

# **Lot 3 - Evaluation of ROP interventions**

**2014 - 2020**

## **EVALUATION REPORT**

### **Theme 4. Supporting sustainable urban development**

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**DISCLAIMER**

This report is the result of an independent evaluation conducted by the consortium led by Lattanzio Advisory Spa (Lider Asociere) and Lattanzio Monitoring & Evaluation Srl (Associate 2), based on the contract concluded with the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, in September 2018.

The opinions expressed belong to the consortium and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Contracting Authority, respectively of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, nor of the Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020.

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## List of Abbreviations

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| AC         | The contracting authority  |
| ADR        | Agency for Regional Development (or plural)  |
| AM POR     | Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Program  |
| AMR        | The Romanian Municipalities Association  |
| AOR        | Association of Romanian Cities   |
| APL        | Local public administration  |
| AZM        | Association of Metropolitan Areas  |
| BE POR     | The Evaluation Office of the Regional Operational Program  |
| BS         | Contribution from the State Budget   |
| CAE        | Administrative Compliance and Eligibility  |
| CCE        | Evaluation Coordination Committee  |
| CCMAP      | The Coordination Committee for the Management of the Partnership Agreement   |
| CdS        | Task book  |
| CM POR     | Monitoring Committee of the Regional Operational Program   |
| CRESC      | Regional Committee for Strategic Evaluation and Correlation Framework Document for the Implementation of Sustainable Urban Development |
| DCI        | Supporting document  |
| DJ         | Major area of intervention (with reference to ROP 2007-2013)   |
| DMI        | Technical-Financial Evaluation   |
| ETF        | Cohesion Fund  |
| FC         | European Regional Development Fund   |
| FEDR       | European Structural and Investment Funds   |
| FESI       | Federation of metropolitan areas and urban agglomerations in Romania   |
| FEZEMAUR   | Decision of the Local Council (or plural)  |
| HCL        | Government decision  |
| HG         | National Institute of Statistics   |
| INS        | Question of evaluation   |
| ÎE         | Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (Joint Assistance for Project Support in the European Region)                 |
| JASPERS    | Intermediate Body  |
| OI         | Non-Governmental (or plural) organization  |
| ONG        | Sustainable Energy Action Plan   |
| PAED       | The Energy Efficiency Improvement Program  |
| PIEE       | Regional Development Plan  |
| PDR        | Investment priority  |
| PI         | The Multiannual Evaluation Plan  |
| PME        | National Program for Rural Development   |
| PNDR       | Human Capital Operational Program  |
| POCU       | Operational Procedure for Urban Development  |
| PODU       | Regional Operational Program   |
| POR        | The computer monitoring system for the Regional Operational  |
| POR MySMIS |  |

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
|           | Program   |
| PT        | The Technical Project   |
| PUG       | General Urbanism Plan   |
| SIDU      | Integrated Strategy for Urban Development   |
| SSDU/SSDL | Structure for Supporting Urban Development / Structure for Supporting Local Development |
| UAT       | Territorial Administrative Unit   |
| UE        | European Union  |
| UM        | Measure Unit  |

## 1. Executive summary

This report contains the results of the evaluation of Priority Axis 4 "Supporting sustainable urban development" within the ROP 2014-2020. In order to achieve this objective, interventions within the transport infrastructure, social infrastructure and educational infrastructure, and other interventions contributing to regional and local development were financed within the axis.

The executive summary presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations obtained and provides the synthesis of the answers to the 7 evaluation questions, obtained from the application of the methodology and instruments specific to such an evaluation.

### Findings

The need for PA 4 is justified by the challenges that cities face, such as lack of jobs, poor quality of housing, socio-spatial segregation, pollution, degradation of public spaces, etc. These issues have generally been addressed at the level of the sectoral municipalities, without taking into account the interdependencies between them.

Experiences at European and international level, but also those acquired locally in Romania so far, however, have shown that urban challenges - economic, social, demographic and environmental - are closely linked, success in urban development can be achieved only through an integrated approach. Sustainable urban development can only be achieved to the extent that measures regarding the physical renovation of urban areas will be combined with measures that promote education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection.

Support for urban development also took place during the financial year 2007-2013, through interventions in several DMIs that addressed common PA 4 themes and which contributed to the acquisition of an experience at LPA level, an experience that was capitalized during this exercise. However, even if at the level of some municipalities this experience has led to the possibility of preparing more projects within the current ROP, other municipalities still face a more limited capacity; the limitation is given either by the insufficient human resources or their level of training in project management, public procurement or programming..

The development of PIDU and SIDU were the result of challenging processes at the level of UAT, but that determined the identification of the needs at local level and their prioritization, as well as the identification of the sources of financing for these needs. Certain aspects such as "complementary" and "integrated" are only now understood. The approach of the integrated interventions of sustainable development promoted by this priority axis has built on the experience accumulated by the LPA during the previous programming exercise. It was found that the municipalities that had developed PIDU and SIDU had a better capacity to prepare projects, outsourcing these services to a lesser extent to consulting firms or designers; they learned to combine local budgets, European funds or from other international bodies. The PIDU / SIDU update created some difficulties in the process agreement, given the need for teams of

consultants and technicians who had to corroborate their contributions in order to produce good quality documents (mainly to cover all the necessary aspects and to have a feasible plan of action).

Regarding the current stage of the PA 4 implementation, it was found that only part of the projects submitted during the launched calls were contracted, others being under evaluation or contracting; of the projects under implementation, most are still in the elaboration stage of the technical documentation, the most advanced projects being those of the "unfinished" category, within which the works for the acquisition of works were launched. There was a particular interest for investments based on urban mobility plans (interventions in public transport network infrastructure and modern charging or traffic management systems), as compared to investments in social infrastructure and education; the municipalities have expressed a more modest interest for the interventions in the reconversion and refunctionalization of degraded, vacant or unused land and surfaces, although projects have been submitted that slightly exceeded the value of the allocation and aimed at modernizing the central areas of the cities. The contracts concluded until the evaluation was carried out showed that the investments aimed at the modernization / extension of the kindergartens, the construction of the tracks for cyclists are of interest for the local communities.

Regarding the logic of the intervention, it was found that the areas proposed for financing through the launched calls corresponded to the realities of the LPA, these submitting projects covering all the SOs targeted within the axis; the allocations for SO 1 proved insufficient to cover the demand for projects significantly, the demand for funding being double the available allocations. The extent to which the interventions will contribute to the achievement of the proposed objectives can be determined based on the indicators of the results at the program and project level. From the documentary analysis (checking the existing data in MySMIS) we found that there is little data (and only at project level), data that cannot allow a precise analysis; moreover, when extending the research to the level of funding applications, in some cases we did not identify the indicators there.

At the LPA level, a number of tools are available for financing investment needs that can ensure, based on a realistic prioritization, urban development. .

## Conclusions

1. Up to the deadline for collecting the data of 08.08.2019, 486 applications were submitted for financing in total value of the contribution of the non-reimbursable contribution of 13,630,266,343 lei, which represents 210.90% in relation to the value of the allocation of 6,464. 286,504 lei; 56 financing contracts were signed in total value of the contribution of the non-reimbursable contribution of 1,734,541,995, which represents 26.80% in relation to the value of the allocation. Payments were made for 7 ATUs in total amount of the contribution of the non-reimbursable contribution of 46,209,640 Euro. Of the total certified payments, 99.36% are payments under SO 4.1, the difference being payments under SO 4.3 - 0.03% and SO 4.4 - 0.61%.
2. Based on the existing data and analyzes based on the indicators available at the level of the analyzed applications, it is appreciated that the objectives of PA 4 (to reduce pollution

through the use of public transport, to improve the quality of urban life and to generate urban spaces, to convert degraded land into green spaces, physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized areas and related communities, the general improvement of the quality of the educational infrastructure concerned) will be achieved, and the indicators assumed through the ROP have a great potential to be achieved.

3. The effects of the projects, which will take place after the completion of the implementation, will mainly contribute to the increase of the quality of life, but also of the attractiveness of the cities, which creates the premises of their socio-economic development, by attracting the population and the entrepreneurs.
4. The logic of the intervention was largely verified in implementation (the typology of the actions to be financed was covering for the needs of the LPA, the eligible costs largely covered the investments, although not for all the beneficiaries; some of the beneficiaries who answered the questionnaire survey Highlighted and other local needs not covered by public funding (paved streets, intermodal centers, road crossings and parking lots, rehabilitation of existing playgrounds and green areas, new food markets, residential centers for the elderly, thermal utilities and indoor parking. city or heritage buildings with a destination other than sightseeing).
5. The launch of calls for "unfinished" type projects and projects in partnership with MDRAP had the effect of accelerating the degree of implementation of interventions within the axis. Interventions in transport and educational infrastructure have best responded to the needs of local communities.
6. The main limitation identified in the programming mechanism, and for which it is appreciated that solutions must be identified quickly, is that the preparation part of the projects has not been sufficiently correlated with the allocations. Thus, the effort of strategic planning and preparation of projects carried out by mayors must be exploited, in order to find alternative sources of financing not covered within the current ROP allocations. The aspect of complementarity of funds must be reinforced from the perspective of "certainty of financing", which is a precondition for substantiating local budgets.
7. Prioritization must bring to light the pressing priorities, focusing interventions on projects with added value for regional or subregional interest, of functional urban area. In this sense it must start from the PUG and from the vision of polycentric development in Romania.
8. The specialists in urban planning, spatial planning and the academic environment interviewed agree that the approach of interventions only at the level of territorial administrative units leads to projects that do not contribute to regional development, but to local development, without real impact on reducing regional disparities and that the current law of regional development does not respond to current development challenges. In this regard, integrated urban development interventions must also include the economic component, in order to stimulate socio-economic growth based on improved infrastructure conditions.
9. At the institutional level, the rethinking of the authority responsible for managing the interventions - by expanding the area of competences - would allow the realization of large investment projects with regional impact and not only local.
10. The level of sustainability of the urban development dimension of the actions promoted by the ROP is ensured by the selection criteria of the operations, by assuming responsibility in the implementation of SIDU, by the mechanisms created at the level of municipalities (creation of transport operators, maintenance contracts subordinated to each direction of

the ROP). to the mayoralty depending on the type of investment, the appropriate financial allocation).

11. The integrated approach promoted by PA 4 responds better to the needs of the communities than the sectoral approach, especially if it provides customized prioritization, evaluation and selection criteria for the types of interventions and local administrative capacity, and the necessary funding.
12. Within the ROP, complementarity is largely ensured, but the high investment needs of the LPA, demonstrated by the value of the projects prepared and accepted for funding, require finding alternative sources of financing not covered by the current allocations within the ROP, to ensure the integrated approach of the ROP. project package of municipalities.
13. Improving the administrative capacity at local level is probably the most important indirect effect of PA interventions 4. This indirect effect has created more synergies: new models of approach to financing the interventions have been created and developed, the degree of involvement and accountability has increased. of citizens and institutions, led to better quality projects and new services to the population, and implicitly to the increase of citizens' quality of life.

