure sustainability.

4.4. Overall timeline and sequencing of actions

The actions included in the IAP are sequenced to allow for progressive implementation and learning. Awareness-raising and capacity-building actions are prioritised in the early stages, as they create the enabling conditions for more complex system-level interventions. The development and institutionalization of the referral pathway follows, building on increased awareness, clearer roles and improved cooperation. Gender equality mainstreaming and cultural actions are implemented in parallel, reinforcing the normative and symbolic dimensions of safety.

4.5. Risk assessment and mitigation measures

Several risks have been identified in relation to the implementation of the IAP. These include potential resistance to change among frontline staff, insufficient institutional coordination, limited financial resources and the risk of actions remaining isolated or symbolic.

Mitigation measures include securing political endorsement at senior level, embedding actions within existing strategies such as SIDU and SUMP, ensuring continuous communication among partners, and maintaining the participatory governance model through the ULG. Training programs are designed to be practical and context-sensitive, reducing resistance by demonstrating relevance and benefits for daily work.

Description of risk	Type of risk (e.g. operational, financial, legal, staffing, technical, behavioural)	Categorisation (low, medium or high risk with regard to the successful implementation of your IAP)	Outline of steps which could be taken to mitigate the risk
Limited institutional buy-in or fluctuating political support may reduce commitment to the sustained implementation of actions, particularly those requiring inter-institutional coordination (e.g. referral pathway, staff trainings).	Institutional / political	Medium	Early and continuous engagement of decision-makers (Deputy Mayor, heads of services); formal endorsement of actions through administrative decisions or protocols; regular briefing notes demonstrating progress and public value; alignment with SIDU 2021–2030 and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan objectives to ensure strategic
Resistance to change or low engagement among frontline staff (public transport drivers, controllers, police officers) may limit the effectiveness of trainings and procedural implementation.	Behavioural / operational	Medium	Use of participatory and practice-oriented training methods; involvement of staff representatives in co-designing procedures; endorsement by institutional leadership; inclusion of trainings within mandatory professional development frameworks; follow-up sessions and peer learning.
Underreporting of harassment and safety-threatening incidents may persist, limiting the availability of data for monitoring and evaluation.	Behavioural / data-related	High	Complement administrative data with qualitative tools (surveys, focus groups, SafeCity-type mapping); awareness campaigns clarifying reporting options; visible institutional responses to reported incidents to build trust; anonymised reporting channels where possible.

ENHANCING WOMEN'S SAFETY IN METROPOLITAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Women's Safety in Urban Mobility: An Integrated Action Plan for Cluj Metropolitan Area

Description of risk	Type of risk (e.g. operational, financial, legal, staffing, technical, behavioural)	Categorisation (low, medium or high risk with regard to the successful implementation of your IAP)	Outline of steps which could be taken to mitigate the risk
Fragmentation or lack of coordination between institutions involved in the referral pathway could lead to delays, unclear responsibilities or inconsistent victim support.	Operational / institutional	Medium	Development and formal adoption of a written metropolitan referral procedure; designation of focal points in each institution; regular inter-institutional coordination meetings; testing and refinement of the referral pathway through pilot cases and simulations.
Insufficient or discontinuous funding may affect the scaling-up and sustainability of actions beyond the URBACT project period.	Financial	Medium	Diversification of funding sources (local budgets, ESF+, ERDF, national funds, private sponsorships); phased implementation allowing partial delivery; integration of actions into existing institutional budgets and programmes; early preparation of funding applications.
High staff turnover within key institutions (public transport company, police, local administrations) may undermine institutional memory and continuity.	Staffing / organisational	Medium	Institutionalisation of procedures and training materials; development of written guidelines and toolkits; training of trainers approach; inclusion of actions in induction programmes for new staff.
Public backlash or misinterpretation of gender equality and women's safety initiatives may generate resistance or negative media narratives.	Social / reputational	Low to medium	Clear, inclusive and rights-based communication; framing actions around safety, dignity and shared responsibility; proactive engagement with local media; involvement of community actors and civil society to strengthen legitimacy.

Description of risk	Type of risk (e.g. operational, financial, legal, staffing, technical, behavioural)	Categorisation (low, medium or high risk with regard to the successful implementation of your IAP)	Outline of steps which could be taken to mitigate the risk
Difficulties in measuring behavioural and perceptual change related to women's sense of safety may complicate evaluation efforts.	Monitoring & evaluation	Medium	Use of mixed-method evaluation approaches; baseline and follow-up surveys on perceived safety; proxy indicators (training coverage, reporting rates, institutional response times); qualitative narratives and case studies complementing quantitative data.

4.6. Monitoring, evaluation and learning framework

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) play a central role in the implementation framework, serving not only accountability purposes but also supporting learning, adaptation and long-term impact. The M&E framework is designed to capture both objective changes and subjective experiences, recognising that women's safety is shaped by perceptions, trust and everyday practices as much as by formal indicators.

Monitoring is structured across three complementary levels. At the output level, quantitative indicators track the implementation of actions, such as the number of awareness materials displayed, staff trained, bystander sessions delivered and procedures adopted. These indicators provide clear evidence of delivery and allow for basic progress tracking.

At the outcome level, indicators focus on short- and medium-term changes resulting from the actions. These include changes in reported incidents in public transport, increased use of reporting mechanisms, improved response times, and increased awareness among passengers and staff. Pre- and post-training assessments, feedback forms and operational data from transport and police services are used to assess these changes.

At the impact level, the evaluation focuses on longer-term shifts in women's perceptions of safety, trust in institutions and patterns of mobility. This includes qualitative methods such as surveys, focus groups and participatory assessments, building on the methodologies tested during the URBACT process. Particular attention is paid to capturing differences across age groups, locations and times of day.

Monitoring responsibilities are shared among implementing institutions, with CMA IDA playing a coordinating role in data aggregation, analysis and reporting. Regular monitoring reports are discussed within the ULG, ensuring transparency and collective reflection. Findings are also used to inform policy adjustments, support funding applications and communicate results to political decision-makers and the wider public.

By combining quantitative data, qualitative insights and participatory review, the M&E framework ensures that the IAP remains responsive, evidence-based and aligned with its overarching objective: transforming public transport into a safer, more caring and more inclusive space for women across the Cluj Metropolitan Area.

YOU DON'T LAY A FINGER ON A WOMAN, NOT EVEN WITH A FLOWER

Not with any inappropriate remark.
Not under any pretext.

A campaign
for women's safety
on public transport



If you have felt verbally, physically, or sexually assaulted on public transport, call the phone number

0374 868 600

FROM MONDAY TO FRIDAY,
BETWEEN 9 AM - 5 PM

For emergencies, call **0264 955**, Cluj-Napoca Local Police.