## Recommendations

- The interpretation of the eligibility criteria to be done in the permissive sense, ie what is not forbidden, must be considered permissible;
- It is necessary to develop a unitary, procedural and technical approach of the same topics between different PIs (eg ownership);
- Reintroducing the obligation of PT verification by the SSDU would reduce the possibility of presenting non-compliant or incomplete projects;
- Analyzing the opportunity to replace the current mechanism of calls; the replacement of calls with a deadline for submission with open calls, with the submission and selection of financing applications to stop when a certain threshold is reached, in relation to the financial allocation, an evaluation process carried out on the first-come-first-served basis;
- In the process of project selection, the assessment of the legality of the documents and their validity should not be the responsibility of the ADR but the responsibility of the LPA (according to the provisions of the current Applicants Guide, this task is the responsibility of the IB).
- Reallocate the related amounts from the budget allocated to AP4 with the amounts necessary to ensure all integrated and complementary interventions, as they have been proposed and accepted by DJ so that current interventions can generate future interventions of a higher complexity.
- A revision of the AU concept approach is required. Existing structures, such as ZM or ADI, can carry out AU functions, and can better ensure an integrative role of policies in the territory. Also, apart from their role in strategic planning, they could also play a role in project monitoring, a function that is currently somewhat deficient at AU level.
- Regional development policy and regional development plans must be directly substantiated through existing strategic documents in the field of spatial planning;

- Strategic planning efforts should be more focused on basic needs (which the spatial planning documents have identified), before any other development objective, which will not reach its purpose if these basic needs are not covered. ;
  - Prioritization of projects must be adapted by category of cities and municipalities, depending on their administrative capacity, their needs and resources;
  - Integrated territorial mechanisms should be designed taking into account the optimal level of "critical mass" needed to ensure the functionality of the urban and peri-urban area;
  - It is necessary for the programming mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the metropolitan areas, to capitalize on the experience of the growth poles in terms of SIDU achievement and a greater involvement of the SSDU in the support granted to the beneficiaries, even from the early stage of project preparation;
  - The integrated approach of urban development actions could use as an example other EU Member States, where it has been gradually developed, through various pilot experiences from the URBAN initiative (eg based on neighborhoods) and continued during the current period based on the previously activated participatory and partnership mechanisms;
  - In order to promote the polycentric approach it is necessary to have the strategic vision continuity at central and local government level;
  - The programming mechanisms to ensure: the support of urban, peri-urban, metropolitan areas and the financial support granted to these structures in SIDU, to capitalize on the experience of the growth poles and a greater involvement of SSDU in support of potential beneficiaries, even from the early stage of project preparation; updating the existing strategic documents, in the form of a single strategic document at the level of each targeted UAT, which contains both the mandatory elements of a strategy and the essential elements of a PMUD / PAED / PIEE / etc, but eliminating overlaps and replay, both within the framework the document as well as in the process of verification, evaluation of it;
- 
- Improvement of the mechanisms for prioritizing the projects and the role of the different structures involved in the urban development process in the different phases of project programming and selection. The planning process must consider the real needs that the community needs, ensuring first and foremost the basic needs, prioritizing in this regard;
  - Strengthening support measures for increasing administrative capacity at the UAT level, especially in the field of public procurement and project management, by raising awareness of the beneficiaries of the financing availability through POCA (PA 1 and PA 2), POAT (PA 1) and ROP (PA 12), but also dpdv programmatic. This should be a permanent priority, both at local level and especially at central level, where regional policies can be combined with those for administrative capacity support. Therefore, measures to support LPA capacity must be continued and strengthened.
  - A real process and as wide a consultation as possible in the phase of the development of the programmatic documents would allow a more effective process of identifying the needs of the communities but also of empowering as many members of the economic environment, civil society, the academic environment, etc. . which will contribute to a better sustainability of the interventions. In the same sense, the creation of partnerships can contribute, where the typology of the projects imposes it.
  - The signing of the contract at the SF / PT stage led to the shortening of the period of implementation of the ROP and entailed the extension of the duration of implementation by

additional acts. Since the beneficiaries start the procurement after contracting, the completion of these documents is a long process. Contracting could be carried out in different design phases and applicants could submit projects with completed PT (this would entail expenses without having the certainty of accepting funding) or it could reduce the deadline for beneficiaries to launch PT ( currently it is 6 months);

Other measures, including legislation. which may be of interest to the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration:

- Revising the regional development law, in the sense of redefining the administrative unit (so that the UAT is large enough to allow major investments to be made, and which may represent integrated investments with real strategic effect - continuation of the process started on 20.02.2013 ) or to modify the financial competences of the LPA (so that investments can be made outside the territory of UAT). Alternatively, AU at CJ level would provide the opportunity for investments for a larger coverage area;
- Implementation of integrated urban development plans, including by including the cultural reconversion of areas in creative neighborhoods, cultural centers, etc .;

## Lessons learned

### At the level of MA and IB ROP

- The good collaboration between MA and OI ROR led to the improvement of the eligibility conditions during the launch of the various calls (especially for the "unfinished" projects) in relation to the first launches in 2016 such as: acceptance of the provisional ownership title, including the expenses with the works. of infrastructure for utilities. A new mechanism for payment applications introduced in April 2013 (by accepting payment applications), with a substantial impact on the increase in absorption;
- Since there was no obligation to check PT at SSDU, most of the projects did not go through the SSDU filter and the beneficiaries did not benefit from consulting. Even though this modification of the procedures was seen by the beneficiaries as an opportunity to save time, it actually led to the submission of incomplete or incomplete projects. A preview of the projects developed by the AP4 beneficiaries by the SSDU, based on a schedule, would lead to the improvement of the quality of the projects and would reduce the duration of the evaluation process;
- The procedure and the prioritization criteria limited the communities in defining the local needs, the large number of criteria limited the chance to apply for funding. An appropriate prioritization procedure could be achieved through SSDU / SSDL, without these structures having local interference;
- Encouraging the participation of civil society through consultation meetings has helped the LPA take responsibility for project prioritization;
- Effective and proactive communication in relation with the beneficiaries, has led to the improvement of the quality of the projects;

### At the level of the beneficiaries

- The need to identify a more appropriate implementation mechanism, because the establishment of the AU as a rank 2 IB involved additional and unpaid work, and the key people in the municipality who were in conflict of interest in relation to the projects being submitted, could not participate in the establishment of the body. In their place, people with less expertise were appointed. In any case, by establishing the AU, it was understood the importance of prioritizing and maturing the projects, the existing risks;
- The process of project preparation in SIDU and PMUD must be collaborative, involving the economic environment, the citizen, and so on, and then involve AU, country, or be collaborative, where it is, using the flexibility to create criteria. , in the financial envelope;
- The updating of the strategic documents must be done during the course, when it is required and not ad-hoc, and together with all the factors that contributed to these documents in order to harmonize their opinions and visions (eg UAT Bistrița did so). The correlation between SIDU and PMUD was difficult due to the public procurement procedures (SIDU and PMUD were elaborated by different types of suppliers, the procurement was done in different stages, and the elaboration of the documentation began to be phased out. SIDU with PMUD scenarios, which were eventually realized and thought completely different.);
- The sub-criteria and the scoring method have determined the beneficiaries to learn that they must present well the objectives and the reasons on which the projects and the long-term results are based;
- A real consultation process, with the support of the community (civil society, economic agents), are success factors in the integrated urban planning, ensure sustainable interventions that contribute to the increase of the quality of life of the citizens, as a general objective of development;
- Some needs were identified as defective. For example. the favorable opinion of the MEN was received for certain schools to be restructured / closed and financed;
- The complexity of the projects within the PA 4 interventions requires a long period of time for their preparation, so that in the future the process must be started early, the issues being very sensitive (eg urban mobility by public transport);
- The lack of updated PUG, of the green space register, of the cadastral register and of the property documents were factors of failure in order to benefit from the interventions within the ROP;
- Selection of the designer and consultants at different stages (their capacity and experience) and failure to take into account all information (eg land ownership) are failure factors in project preparation.

### Good practice models

- ✓ LPA with good administrative capacity (quality and number of resources), continuously updates strategies and submits projects on time and of good quality (eg Bistrița Municipality)
  - The administrative capacity of the LPA in the North-West region led to the preparation of a large number of good quality projects, contracted in a short time, which started the activity and made the certified payments with the highest value in the country.

- ✓ Projects that include partnerships ensure a high degree of accountability of local structures and create the premises of sustainable projects
  - Iași City - close collaboration with the Iași Metropolitan Area Association
  - Bacău Municipality - close collaboration with the Bacău Local Development Agency but also internally by involving all the directions
  - Piatra Neamț Municipality - capitalizing on the transfer of know-how carried out by external consultants over time, determining the improvement of the internal staff competences
- ✓ A sustained process of promotion of interventions and of support through consultancy by SSDU / SSDL at local level, leads to the preparation of a high number of projects accepted for funding
  - The sustained promotion campaign in the NV region, for informing and raising the awareness of the potential beneficiaries of the financial opportunities within the AP 4 ROR, led to the highest number of applications at the country level.
- ✓ Use of virtual information (social networks) in defining the needs and strategy at the Baia Mare UAT level
- ✓ The initiative of the participatory budget by which the citizens are consulted in the way of spending the budgetary resources at local level in Cluj-Napoca, model "recently imported" by Oradea.

## 2. Existing situation

Priority axis 4 "Supporting sustainable urban development" aims at the following specific objectives:

- SO 4.1: Reducing carbon emissions in county resident municipalities, through investments based on sustainable urban mobility plans;
- SO 4.2: Reconversion and re-functionalization of degraded, vacant or unused lands and surfaces from county residence occupations;
- SO 4.3: Improving the physical, economic and social regeneration of the marginalized communities in the county residence municipalities in Romania;
- SO 4.4: Increasing the quality of the infrastructure in order to ensure increased access to early education and to support the participation of parents in the labor market;
- SO 4.5 Increasing the quality of the educational infrastructure relevant to the labor market.

The operations within PA 4 subscribe to the following thematic objectives (TO):

TO 4 - Supporting the transition to a low carbon economy in all sectors;

TO 6 - environmental conservation and protection and promoting the efficient use of resources;

TO 9 - promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination and

TO 10 - investments in education, training and professional training for skills and lifelong learning.

The typology of investments made within the axis covers the following fields of intervention:

032. Local access roads (new construction)

034. Other reconstructed or improved roads (highway, national, regional or local)

043. Infrastructure and promotion of clean urban transport (including equipment and rolling stock)
044. Intelligent transport systems (including introduction of demand management, charging systems and IT monitoring and control systems)
050. Educational infrastructure for vocational education and training
052. Infrastructure for education and childcare
055. Other types of infrastructure that contribute to regional and local development
083. Air quality measures
090. Tracks for cyclists and pedestrians

Until 08.08.2019, 7 calls for project proposals with a total budget value of 13,630,266,343 lei have been launched (of which 11,852,339,252 lei EU contribution and 1,777,927,091 lei national co-financing. ROP allocation for PA 4 is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Total PA allocations 4 (value in MEuro)**

| Axa Prioritara POR - AP4/ Prioritatea de investitii (PI) | Alocare POR 7 Regiuni | NE          | SE          | SM          | SV          | V           | NV          | C           |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AP4 Dezvoltare Urbana - total din care                   | 1,386,858,575         | 242,838,936 | 206,087,185 | 218,291,541 | 166,006,971 | 163,233,253 | 198,736,834 | 191,663,855 |
| FEDR   | 1,178,829,788         | 206,413,096 | 175,174,107 | 185,547,809 | 141,105,925 | 138,748,266 | 168,926,309 | 162,914,276 |
| Contrapartida nationala (BS+BL)                          | 208,028,787           | 36,425,840  | 30,913,078  | 32,743,732  | 24,901,046  | 24,484,987  | 29,810,525  | 28,749,579  |
| PI 4.1. Mobilitate urbana                                | 1,126,408,011         | 197,234,042 | 167,384,231 | 177,296,621 | 134,831,039 | 132,578,222 | 161,414,268 | 155,669,588 |
| FEDR   | 957,446,809           | 167,648,936 | 142,276,596 | 150,702,128 | 114,606,383 | 112,691,489 | 137,202,128 | 132,319,149 |
| Contrapartida nationala (BS+BL)                          | 168,961,202           | 29,585,106  | 25,107,635  | 26,594,493  | 20,224,656  | 19,886,733  | 24,212,140  | 23,350,439  |
| PI 4.2. Revitalizare urbana                              | 125,156,446           | 21,914,894  | 18,598,248  | 19,699,625  | 14,981,226  | 14,730,914  | 17,934,919  | 17,296,620  |
| FEDR   | 106,382,979           | 18,627,660  | 15,808,511  | 16,744,681  | 12,734,042  | 12,521,277  | 15,244,681  | 14,702,127  |
| Contrapartida nationala (BS+BL)                          | 18,773,467            | 3,287,234   | 2,789,737   | 2,954,944   | 2,247,184   | 2,209,637   | 2,690,238   | 2,594,493   |
| PI 4.3. Regenerare comunitati defavorizate               | 58,823,530            | 10,300,000  | 8,741,176   | 9,258,824   | 7,041,177   | 6,923,529   | 8,429,412   | 8,129,412   |
| FEDR   | 50,000,000            | 8,755,000   | 7,430,000   | 7,870,000   | 5,985,000   | 5,885,000   | 7,165,000   | 6,910,000   |
| Contrapartida nationala (BS+BL)                          | 8,823,530             | 1,545,000   | 1,311,176   | 1,388,824   | 1,056,177   | 1,038,529   | 1,264,412   | 1,219,412   |
| PI 4.4. Educatie APL                                     | 76,470,588            | 13,390,000  | 11,363,530  | 12,036,471  | 9,153,529   | 9,000,588   | 10,958,235  | 10,568,235  |
| FEDR   | 65,000,000            | 11,381,500  | 9,659,000   | 10,231,000  | 7,780,500   | 7,650,500   | 9,314,500   | 8,983,000   |
| Contrapartida nationala (BS+BL)                          | 11,470,588            | 2,008,500   | 1,704,530   | 1,805,471   | 1,373,029   | 1,350,088   | 1,643,735   | 1,585,235   |

Source: DCI PA 4 - Supporting sustainable development

During these calls 486 projects were submitted (of which 21 projects from the “unfinished” category and 15 projects in partnership). The distribution of projects by calls and their value is reflected in Table 3 and shows the highest allocation for interventions under OS 4.1, which, as will be shown in the case of the submitted applications, corresponds to the needs of the potential beneficiaries.

**Table 2 - Distribution of projects submitted within PA 4 by calls on 08.08.2019**

| CALL                                  | TOTAL NON-REFUNDABLE<br>BUDGET [lei] | TOTAL EU ELIGIBLE<br>BUDGET [lei] | TOTAL NATIONAL<br>COFINANCING [lei] |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ROP/2017/4/4.1/1                      | 9.127.136.475                        | 7.916.472.288                     | 1.210.664.187                       |
| ROP/2017/4/4.2/1                      | 617.788.361                          | 537.078.505                       | 80.709.857                          |
| ROP/2017/4/4.3/1                      | 340.994.335                          | 295.760.394                       | 45.233.941                          |
| ROP/2017/4/4.4/4.4/1                  | 306.634.895                          | 271.136.739                       | 35.498.157                          |
| ROP/2017/4/4.4/4.5/1                  | 321.478.790                          | 301.327.976                       | 20.150.814                          |
| ROP/2018/4/4.1/2/ unfinished projects | 885.910.704                          | 768.391.937                       | 117.518.766                         |
| ROP/2018/4/4.1/3/<br>in partnership   | 2.030.322.782                        | 1.762.171.413                     | 268.151.369                         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                          | <b>13.630.266.343</b>                | <b>11.852.339.252</b>             | <b>1.777.927.091</b>                |

Comparing with the allocations on each OS it is observed that the ratio between the ERDF + BS allocation of the submitted projects and the ERDF + BS POR allocation is on average at the axis level of 210.90%, which means that consistent needs will remain unmet and that the municipalities will need to be met. looking for other sources of funding (unless ROP allocations will be supplemented). The situation for each OS is presented in Table 4, below:

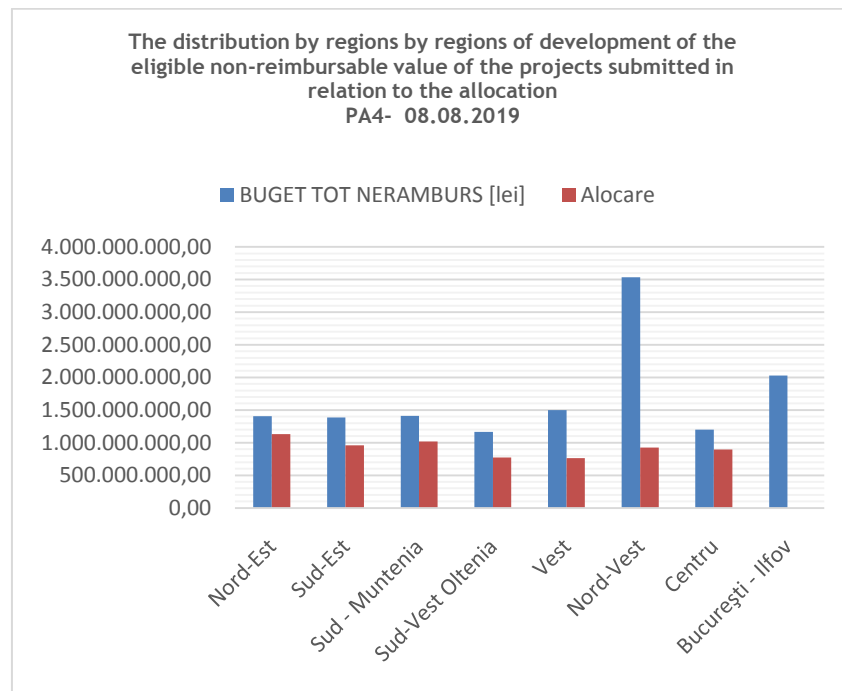
**Table 3 - The ratio between the ERDF value. BS. FEDER + BS applications submitted and allocations on 08.08.2019**

| Specific Objective                                   | Total value of projects<br>submitted (Total non-<br>refundable budget) [lei] | Allocation [lei]     | % value<br>projects<br>submitted from<br>the allocation |
|--|--|----------------------|---|
| SO 4.1. Urban mobility                               | 12.043.369.960   | 5.250.300.380        | 229,40%   |
| SO 4.2. Urban revitalization                         | 617.788.361  | 583.366.710          | 105,90%   |
| SO 4.3. Regeneration of<br>disadvantaged communities | 340.994.335  | 274.182.356          | 124,40%   |
| SO 4.4. APL education                                | 628.113.685  | 356.437.058          | 176,20%   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>13.630.266.343</b>  | <b>6.464.286.504</b> | <b>210.9%</b>   |

Source: data taken from MySMIS by the Evaluator

It is also noted that the interest for the different objectives is different, the highest interest was expressed for OS 4.1, at the opposite pole being the interest for OS 4.2.

The distribution of the projects submitted by development regions, in relation to the allocations is presented in the graph below:

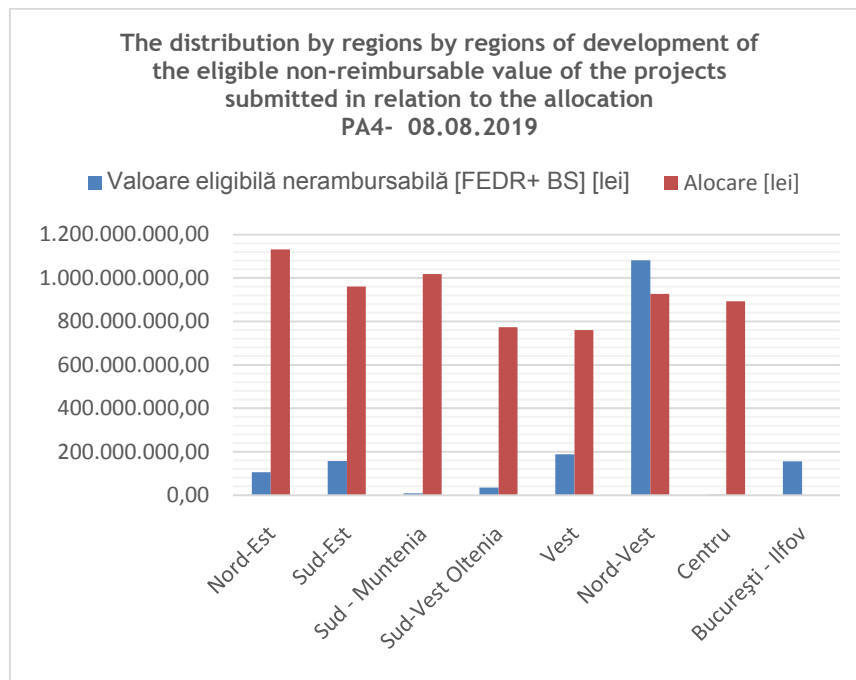


Source: data taken from MySMIS by the Evaluator

It is observed that within the NW development region, the value of the submitted applications is higher than the allocation more than 3 times; the ratio is 381.70%, as can be seen from Table 5 in Annex 10. The Bucharest-Ilfov region has no allocation but implements projects in partnership with MDRAP. And the West region has registered a high demand, the value of the total non-reimbursable budget of the submitted applications represents 196,70% compared to the allocation. A volume over allocation, but in a smaller proportion, registered by Center and South-Muntenia region, 134.10% respectively 138.40%. A possible explanation would be that in these regions investments have already been made in the 2007-2013 financial year.

**56 projects with a total eligible value of 1,770,108,765 lei were contracted**, out of which the total non-reimbursable value is 1,734,541,995 lei and the EU contribution is 1,504,592,451 lei. Of these, 16 are "unfinished" projects with a total non-reimbursable value of 718,429,686 lei, and 2 are partnership projects with a total non-reimbursable value of 156,042,372 lei.

The distribution of the projects submitted by development regions, in relation to the allocations is presented in the graph below:



Source: data taken from MySMIS by the Evaluator

This distribution shows that the region that submitted the most projects managed to contract a higher value than the allocated one, demonstrating a very good administrative capacity and possibly a good quality of the submitted projects, which facilitated a more evaluation and contracting process. accelerated. At the opposite pole, as for the submitted applications, are the regions Center and South-Muntenia with 0.30%, respectively 0.80% total non-refundable value related to the allocation.

Regarding the situation of the indicators, they are not registered in MySMIS. In the ROP, the following performance indicators (target 2023) are considered at the PA 4 level:

**CO15 Urban transport - Total length or new lines or tram improvements or subway: 50 km**

**1K2 - Contracted operations for public and non-motorized transport: 50 operations**

**1K3 - Total length of new or improved tram / and subway lines according to signed contracts: 50 operations**

**1S11- Operations implemented for public and non-motorized transport: 50 operations**

At the OS level, performance and result indicators are provided. Both types of indicators have been analyzed for 40 funding applications, to make an estimate as to the extent to which the outcome indicators will be achieved. It was found that the indicators were not included in all funding applications; the situation at the level of the applications, highlighted on each OS and by type of indicator, is presented in Annex 11 and a data analysis was provided in the analysis of the data within the EQ 1.

### 3. The stages of the study

#### a). Specific literature

The list of the specialized literature covered is grouped into: national, EU and international and is set out in Annex 1. The analysed documents have taken into account the topics addressed and the relevance for the evaluation questions.

##### In connection with the logic of interventions

The specialized literature analyses the nature of the relationship between the extension of the process of urbanization on new and increasing areas and areas, the efforts to increase the standard of living for the inhabitants of the communities and investors, in a sustainable way, friendly with the environment and with the social dynamics. The urbanization and the increase of the standard of living are viewed from the perspective of the orientation towards the conservation of the environment for future generations, respecting the past by preserving the specificity of the communities (at the level of education, heritage and culture).

Several studies contain **examples of good practices**, including the ones below, on the impact of urban development on the living standards of urban communities, which are regarded as the main drivers of growth in any economy, determining that investments in urban areas dynamics to have a positive effect at the level of the entire development region, as well as at national level, according to the report "Competitive Cities: Remodelling the economic geography of Romania" of the World Bank:

- The Study "Assessing the Performance of Integrated Territorial and Urban Strategies: Challenges, emerging approaches and options for the future" ,
- The Study "Urban Development in the EU: 50 Projects Supported by The European Regional Development Fund During The 2007-13 Period" ,
- The Study "Sustainable Urban Development Implementation Praxis of Art 8" (n°2009.ce.16.0.at.109) ,
- The Study "New Concepts and Tools for Sustainable Urban Development in 2014-2020" Synthesis Report September 2015 ,

**These studies aimed at analyzing the increasing competitiveness of urban communities** using complex macro economic indicators, correlated with their level of development and general economic growth and analyzed the following aspects:

- the level of physical, economic and social revitalization in the urban environment;
- the degree of regeneration and decontamination of the decommissioned industrial lands;
- the degree of urban mobility correlated with the degree of connectivity between the strongly crowded urban spaces and with the degree of reduction of noise pollution, carbon dioxide emissions and greenhouse gases;
- the level of education of the population in urban communities.

The analysis showed that there is a direct correlation between urban development and living standards. Examples: in Belgium (the Brussels case study) and France (the Toulouse case study), urban development has been shown to be a driver of living standards, in Spain (the Malaga case study) and Cyprus (the Nicosia case study). the level of living against the background of obtaining income (independently, sectorially, from culture) has determined the urban development of those areas.

MDRAP conducted counterfactual analyses in 2015 to measure the impact of the ROP 2007-2013 interventions. Regarding DMI in connection with PA 4 of the ROP 2014-2020, respectively DMI 1.1 - Urban development poles, the study highlighted: in the cities participating in the program, the quality of life increased and new jobs were created, and urban centres who carried out Regio projects became more attractive and attracted more immigrants than those who did not participate in the program.

**The Urban Agenda of the European Union**, launched under the Amsterdam Pact in May 2016, is a new way of connecting. Member States, cities, the European Commission and other stakeholders work together in 12 partnerships, inviting mass cities with organizations supporting cities such as URBACT. In Romania, CIVINET - National Network for the cities of Romania and the areas where the Romanian language is used, in order to share the experience and best practices in the development and implementation of sustainable urban mobility strategies, policies and operations. measures in this area. The network is open to local authorities (municipalities, county councils, metropolitan areas, ministries), but also to associations, research centers, universities and other organizations (both public and private), which have an interest in urban transport. CIVINET is the only network in Romania that aims to promote the CIVITAS approach in the field of integrated sustainable mobility and its principles.

The paper ESPON, the Working Paper "Indicators for integrated territorial and urban development", published in 2018, presents the main trends in finding effective methods of assessing the impact of integrated urban development measures as a whole across several sectors of intervention, The European Commission outlining three possible scenarios:

- The impact measured by evaluating the efficiency of the sectorial investments;
- Evaluation of the intervention logic: if the various investment components are synergistic, the integrated character will be strengthened;
- Impact assessment by counterfactual methods

ESPON highlights the limitations of the sectorial approach in analyzing the impact of integrated interventions and encourages the adoption of indicators that will be able to measure the impact of investments at territorial development policy level (as in the ESPON INTERCO pilot projects (indicators on net migration rate and population living) 50 km from the urban center where the investments were made), ESPON KITCASP (indicators such as the natural change of the population, the increase of the stock of new housing on the total housing, the change of the number of passengers depending on the means of transport) and ESPON SIESTA (indicator regarding long-term unemployment as a share of total unemployed persons)).

### In connection with the sustainability of the interventions

Regulation (EU) no. 1301/2013 on the European Fund for Sustainable Development (ERDF) states, in Article 7, that at least 5% of the ERDF allocation for growth and investments in jobs should be allocated at the level of each Member State for integrated urban development. Overall, Romania has allocated the highest percentage of ERDF funds for the 2014-2020 programming period for sustainable urban development among all 28 Member States.

- The case studies analyzed showed that there is a direct correlation between urban development and living standards.
- Integrated urban planning is a process that involves the combination of sector-specific planning efforts;
- The Urban Mobility Partnership can be a support tool for better legislation, better financing and better knowledge under a coherent development vision.

### **b) Data collection**

Data collection was carried out using the methods mentioned in the SME adapted to the existing situation and consisted in obtaining the information needed to answer the evaluation questions, namely:

EQ 1. Given the current state of implementation of PA 4, to what extent will the ROP promote / contribute to sustainable urban development in Romania by:

- urban mobility plans, use of public transport?
- improving the quality of urban life and generating urban spaces?
- conversion of degraded land into green spaces?
- physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized areas and communities related?
- a general improvement of the quality of the educational infrastructure concerned?

EQ 2. Has the intervention logic of the Priority Axis been verified in implementation? If not, which elements need improvement (eg expected results, implementation mechanisms / types of interventions)? Are there examples of good practices in terms of interventions to promote urban development and what are their main features, which can be taken up in the future?

EQ 3. What programming and selection mechanisms have proven to be effective and for what reason? What are the lessons learned from the perspective of the PA implementation strategy? What types of interventions / implementation mechanisms have proven to be effective and why?

EQ 4. What is the level of sustainability of the actions promoted by the ROP?

EQ 5. Does the integrated approach promoted by this priority axis lead to better results compared to the sectoral approach? In practice (in the implementation of operations) is complementarity guaranteed, ie the integrated approach of the interventions? To what extent is complementarity with other funding sources ensured (eg European, national, local, etc.)?

EQ 6. Do these complementarities create synergies? What should be improved to achieve synergies and increase the impact of integrated interventions?

EQ 7.Has it contributed so far and will the approach promoted through this priority axis contribute to improving the administrative capacity at local level in the future? (change of organizational culture, cooperation with civil society, economic environment, NGOs, etc.)

In Annex 2, the collected data, the sources, the instrument used, in relation to each HEI are detailed. In essence, the collected data used the following quantitative sources:

- from the MySMIS computerized system;
- from SIDU;
- from the case studies;
- from the funding applications;
- from reports or situations from ADR.
- The qualitative data consisted of the following information:
- The degree of involvement of the actors in the territory in the preparation of projects;
- Strategic / priority character of the submitted projects;
- The degree of internal consistency of the documents submitted by the beneficiaries;
- Compliance / eligibility / selection criteria that directly or indirectly refer to the integrated approach;
- The degree of complementarity with other sources of financing;
- The degree of involvement of the actors in the territory in the preparation of SIDU / PMUD;
- Degree of improvement of administrative capacity

Primary data (collected by the evaluator from the actors related to the program) and secondary data (from the specialized literature or collected by third parties - ROP management documents) were used.

The data collection started with the office research and the collection of the information considered relevant for the subsequent analysis of the secondary data. This information was qualitative and quantitative in nature.

The process continued with the retrieval of existing data in the MDRAP MySMIS system (see Annex 3). These data constituted the main source of information for analysis at national and regional level: the financial allocations for each call, the number and value of the submitted projects, the number and value of the contracted projects. As for the target achievement and outcome indicators, they were not uploaded to MySMIS, which is why the indicators were taken from a random sample of funding applications.

**The deadline for the database initially agreed with BE ROP was 31.03.2019. However, during the evaluation process, it was found that significant progress was made, so it was preferred to take over and analyze a more recent MySMIS database, respectively on 08.08.2019.**

Other information was obtained from the processing of data from the questionnaires for beneficiaries launched via e-mail (see Annex 4) and from the group discussions conducted with the beneficiaries or relevant actors within the focus groups organized both regionally (a focus

group). for the beneficiaries from the NV region and a focus group for the beneficiaries from the NE region, as well as a group interview with the relevant actors (stakeholders) organized at national level (see reports and data collected in Annex 5.) Due to the small number of participants, this focus group was finally considered a group meeting and the conclusions were also included in the category of data from privileged witnesses.

Following the field visits to all the seven ADRs in the regions eligible for PA 4, qualitative data were obtained following the group or individual interviews with the direct personnel involved in the implementation of the ROP: service heads and department heads, directors and OI directors. The organization and position of the interviewees are included in Annex 6. A survey was conducted within the OI on the basis of a questionnaire based on a semi-open grid (see Annex 7).

The field visits to the beneficiaries provided qualitative information regarding the process of carrying out the strategies, the prioritization criteria of the projects, the way of preparing the projects, the process of contracting and implementing the projects. Based on a multicriteria analysis, 4 case studies were selected. Detailed methodology, summary of reports and reports are included in Annex 8.

Throughout the entire process of data collection, it was sought to allow the information to express conclusions and assumptions based on existing data, even if the projects were not finalized and, as a result, had not yet produced effects. The aim was to identify those information that would lead to signals / trends / practices that can provide answers to the evaluation questions.

Data were collected regarding the promotion events within PA 4 organized by RDA and UAT (number and types of events, number of participants).

### c) Description of the methodology

#### **Strategy for approaching the evaluation process**

Given that all projects under PA 4 are in the process of being made investments and none is completed, the evaluation focused in particular on those elements that will lead to the verification of the logic of the interventions (ie the verification of how the proposed operations within the framework are The PA responds to the needs of the communities, verifying the way of implementing the interventions, determining the premises for achieving the results), and identifying the success or failure factors, in order to use the lessons learned and to elaborate recommendations for the current and / or future programming period.

The methods and techniques for collecting primary and secondary data used and the collection tools are listed below.

Semi-structured questionnaire with closed and open answers. It was sought to consult stakeholders through this instrument because it was considered to allow obtaining an optimal number of information within a reasonable time. The questionnaire was launched by e-mail to 39 eligible beneficiaries questionnaires, the receipt was verified and, where appropriate, it was relayed. 29 completed questionnaires were received, from all 22 beneficiaries and an

additional number of questionnaires from 7 ATUs; it is appreciated that the supplementary answers come from the beneficiaries with the request for financing during the evaluation / pre-contracting / contracted stage between 08.08-14.08.2019, the date on which the last questionnaire was received, or beneficiaries whose data were not yet registered in system.<sup>1</sup>

The questions were aimed at obtaining information on the following aspects (questionnaire items):

- justifying the intervention of sustainable urban development;
  - are the projects complementary and integrated with other initiatives promoted by the beneficiary?
  - are the projects complementary to other initiatives existing at county or regional level promoted by other institutions?
  - do the projects derive from the experience of the 2007-2013 programming period?
- elaborare elaboration and submission;
  - To what extent have the local actors contributed to defining the needs and strategy of the municipality?
  - if the projects selected to be submitted within AP4 have a truly priority character for the sustainable urban development of the municipality?
  - how were the projects developed?
  - if the documentation related to the calls for project proposals was clear?
  - if there were procedural problems during the preparation phase?
- efectul the expected leverage effect;
  - appreciation of the leverage effect (contribution to development) of the Axis 4 experience on the development of the strategic planning capacity of the municipal administration?
  - appreciation of the leverage effect of the Axis 4 experience on developing the capacity for programming and delivery of public services locally?

#### Focus groups

By applying this tool, the aim was to obtain the beneficiaries' opinions regarding the processes under way until the moment of the evaluation, to identify the current stage of implementation of the projects, internal and external factors (negative and positive) that condition the achievement of the estimated results, lessons learned. Each focus group also contained a brainstorming session in which participants spoke about the problems identified, grouped on the different stages of the processes they went through and made proposals to solve them.

Two regional focus groups were organized: one in the NV region, in order to formulate a good practice model, considering that the region is in first place in the number of applications submitted, contracted and of the payments made; and one in the NE region, where at 31.03.2019, there was a lower progress, and where we considered that we can identify with the help of the beneficiaries, the stakeholders, SSDU / SSDL and OI, the elements that prevented the progress and we will be able to put together the formula proposals to improve the implementation.

The summary of the discussions and the conclusions of the focus groups are presented in Annex 5.

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<sup>1</sup> On 08.08.2019, in the MySMIS 22 of UAT were identified with signed contracts, additional contracts signed contracts and contracts signed with modifications;

### **Methodologies based on privileged witnesses**

Individual and group interviews were conducted with the experts and / or the OI ROP Directors within the RDA, with representatives of the target group, but also with representatives of the social partners or beneficiaries (in-depth interviews for the analysis of case studies).

The following were achieved:

- 4 in-depth group interviews in case studies;
- 15 face-to-face group interviews and
- 4 individual interviews face-to-face

See details about the participants, the topics covered and the conclusions in Annex 9 and Annex 6. The privileged witnesses were considered MDRAP, ADR, in their capacity as Intermediate Body, Association of Municipalities of Romania, Urbasofia, National Institute for Research and Development in Construction, Urbanism and Sustainable Territorial Development "URBAN-INCERC".

### **Case Studies**

For a more detailed analysis, it was considered necessary to carry out case studies that provide in particular qualitative data, which were not found in the sources investigated and presented previously, but also to understand the existing context at the project level and to establish the significant effects (potential of fi) obtained from the project. The consultation with the MA ROP allowed the identification of the projects for the case studies, 4 projects selected by the Evaluator based on the methodology and criteria detailed in Annex 8; these are the municipalities: Galați, Miercurea Ciuc, Oradea and Târgoviște. The methodology of selection of the case studies is based on the situation revealed in the database on 31.03.2019; for this reason, the data with the progress of implementation at this date were provided.

### **Mono-varied and bi-varied analysis**

The existing data in MySMIS were analyzed, thus obtaining information at county, region, ratio between the financial allocation available at PA level and at OS level in relation to the demand (the value of the projects submitted or contracted). Different distributions were calculated and the weight of the different variables in the total PA and OS (payment requests, payments made).

The main data used from the MySMIS database, the projects chapter, were: the SMIS code, the region, the locality, the type of the beneficiary, the date of the application for financing, the total budget, if the contract was signed; in the chapter on project and result indicators we found a small number of data.

### **Matrix analysis. External coherence matrix**

To verify the logic of the intervention, multiple matrices were used for the analysis of the project portfolio, by development regions, the analysis of the correspondences between the submitted projects and the contracted projects, or the degree of determination / causality between the various variables analyzed.

The degree of synergy / complementarity of the ROP of the different types of intervention within PA 4 was verified with other programs available within the POIMM, POCU, POCA, PNDR

or that were available in the current URABN exercise using the external and internal coherence matrix (other interventions from other PAs within the ROP). See Annex 10.

#### **Impact analysis based on theory**

The validity of the program theory was analyzed to verify the intervention logic, based on the types of interventions funded, of the context data corroborated with the quantitative data obtained.

#### **d) Limitations and constraints**

Only one limitation was encountered during the evaluation, namely::

Lack, inconsistency or difficult aggregation of relevant data (eg: number of applications submitted, indicators, project progress data). The indicators have not been identified in MySMIS.

#### Solution

Alternative solutions were sought, for the validation and / or completion of the information collected (ie: analysis of financing applications).

## **4. Analysis and interpretation**

#### **a) Data collected**

The table below summarizes the data collected based on the methodology and instruments described above and data that were the basis of the analyzes within the evaluation.

**Table 4 - Summary of data collected**

| No. | Methods / techniques       | Details   |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 1.  | Documentary analysis       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The database containing the portfolio of projects submitted, contracted and the certified payments based on which matrices for the regional distribution, on the OS, on the beneficiaries were taken from MySMIS;</li> <li>▪ 40 financing applications were analyzed to complete the lack of information in MySMIS (achievement and result indicators);</li> <li>▪ The SIDU, DJ, the negotiation agreements at regional level, the operational procedure for urban development, for the preparation of the case studies and the documentation of the mechanisms of programming, selection, monitoring of the operations were studied.</li> </ul> |
| 2.  | Semi-structured interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviews were conducted with the main authorities involved in the management and implementation of PA 4</li> </ul>   |

|    |                         |  |
|----|-------------------------|--|
|    |                         | <p>(MA ROP, OI ADR, OI UAT) and with key actors at sectoral level (National Institute for Research on Development in Construction, Urbanism and Sustainable Territorial Development "URBAN- INCERC ") and with other actors with experience in LPA and consulting: LAG Association Târgoviște Equal Opportunities, Urbasofia, ASEVAL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were conducted both individual and group interviews, and face-to-face and telephone interviews;</li> <li>Number of interviews: 23.</li> </ul> |
| 3. | Unstructured Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free discussions, facilitated by brainstorming techniques were conducted with: The Romanian Cities Association. The Romanian Municipalities Association was invited to participate in the focus group / group interview but although expressing the telephone interest was not available.</li> </ul>  |
| 4. | Case studies            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 case studies were selected in the following UAT: Oradea, Miercurea-Ciuc, Târgoviște, Galați;</li> <li>The selection methodology was based on 2 criteria: the degree of contracting and the degree of integration of the interventions according to the existing portfolio of projects on 31.03.2019;</li> <li>In-depth interviews were conducted, face to face with the representatives of the 4 UAT.</li> </ul>  |
| 5. | Survey                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaires were sent to all 39 eligible beneficiaries;</li> <li>29 questionnaires were received, for all 22 beneficiaries contracted until 08.08.2019, plus a number of 7 beneficiaries, who were probably in pre-contracting;</li> <li>All 29 questionnaires were analyzed.</li> </ul>   |
| 6. | Focus group             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 regional focus groups were organized, in the NV region and in the NE region;</li> <li>Each focus group also had a brainstorming session;</li> <li>Within the focus group of the NV region, a panel of experts was created;</li> <li>Number of participants: 17.</li> </ul>  |

## b) Data analysis

**EQ 1. Given the current state of implementation of PA 4, to what extent will the ROP promote / contribute to sustainable urban development in Romania by:**

- urban mobility plans, use of public transport?
- improving the quality of urban life and generating urban spaces?
- conversion of degraded land into green spaces?
- physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized areas and communities related?
- a general improvement of the quality of the educational infrastructure concerned?

The documentary analysis shows that the municipalities from the SW, SM and West regions negotiated the submission of projects only for certain specific objectives, which reduces the integrated character of the potentially financable projects from the ROP, PA 4. In these regions it was possible to renegotiate the allocations according to the current priorities while in the other regions this was not possible and therefore the initial allocation is mentioned.

As can be seen from the MySMIS query, which is presented in Table 3 on page 15, there is a good degree of coverage of allocations on all SOs, with significant differences between SOs.

In relation to the allocations, projects were submitted representing, in relation to the value of the allocations: 229.4% for OS 4.1 "Urban mobility", 105.9% for SO 4.2 "Urban revitalization", 124.4% for SO 4.3 "Regeneration of the disadvantaged community", 176, 2% for SO 4.4.

Regarding the value of the contracts in relation to the allocations on specific objectives, we have the following situation: on OS4.1, the coverage degree is 30.68%, on SO 4.2 there were no contracts concluded at the date of evaluation, on SO 4.3 the coverage degree is 8%, on SO 4.4 and 4.5, cumulatively, we have a coverage of 28.53%.

It can be seen that the interventions financed under SO 4.1 will best contribute to sustainable urban development, while, at the opposite end, the operations financed under SO 4.2 are slightly higher than the allocations. The reason for which there was a low interest for the interventions in SO 4.2, could be due to a series of limitations of the eligibility criteria (the minimum of the area subject to the intervention, the maximum of the built area accepted during the intervention, the need for the existence of the "Register of green spaces").

As no progress or result indicators were identified in MySMIS, in order to have an image - even partial - of the target indicators, the indicators were taken from 40 funding applications from the randomly selected contracted projects. I found that the indicators were not specified in some financing applications, and I predicted the number of requests from which the values for the respective indicators were taken. This situation is set out in Annex 11 and reproduced below.

#### **SO 4.1 Urban Mobility**

| Indicators  | Target 2023     | Target estimated by the analyzed financing applications | Potential degree of achievement towards the final target |
|---|-----------------|---|--|
| <b>Immediate achievement</b>  |                 |   |  |
| 1S11 Operations implemented for public and non-motorized transport                                      | 50              | 24  | 48%  |
| 1S46 Urban development: Population living in areas with integrated urban development strategies         | 5.143.438 pers. | 1.068.042 pers.   | 20,77%   |
| 1K3 Urban transport: the total length of new or improved tram and subway lines                          | 50 km           | 13,52 km  | 27%  |
| 1S12 Operations implemented to reduce CO2 emissions (other than for public and non-motorized transport) | 20              | 3   | 15%  |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Result</b>   |  |   |   |
| 1S9 Passengers transported in urban public transport in Romania |  | - | - |
| 1S10 GHG emissions from road transport                          |  | - | - |

For the 40 financing applications analyzed, the most advanced indicator is the one regarding the number of operations implemented for public and non-motorized transport (indicator identified in 24 applications). This indicator is part of the performance framework, and the intermediate target for 2018 was 25 operations, a target that will be achieved 96% by implementing according to estimates based on the studied projects.

At the same time, the value of the 56 existing contracts on 08.08.2019 was less than 1/3 of the total allocation).

The other indicators of immediate realization have much lower cumulative values, but, as a general remark, given the high level of overwriting of funding applications and the progress made in the last year in the evaluation-selection-contracting process, there is a great potential. to achieve a good degree of achievement of the program indicators, while at the same time more attention is needed to the absorption rate, taking into account the contracted value until the moment of evaluation.

In particular, the indicator that measures the total length of the new or improved tram and subway lines, which is also included in the performance framework, is far from reaching its intermediate target, of 25 km in 2018, by implementing the studied projects, the degree of achievement being only 54%. Therefore, it is necessary, as mentioned above, for a rapid contracting of the submitted projects, in order to allow the timely implementation of the projects, under conditions as close as possible to the situation estimated through projects, in order not to jeopardize the achievement of the indicators.

The analysis cannot be performed for the outcome indicators, because they were not included in the financing applications and were not reported in SMIS.

#### SO 4.2 Urban revitalization

| Indicators  | Target 2023 | Target estimated by the analyzed financing applications | Potential degree of achievement towards the final target |
|---|-------------|---|--|
| <b>Immediate achievement</b>                          |             |   |  |
| CO38 Open space created or refurbished in urban areas | 30.000      | 7.398,98 mp   | 24,66%   |
| <b>Result</b>   |             |   |  |
| IS13 Green spaces in the municipalities               | 26 mp/loc.  | -   | -  |

#### OS 4.3 Regeneration of the disadvantaged community

| Indicators  | Target 2023 | Target estimated by the analyzed financing applications | Potential degree of achievement towards the final target |
|---|-------------|---|--|
| <b>Immediate achievement</b>  |             |   |  |
| IS15 Population living in the areas with interventions in the physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized communities in county residence municipalities | 87.500      | 4.328 pers.   | 5%   |
| CO39 Public or commercial buildings built or renovated in urban areas   | 20.000      | 15.408,01 mp  | 77%  |
| <b>Result</b>   |             |   |  |
| IS14 Population at risk of poverty and social exclusion from marginalized areas of county residence municipalities  | 80.607      | -   | -  |

Given the very low cumulative value of the first indicator, at the level of the studied projects and in conjunction with the rather high level of the second indicator, we can deduce that most interventions take place in areas with a low population density. This raises a question mark on the realism of setting the program target.

Regarding the outcome indicators, no information was found.

If we look at the degree of coverage of the allocation with financing applications and with contracted projects, the modest values determine us to have a rather pessimistic prognosis regarding the achievement of the program targets for IS15 and CO38.

#### OS 4.4 Pre-preschool and preschool education

| Indicators   | Target 2023 | Target estimated by the analyzed financing applications | Potential degree of achievement towards the final target |
|--|-------------|---|--|
| <b>Immediate achievement</b>   |             |   |  |
| IS19 The capacity of the educational infrastructure that benefits from support (pre-preschool education) | 5000 pers.  | 5.585 pers.   | 111,7%   |
| IS64 The capacity of the educational infrastructure that receives support (pre-school                    | 10.000      | 10.961  | 110%   |

|  |     |      |  |
|--|-----|------|--|
| education)   |     |      |  |
| <b>Result</b>  |     |      |  |
| IS16 The gross rate of inclusion in nurseries of children aged 0-2 years in the urban area | 5%  | n.a. |  |
| IS17 Gross coverage rate in pre - school education (3-5 years) in urban area               | 90% | n.a. |  |

At this specific objective, the targets will already be exceeded under the conditions of the implementation of the analyzed projects, although the degree of coverage of the contract allocation is about 28% (cumulative with SO 4.5), which raises the problem of underestimating the program target for this specific objective.

Result indicators of gross rate of coverage cannot be calculated based on the rates of the projects that estimate this indicator, but on the basis of the absolute cumulative data of the implemented projects. It is recommended to calculate these indicators after completing the implementation of at least the projects that are currently in progress, in order to obtain an indicator realized at the program level.

#### OS 4.5 Vocational and technical education and lifelong learning

| Indicators  | Target 2023 | Target estimated by the analyzed financing applications | Potential degree of achievement towards the final target |
|---|-------------|---|--|
| <b>Immediate achievement</b>  |             |   |  |
| IS20 The capacity of the infrastructure that benefits from support (education for Vocational and technical education) | 7520 pers.  | 2.452   | 32,6%  |
| IS21 The capacity of the infrastructure that benefits from support (lifelong learning)                                | 230 pers.   | -   | -  |
| <b>Result</b>   |             |   |  |
| IS18 Coverage rate in education professional and technical in the urban environment                                   | 60%         | n.a.  | n.a.   |

If the first indicator of achievement could be reached in proportion of approx. 1/3 through the implementation of the studied projects, for the second indicator of immediate achievement no information is known.

**Qualitative analysis of the contribution that is expected to be obtained through the interventions within PA 4, at the level of the funded projects.**

Depending on the proposed objective, the interventions within PA 4 aimed at the following:

- Reducing carbon emissions in county resident municipalities through PMU-based investments: this will be achieved by developing an attractive and efficient public passenger transport system (eg modernizing the public transport fleet with low-

polluting vehicles, the so-called green vehicles with power supply, passenger fare collection systems, passenger information system and fleet management, through the creation / modernization / extension of a coherent network of tracks / routes for bicycles, but also through the creation / modernization of routes / pedestrian spaces or predominantly comfortable pedestrians for pedestrians, activities that, through an integrated approach, will directly contribute to the reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions);

For example, the contracted projects were identified:

- Intermodal Center for Public Transport - Garii Street - Tarpiului Street - Industriei Street in Bistrița Municipality
  - Rehabilitation of tram infrastructure in Iași - Reorganization of traffic on Tudor Vladimirescu Boulevard in Iași
  - Modernization of sustainable urban mobility corridors in Zalău 2023
  - Modernization of tram and road lines of Siderurgișului and 1 December 1918 streets in Galați Municipality
  - Integrated system of ecological public transport in Suceava Municipality
  - Creation and development of a bicycle track in the North area of Satu Mare
  - Creation of pedestrian routes and improvement of public transport of people in the central area of Oradea Municipality
- 
- Reconversion and re-functionalization of degraded, vacant or unused land and surfaces from county residence occupations by carrying out actions aimed at improving the urban environment, revitalizing cities, regenerating and decontamination of disused industrial land (including reconversion areas), reducing air pollution and promoting air pollution. noise reduction such as: demolition of buildings located on the land subject to interventions in an advanced state of degradation, which do not belong to the national cultural heritage or the realization of pedestrian alleys, bicycle lanes, the creation of sidewalks. Actions to develop green spaces by clearing the existing vegetation, modeling the land, planting perennial plants, lawning the surfaces, or planting shrubs, actions with immediate effect on improving the quality of life of citizens d.p.d.v. of health, of socializing communities through spaces created with this purpose, making available public areas with Wi-Fi coverage, endowment of urban furniture. For the spaces set up by the project, the interventions aim at installing video surveillance systems, connecting them to public utilities, modernizing the urban streets that lead directly to the land subject to the intervention.

There is no contract within this type of intervention.

- Improving the physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized communities in county residence municipalities by providing support for the physical, economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in urban and rural regions. The interventions concern a wide range of investments such as: investments in facilities for public use (small green areas, public markets, squares, parks, playgrounds for children, as well as facilities for sporting and recreational activities), investments in buildings intended for public use for educational, cultural and recreational activities, socio-cultural (including equipping them with specific equipment), construction /

rehabilitation / modernization of streets of secondary importance, including sidewalks, bike paths, pedestrian paths, access roads.

Examples of projects in implementation:

- Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty in disadvantaged communities in Craiova - phase II - Fântana Popova area
- Physical, economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in the Gutenberg area in Oradea
- Arrangement of Children's Day Center in Zalău Municipality by changing the destination of the thermal point P.T.17

- Increasing the quality of the infrastructure to ensure increased access to early education and supporting parents' participation in the labor market through actions of construction / rehabilitation / modernization / extension / equipping of the educational infrastructure for pre-preschool (nursery) and preschool (nursery).

Examples of projects in implementation:

- Pre-school education unit in the central area of Suceava Municipality
  - Extension of the Nursery and Nursery no.53, with the equipping of the educational infrastructure for the pre-preschool and preschool education in Oradea Municipality
  - Extension of the infrastructure for pre-school education in Vaslui
  - Rehabilitation and modernization of kindergartens and nurseries in Resita Municipality
  - Construction of a building with a growing destination in Timisoara Municipality
- Increasing the quality of the educational infrastructure relevant to the labor market through investments in education and training, including vocational training, for acquiring skills and lifelong learning through the development of education and training infrastructures such as: construction / rehabilitation / modernization / extending / equipping educational infrastructure for vocational and technical education and lifelong learning (through high schools and vocational schools).

2 projects are under implementation:

- Rehabilitation and equipping of the educational infrastructure for vocational and technical education and lifelong learning within the Mihai Viteazul Technical College in Oradea
- Rehabilitation, modernization, development and equipping of the Mihai Viteazul High School from Zalău Municipality - Stage I Internat.

The qualitative analysis leads to the following conclusions:

The projects financed by PA 4 concern investments of different types, most of them targeting investments in urban transport infrastructure but also educational infrastructure. The effects of the projects, which will take place after the completion of the implementation, will mainly contribute to the increase of the quality of life, but also of the attractiveness of the cities, which creates the premises of socio-economic development of the cities by attracting new inhabitants and entrepreneurs.

The analysis of the case studies led to the following observations:

- At the level of a single beneficiary of the 4 selected, there are ongoing projects in the fields: urban mobility, rehabilitation of urban spaces, regeneration of marginalized areas and communities, improvement of the educational infrastructure of pre-school, pre-preschool and TVET education, improvement of the vocational training infrastructure;
- The projects are part of a unitary Strategy for sustainable urban development;
- The financing applications quantify the performance indicators adequately, so as to allow the analysis of the immediate effects of the expected achievements of the financed and ongoing interventions;
- The contracted projects focus mainly on Specific Objective 1, which concentrates about 70% of the contracted value, 80% of the allocation on objectives and 85% of the value of the submitted applications;
- All 4 beneficiaries appreciate that the projects will be completed according to the contractual terms.

From the analysis of the questionnaires from the beneficiaries it was found that:

- 26 out of 29 respondents are involved in interventions that support SO 4.1;
- 17 out of 29 respondents are involved in interventions that support SO 4.2;
- 17 out of 29 respondents are involved in interventions that support SO 4.3;
- 21 out of 29 respondents are involved in interventions that support SO 4.4;
- 17 out of 29 respondents are involved in interventions that support SO 4.5;
- the average number of projects submitted and under evaluation in AP4 per beneficiary interviewed is 11 projects - although we have this average, it should be emphasized that the lowest number of projects submitted and under evaluation in PA4 per beneficiary is 4 (Miercurea Ciuc - taken over as a case study), and the highest number of projects submitted and under evaluation in PA4 per beneficiary is 24 (Drobeta-Turnu Severin);
- the average number of projects under preparation in PA4 per beneficiary interviewed is about 1.4 projects - to this average, we add that the highest number of projects under preparation in PA4 per beneficiary is 13 (Bacău) and is registered provided that the same beneficiary also has 13 projects submitted and under evaluation.

The differences between localities, apart from the fact that they express a need for financing (which can be present at the level of other municipalities), a availability of co-financing, expresses the administrative capacity of the LPA.

Preliminary conclusions:

Almost all beneficiaries of PA 4 have approached investment projects related to urban mobility, which shows that there are still unmet needs in the previous programming period, regarding this type of infrastructure. Through the portfolios of projects submitted and under

evaluation all the objectives of PA 4 are covered at national level, over 50% of the beneficiaries have submitted projects for each objective. The need to complement investments in infrastructure, which ensures sustainable mobility and connectivity, is noted, by almost unanimously involving beneficiaries in SO 4.1 interventions.

Corroborating the information obtained from the office analyzes (MySMIS data on the number and value of the projects), with the qualitative information obtained from the case studies and the survey through the questionnaire (the beneficiaries consider that the allocations were insufficient), they confirm the increased interest for the interventions within OS 4.1 as the mechanism of urban development most appreciated by the beneficiaries of the ROP 2014-2020.

The slow progress of the implementation, considering that payments were made in the amount of 46,209,640 lei, which represents 2.66% of the allocation of 1,734,541.995 lei totally non-refundable, allows to make only estimates, based on the sample of 40 applications. financing.

**EQ 2. Was the intervention logic of the Priority Axis verified in implementation? If not, which elements need improvement (eg expected results, implementation mechanisms / types of interventions)? Are there examples of good practices in terms of interventions to promote urban development and what are their main features, which can be taken up in the future?**

To answer this question we analyzed the causal chain Needs - Actions - Immediate achievements - Results - Impact, the factors that intervene in this causal relationship and which influence it, positively or negatively. The relationship is summarized in the following table.

| Actions  | Immediate achievements  | Results   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>OS 4.1 Urban Mobility</b>   |   |   |
| Investments for urban public transport<br>Investments for electric and non-motorized transport | Operations implemented for public and non-motorized transport<br>Urban transport: the total length of new or improved tram and subway lines | Passengers transported in urban public transport in Romania |
| N.A.   | Urban development: population living in areas with integrated urban development strategies  | -   |
| Other investments aimed at reducing CO2 emissions in the urban area                            | Operations implemented to reduce CO2 emissions (other than for public and non-motorized transport)  | GHG emissions from road transport                           |
|  |   |   |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>OS 4.2 Urban revitalization</b>  |  |   |
| Actions aimed at improving the urban environment, revitalizing cities, regenerating and decontamination of disused industrial land (including conversion areas), reducing air pollution and promoting noise reduction measures  | Public or commercial buildings built or renovated in urban areas   |   |
|   | Open space created or rehabilitated in urban areas   | Green spaces in county residence municipalities   |
| <b>OS 4.3 Regeneration of the disadvantaged community</b>   |  |   |
| Investments in facilities for public use (small green areas, public markets, squares, playgrounds, playgrounds for children, as well as facilities for sporting and recreational activities); Investments in buildings intended for public use for educational, cultural and recreational activities, socio-cultural, with the purpose of creating, improving or extending basic public services (construction / rehabilitation / modernization), including their provision with specific equipment; Construction / rehabilitation / modernization of all types of small-scale basic utilities (such as gas infrastructure, electricity, water, sanitation); construction / rehabilitation / modernization of streets of secondary importance, including sidewalks, bicycle paths, pedestrian alleys, access roads. | Population living in the areas with interventions in the physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized communities in county residence municipalities | Population at risk of poverty and social exclusion from marginalized areas of county residence municipalities |
| <b>OS 4.4 Pre-preschool and preschool education</b>   |  |   |
| Construction / rehabilitation / modernization / extension / equipping of pre-preschool and preschool educational infrastructure (nurseries and kindergartens);  | Capacity of the educational infrastructure that benefits from support (pre-preschool education)  | The gross rate of inclusion in nurseries of children aged 0-2 years in the urban area                         |
|   | The capacity of the educational infrastructure receiving support (pre-school education)  | Gross enrollment rate in pre-school education (3-5 years) in urban areas                                      |
| <b>OS 4.5 Vocational and technical education and lifelong learning</b>  |  |   |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Construction / rehabilitation / modernization / extension / equipping of the educational infrastructure for vocational and technical education and lifelong learning (high schools and vocational schools). | The capacity of the infrastructure that benefits from support (education for vocational and technical education) | Coverage rate in vocational and technical education in urban areas |
|   | The capacity of the infrastructure that benefits from support (lifelong learning)                                | -  |

Regarding the causal relationship, we find the following:

- There is a direct link between actions and immediate achievements for all OSs;
- For OS 4.1, the indicator "Urban development: Population living in areas with integrated urban development strategies" is not the direct result of a funded action, but comes from the eligibility criterion that allows financing only those interventions that are part of a integrated urban strategy;
- For OS 4.3, the indicator "Population living in the areas with interventions in the physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized communities from county residence municipalities" is not clearly formulated from the perspective of achievement, respectively of the programmer's intention. The correlation of this indicator with the one to be found is deficient, in the sense that "The population at risk of poverty and social exclusion from the marginalized areas of the county residence municipalities" is not supposed to be located in the areas with interventions in physical, economic and social regeneration. , although the program specifies the intention that the population benefiting from interventions through OS 4.3 should be excluded from the category of risk of poverty and social exclusion. For this reason, rigor is required in reporting, to refer to the same area.
- There are immediate achievement indicators that have no allocated outcome indicators.

Regarding the factors that influence, positively or negatively, the achievement of the achievements and the targets, the analysis reveals more elements that are generally valid for all the specific objectives. Therefore, the analysis below is cross-sectional, with the specific elements of OS being scored, where appropriate.

The financing process for PA 4 interventions is a process that completes several stages of strategic planning at the local level and involves several stages. According to the provisions of the latest versions of the DCI and PODU the procedural steps are:

- Development of SIDU and PMUD by APL / ADI;
- Transmission of SIDU and PMUD, for preliminary verification, to SSDU;
- The SSDU elaborates and sends to the LPA / ADI "the preliminary verification report SIDU / PMUD";
- Approval of SIDU / PMUD by CL / CA of ADI;
- ADI / LPA submits SIDU / PMUD to OI for verification of administrative compliance;

- OI notifies the beneficiary and the AU coordinator of the completion of the verification phase of the SIDU and PMUD CAE;
- OI notifies AMPOR about the completion of the verification phase of the CAE of SIDU and PMUD through the "progress report" submitted weekly by the ADR;  
By the notification letter finalizing the CAE verification stage of the SIDU and the PMUD, the beneficiary is notified that the selection phase of the project files can be started, in accordance with the operational procedure of the Urban Authority;
- Elaboration of DJ FESI and transmission to SSDU for preliminary verification.

The process of evaluation, selection and contracting of the individual projects contained in the Supporting Document is presented in Annex 12.

In order to establish the logic of the intervention, it is necessary to underline the general framework in which the interventions through the ROP take place at the present moment, and to what extent what was optimally achievable in the general context. At the institutional level, there is a framework that provides the premises for addressing the issues of major interest, including sustainable urban development. In order to strengthen the role of interinstitutional cooperation, and according to the "Partnership Agreement" between the EU and Romania 2014RO16M8PA001.1.2, a first level of FESI coordination is specified as covered by the Coordination Committee for the Management of the Partnership Agreement (CCMAP). The CCMAP carries out its activity both through plenary and section meetings, through 5 Thematic Coordination Sub-Committees and 4 Functional Working Groups. At the level of the Ministry of European Funds was set up the Functional Working Group for Innovative Approaches covering the following topics: financial instruments, sustainable urban development, integrated territorial investments, local devolution placed under the responsibility of the community.

The interviews with the privileged witnesses obtained information considered to be of great importance, especially in relation to the programming aspects, but also to the implementation of the interventions. These will be presented below, in the logical sequence of process development, to analyze whether these processes and procedures, the institutional and legislative framework, are capable of creating the premises for obtaining the expected results.

The national regional development strategy is based on regional development strategies drawn up at regional level. However, the law of regional development does not surprise the innovative aspects related to integrated territorial development, and one of the problems encountered by the local public administrations is that the law of the public administration does not allow them to make investments within the administrative territory outside its territory. Thus, the polycentric approach is difficult to implement and the role of the inter-community associations must be enhanced to promote this approach. This conclusion is confirmed by the qualitative data obtained from the application and other instruments, as, synthetically, we included in the report the most relevant aspects. The details of the topics under discussion, the participants' considerations can be found in the annexes to the report, the annexes regarding focus groups and interviews with the privileged witnesses, Annex 5 and Annex 9 respectively.

Regarding the process of implementing the interventions, the privileged witnesses identified the following difficulties in the process of preparing and submitting the applications for funding:

- The documentation of the calls has been considerably improved and is very responsive to the needs. However, there are also exceptions: e.g. the eligibility conditions in IP 4.2, the conditionality of law 24 (of green spaces) whereby only 10% of the area could be affected by constructions, making confusion between parks and lands that will now be arranged - the guide took as a restrictive approach the provisions of this law and the "cities in the city" are inventoried as green spaces, they are in fact degraded spaces, but also the eligibility conditions within PI 4.4 and PI 4.5 that imposed conditionalities considered unnecessary (correlation with POCU);
- The existence of the General Guide does not appear necessary, it could be replaced by a framework document, and the guide on PA 4.1 is considered with a very high degree of complexity, the same issues are approached differently between the PI and require a procedural and technical unitary approach
- In general, the lack / insufficiency of a thorough substantiation of the information that had to be included in the project files, in relation to the provisions of the specific guides, which determined that an important number of project files, selected and prioritized by the UA, included in the list annexed to DJ FESI, can not be realized (in the phase in which the activity of preparing the specifications for the procurement of design services was started, have been identified either property problems (the inventory of the public domain, in most cases is not updated; the nonexistence) property, claimed land, etc., or changes in the legal regime of the land targeted by the proposed investments (regarding some land, initially considered degraded, it was found that they were included in the register of green spaces, in the category of green land, etc.);
- Non-correlation of the proposed activities with the eligible activities in the applicant's guides;
- Frequently, the lack of interest and professionalism from the designers - the successive resumption of the procurement procedures for the elaboration of the economic technical documentation services (DALI, SF, PT), either due to the failure to tender, or as a result of the termination of the design contracts, motivated by the lack of technical capacity of the designer, causing the initial estimated deadlines for elaborating the documentation and submitting the financing applications to be exceeded;
- Problems related to the administrative capacity of some PA4 beneficiaries when preparing the specifications, organizing tenders, verifying and receiving the technical-economic documentation drawn up by the service providers;
- Insufficient knowledge of the provisions of the specific guides and of the applicable legislation, by the persons designated in the management of these projects;
- Nominating the persons who are part of the AU has not always ensured the selection of people with the specific competences necessary to carry out in the best conditions the process of selecting and prioritizing the projects and the one of DJ FESI elaboration. The difficulties encountered during the execution of the financing applications are important to remember because these can be starting points for improving the documentation and processes for the following calls within the current and / or future multiannual financial framework;

In the process of project selection, the assessment of the legality of documents and their validity should not be the responsibility of the ADR, but the responsibility of the LPA.

In the implementation of projects, the critical aspects commonly encountered refer to :

- property and cadastre issues;
- low capacity for co-financing of interventions;
- the need to make integrated investments outside the territory of the administrative radius, for the delivery of public services at the optimal level of sizing the potentials of the users.

Following the discussions with the beneficiaries, but also from the questionnaires completed by them, the establishment of the Urban Authority was put into question. The beneficiaries gathered in the regional FG in Cluj, as well as the privileged witnesses interviewed in Bucharest, unanimously agreed that the responsibilities of this structure should have been taken over by an existing organization, with adequate human and financial resources, and that the supporting documents overlap. to those established through SIDU. A form of partnership between LPA and AZM / LAG would be a more appropriate structure because, as the AU role was designed, they cannot play a significant role in sustainable strategic planning because they do not have the necessary human and financial resources (AU has some people involved in the selection process, generally not decision makers, but who cannot be involved in the implementation process). Existing entities can take over AU responsibilities: in general, the most appropriate for this would be organizations that can ensure a high degree of community representation but also have the widest coverage area from an administrative point of view , to ensure a process of integration of sectoral policies but also the possibility of generating large projects.

The level at which a strategy is constituted is given by the beneficiaries to whom it is addressed. The most appropriate organization is the one that can ensure the design, implementation and updating of the strategy and is the one actor that represents the strategic beneficiaries best. The strategy must not only be a sum of objectives, but must be constantly updated to meet the needs of the community. The strategy must ensure flexibility and permanent adaptation to the needs. In the previous programming period, through PIDU it was foreseen the establishment and existence of a coordinating entity of PIDU (at the elaboration phase, in the incipient and more concrete form, during the implementation phase), this having no distinct legal form and as such no financial resources allocated. at the operating level, the only resources made available are: 1. human resources (by local government decision), 2. administrative resources (similar), 3. financial resources for infrastructure implementation (and those supporting it: audit, management expenses, etc.). project, advertising). In fact, the financial resources for functioning (salaries, travel, daytime accommodation, consumables) were not specifically allocated but only at the declarative level and as such, this authority, without distinct legal personality, functioned supplementing the current tasks of the administration personnel. local, generating overload, with all its effects. In the current programming period, one step forward, in the sense in which the term Urban Authority appeared, an entity with decision power over the priority projects, which, although it wanted to function as a perfect link between the financier, represented in the field through the Regional Development Agencies - through "Structures to support sustainable urban

development" (SSDU) - and the beneficiary, it worked similar to the PIDU management entity, in most cases in the country, even though its responsibilities were clearer. and assumed through decision documents (decisions, decisions); this entity not having, most of the times, operating budget, similar to the situation from the previous programming period. An example of good practice of an entity that decides to finance the priority projects at the micro-regional level, by involving all the local actors in the geographical area, are the LAGs, met in the rural area, financed by PNDR, which have operating budget, assuming salary, transport, accommodation, meal / day, staff training, outsourced consulting services, outsourced evaluation services. Such an approach could lead to a more incisive entry into the territories, a much more intense animation of the final beneficiaries of the investments, which could generate either the support or the constraint of the PA 4 beneficiaries to carry out those necessary investment projects according to the needs of the final beneficiaries. . As a result, this Urban Authority could make sense as a separate entity in the context of ensuring its functioning, under complete conditions, or it could be replaced by the larger local partnerships, already realized for the different investment projects proposed at local level (or LPA in itself, or LPA together with ADI / AZM), without the need to establish an urban authority.

### Case Studies

The analysis of SIDU and the case studies show that the strategies were developed in a broad framework of participation of the actors in the territory, they being involved in both the initial stage of analysis and the final consultation (at least two consultation phases, of which the slightly the first divided into various events / working groups). SIDU was developed by all the municipalities analyzed in the case studies through thematic working groups, focused on the strategic objectives or the main needs identified. The degree of involvement is considered quite good, although some mayors believe that the participation produced more concrete effects on the strategic directions (eg at the Târgoviște Municipality level, the participants offered a more structured written input) and others less (at the Oradea Municipality level, the representatives stated that the input of the consulted actors was not substantial for the modification of the documents).

The need to broaden the categories of eligible expenditure is confirmed: eg. The municipality of Oradea considers that it would have been necessary for the utilities of the type of heating and the parking inside the city or the heritage buildings with a destination other than the ones to visit (these being currently ineligible), but also that the maximum limit of the budget eligible in certain cases is not sufficient. In this regard, the municipality of Oradea explained that it divided the objective into stages and requested 3 distinct, but complementary and synergistic financing.

The activities to promote the urban development were analyzed and it was found that they were multiple and differentiated, and supported the concrete participation of the civil society in the programming of the interventions as well as in informing with the financing opportunities made available within the axis. There were also meetings with the potential beneficiaries for

promoting the interventions within the ROP, support for the preparation, prioritization, project selection, negotiation of allocations. These actions are considered to provide LPAs the opportunity to benefit from the resources made available for sustainable urban development actions. More specifically, the following types of actions were organized with the support of OI:

- international conferences;
- meetings at county level municipalities for discussing strategic documents (PIDU, PMUD), setting up of AU and subsequently of the operational procedure for AU, list of priority projects;
- meetings to present the guides for the calls for proposals;
- meetings to discuss the stage of the implementation of PA 4 within the ROP with the representatives of the municipalities;
- meetings with civil society and stakeholders;
- ad-hoc working meetings, at the request of the beneficiaries / AU to clarify the procedural aspects regarding the launch of new calls or the updating of the project / DJ sheets, eligibility of expenses / activities;
- permanent contacts with municipalities by telephone or e-mail.

For example, in the South-Muntenia region 9 events were organized with the participation of 380 participants; in the South-West Oltenia region there were organized 10 training meetings with AU, 20 working meetings with the beneficiaries in the project preparation phase and 3 training meetings for the implementation of the contracted projects; the Center region organized a working meeting on urban development and the stage of the implementation of PA 4 with JASPERS representatives.

The municipalities also organized at least one consultation meeting in the context of drafting strategic documents.

Regarding the degree of involvement of the actors in the territory in identifying the needs / preparation of the PA 4 projects, the following aspects were clear from the questionnaire survey:

- 2 out of 29 respondents claimed that the actors in the territory were little involved (they were invited to events but participated little);
- 8 out of 29 respondents claimed that local actors contributed in a medium way to defining the needs and strategy of the municipality and that they participated in events according to expectations;
- 11 out of 29 respondents claimed that the local actors were very involved in defining the needs and strategy of the municipality and that they participated in a large number of events;
- 8 out of 29 respondents claimed that local actors were very involved in defining the needs and strategy of the municipality and that they participated in a large number of events also providing written contributions.

It is estimated that if more than half of the respondents considered that the local actors were involved much and very much in defining the needs and strategy of the municipality and that they participated in a large number of events providing also written contributions, there is a

good participation process. of the local community at the "life of the citadel", but that this process must still be supported to identify the real needs of the community.

An example of good practice that emerged from the analysis of the answers to the questionnaires can be Baia Mare, where the relevant actors got involved by using virtual information (especially the social networks), especially the young population, which represents the long-term target group to PA4.

Preliminary conclusion:

The majority percentage of the respondents (65.52%) claim that the local actors have been involved much and very much in defining the needs and strategy of the municipality, which determines the conclusion that at least under this aspect, the intervention logic of the Priority Axis has been verified in implementation. , projects that reflect the needs of the community to a great extent.

Regarding good practice examples, it was found that the North-West region has performed well both in terms of the interest shown by the potential beneficiaries, who have applied for financing and the degree of contracting in relation to the budget allocation. .

The focus group organized in Cluj, to analyze the regional success factors, revealed the following conclusions:

- Regarding the participation of the community in the strategic planning process, in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca, and recently also in the municipality of Oradea, the initiative of the participatory budget takes place. This consists in the development of a computer system that allows the allocation of a budget and the collection of project ideas from the citizens and is a democratic process by which the citizens decide how to spend a part of the local budget. Participatory budgeting is an opportunity offered to the citizens by the municipality, through which they can propose their ideas for the development of the city, and the best ideas are chosen by the vote of all and implemented;
- Regarding the elaboration, submission, contracting, implementation of projects, although there is an improvement of the approach at the MA level, there are still a number of malfunctions that impede the proper implementation of the ROP (eg the vague terminology used in the guides, contradictory recommendations from AM and OI, very long time for resolving clarifications, certain absurd eligibility criteria - considering as cost eligible only the lighting for the bicycle lane, as if this could be divided / isolated by the illumination of the respective axis / directions (operating the MySMIS platform).

**Focus group** from Piatra Neamț highlighted in good practice regarding citizen participation in strategic planning processes that, although citizen consultation was respected according to all legal procedures imposed and there was involvement from the different actors involved in public consultation, yet the effective contribution of the citizens consisting of suggestions and comments was minimal.

Regarding the key factors of the success of the NV region in the implementation of ROP PA 4, they were identified by the IO expert panel as:

1. aggressive and systematic marketing in promoting the interventions that can be financed through ROP by the RDA at the level of the decision makers (mayors); apart from the communication events, monthly RDA reminded the municipalities in writing about the commitments made for each SO at the level of UAT;
2. administrative capacity (in house and / or attracted). The municipalities consider that they have received assistance from professional companies, who prepared quality documents, which ensured a smooth selection and contracting process and created the premises for a successful implementation of the projects;
3. community participatory planning process comunității.

The discussions within the focus groups also revealed that the funds are insufficient in relation to the budgets for which the contracting was prepared (supplementing to 120%, subsequently to 200%) and the MA ROP 115 instruction of 18.04.2019 on how to make "The list of financing projects" and "The list of priority projects" led to dissatisfaction with the beneficiaries; they consider it important to identify solutions with the support of the MA.

Given the low level of results in relation to the intermediate target and the level of absorption, it is appreciated that the delayed launch of the calls and the duration of the completion of the technical documentation, which was included in the implementation period, led, on the one hand, to a reduced rate of contracting in relation to the allocations (the ratio between the eligible non-refundable contracted value and the value of the allocation is on average at the level of the regions of 26.80%) and on the other hand at a reduced level of payments (2.66% of the allocation of the value total non-refundable).

#### Conclusion:

The data obtained from the application of the specified instruments are corroborated and it can be concluded that the intervention logic has largely been verified in implementation, even if there are elements that can be improved (at the institutional and legislative level, of the strategic planning, preparation, evaluation, selection and contracting of projects), there was a good degree of community involvement in the implementation of strategies and good practice models were identified. The selected indicators largely correspond to the sectoral typology of the interventions and are included in the list of sustainable development indicators used by the NIS. However, the specialized literature recommends finding aggregate indicators that are more suitable for evaluating specific PA outcomes. 4. Identifying distinct performance and outcome indicators will better meet the purpose of monitoring and evaluation (eg in the case of operations financed under the OS 4.1, the indicator "number of operations" can be found both as an achievement indicator and as an outcome indicator); updating the indicators in MySMIS would also contribute to this goal.

#### Good practice examples identified

Use of virtual information (social networks) in defining the needs and strategy at the UAT Baia Mare level.

The initiative of the participatory budget by which the citizens are consulted in the way of spending the budgetary resources at local level in Cluj-Napoca, model "recently imported" by Oradea.

The sustained campaign of promotion in the region, for informing and raising the awareness of the potential beneficiaries of the financial opportunities within the AP 4 ROR, led to the highest number of applications at country level.

The administrative capacity of the LPA in the North-West region led to the preparation of a large number of good quality projects, contracted in a short time, which started the activity and made the certified payments with the highest value in the country.

**EQ 3. What programming and selection mechanisms have proven to be effective and for what reason? What are the lessons learned from the perspective of the PA implementation strategy? What types of interventions / implementation mechanisms have proven to be effective and why?**

Programming and selection mechanisms are part of the processes through which interventions are implemented. These were, in part, analyzed in the GG 2 regarding the verification of the intervention logic, to answer this question we will analyze complementary data, starting from the intervention logic as well.

At the ROP level, through the office research, the following needs were identified, in connection with PA 4:

- greenhouse gas emissions and air quality are problems in all major cities in Romania, due to the decrease of the importance of public transport at the city level. , at the same time with the accelerated increase of the number of personal vehicles with effects on the emissions of greenhouse gases, the increase of the traffic congestion;
- the lack of coordinated interventions and the reduction of the investment capacity of the local authorities, which led to the emergence of abandoned, degraded or unused land at the city level, impacting on the quality of life of the population and attracting private investments;
- reducing the availability and quality of the workforce, these being critical factors for the development and economic growth of the cities, requiring the alignment of educational qualifications with the needs of the labor market and the provision of lifelong learning conditions, as well as facilitating the return of parents to work. , by supporting the quality and access to pre-preschool and pre-preschool education services;
- social inclusion and combating poverty, especially for the Roma population - major challenges for large cities, requires measures to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities and to combat exclusion, as part of a broader urban development strategy.

All these needs were addressed by a specific objective within PA 4, OS to be achieved after launching the various calls for proposals. The data obtained from the beneficiaries were analyzed, either as a result of the investigation, or as a result of the case studies or focus groups, and were corroborated with the direct observations of the documentation of the calls for proposals and of the interviews at the IB.

The case studies show that PMUD was very closely correlated with SIDU, in the case of Oradea Municipality this aspect is very obvious due to the insertion in SIDU of traffic maps and descriptions taken from PMUD.

The documents related to the calls for project proposals are considered clear (no beneficiary interviewed for the case studies made negative comments), but all the beneficiaries noted that the budget available is insufficient and that the ineligibility of certain expenses implies not realizing some investments that are considered important ( car parks).

The project selection procedure allowed the identification of the truly priority interventions for the sustainable development of the analyzed localities. However, there were comments from the representatives of the municipalities included in the case studies, regarding the fact that the prioritization criteria could be closer to the local needs (eg in the case of educational infrastructure) if they were personalized and the interpretation of the guides would be more flexible.

Also, several beneficiaries interviewed expressed concerns regarding the observance of the schedule of projects, due to the duration of the contracting stage, the problems encountered in carrying out the public procurement procedures and the problems related to the property regime, these factors being able to generate delays in the project implementation process.

The following preliminary conclusions were drawn from the analysis of the case studies:

SIDU and Mobility Plans are consistent.  
The framing of interventions as eligible actions under PA 4 was simple.  
The urban authorities have ensured an adequate prioritization of the strategic interventions.

The survey questionnaire revealed the following results:

- Cu With regard to the clarity of the documents related to the calls for project proposals, the following issues emerged from the investigation:
  - 10 out of 29 respondents believe that the applicant's guide and its annexes have many unclear aspects;
  - 10 out of 29 respondents are of the opinion that the applicant's guide and its annexes are clear but have some secondary issues that are unclear;
  - 5 out of 29 respondents believe that the applicant's guide and its annexes are clear;
  - 4 out of 29 respondents think that the applicant's guide and its annexes are very clear.
- With regard to the strategic / priority nature of the projects submitted within PA 4, the following issues emerged from the investigation:
  - all the respondents (respectively 29) in the survey questionnaire considered that the projects selected to be submitted within AP4 have a truly priority character for the sustainable urban development of the municipality, on a scale from 1 to 5, less than half of them indicating level 4, and the majority difference indicating level 5 (where Level 1 represents that the interventions selected by the Urban Authority are not at all a priority for the sustainable urban development of the municipality (they will not contribute at all to the sustainability and the

improvement of the quality of urban life, and Level 5 represents that the interventions selected by the Urban Authority are really priorities for the sustainable urban development of the municipality (they will greatly improve the sustainability and quality of urban life);

- correlated with the same question, respectively how the projects selected to be submitted within the AP4 have a truly priority character for the sustainable urban development of the municipality, an important aspect mentioned by the beneficiaries with the high operational, technical and financial capacity, that due to the degree of the requested over-contracting (200%) and the actual one to which the contracting was carried out, the beneficiaries were forced to withdraw part of the submitted projects;
- In relation to the eligibility criteria, the respondents made a series of recommendations in order to customize the eligibility and selection criteria as much as possible, which we present below:
- For SO 4.1: Elimination of the condition that only a maximum of 30% of the amount of eligible expenses for categories 6 and 15 represents eligible expenditure for the basic investment related to the sub-activity "Construction / modernization / rehabilitation of bridges and overpasses and subways with lanes dedicated to public transport" from activity 10, cumulated with those of some sub-activities from activity 11 "Construction / modernization / rehabilitation of the road infrastructure used as a priority by public passenger transport" and increasing the percentage to 100%. Justification of the request: in the case of the existing bridges / passages, in very few situations, according to the technical expertise, works to consolidate these constructions are required, which require massive financial interventions; most of the time, the intervention concerns only the superstructure part of the road, as well as the entire road route subject to modernization / reconfiguration and which has a non-reimbursable support of max. 98%.
  - For SO 4.2: elimination of the minimum surface condition of 100 sqm degraded land.
  - For SO 4.4 and OS 4.5: elimination from the ETF grid of criteria such as: number of children enrolled in zero class, who attended pre-preschool education (information that is not recorded and officially reported by any institution, starting from schools , school inspectorates, INS, the Ministry of Education; the entire grid is designed for small cities or municipalities, not for county residence municipalities (eg: existence of school networks in schools, kindergartens; technological high schools); elimination of the ZUM criterion from the grid;
- It was also specified:
- greater flexibility in the process of directing the funds allocated to the county residence municipality, according to the specific needs, without the limitations imposed on areas of intervention, depending on the concrete situations and needs of the community;
  - widening the area of eligible expenses with other basic needs of the community: asphalted streets, intermodal centers, road crossings and parking lots, rehabilitation of existing playgrounds and green areas, new agri-food markets, residential centers for the elderly.

#### Preliminary conclusion:

Although the opinions are equally divided regarding the clarity of the documents related to the calls for project proposals, however the respondents unanimously agree that the projects selected to be submitted within the AP4 have a truly priority character for the sustainable

urban development of the municipality, which leads to the conclusion that the implementation of AP4 is effective but perfectable.

The need to implement AP4 is thus fully justified, with the mention of ensuring communication and promotion through clearer programmatic documents.

The beneficiaries presented proposals to improve the eligibility criteria, together with the necessary justification, to better respond to the needs of the local communities (eg asphalted streets, intermodal centers, road and parking areas, rehabilitation of playgrounds and existing green areas, agri-food markets. new residential centers for the elderly).

**Focus groups highlighted the following aspects related to the project selection process and the implementation mechanisms:**

- It is considered that the involvement of UA in the process of project selection is not part of its role, the criteria being stipulated in the DJ. Metropolitan Areas (ZMs) are structures that have the expertise to take over the role of AU; 2 regional consultations have already taken place with ZM and the municipality of Baia Mare in order to increase the territorial integration in the strategic planning;
- Regarding the partnerships, the participants in the two focus groups have different opinions: while the beneficiaries in the NW region did not feel the need to achieve them - because they considered that they had in-house expertise or outsourced certain services to professionals and they had the resources. sufficient financial - the beneficiaries from the NE region consider that the benefits of the local partnership are obvious - the discharge of the cash flow through the accumulation of the corroborated financial capacities, similar operational superior capacity, exchange of experience, transfer of know-how).

The realization of the projects in partnership, is a mechanism with potential still not sufficiently valued by the LPA, although at the level of the smaller municipalities, with financial and human resources insufficiently adapted to the current needs of urban development, it is recognized as an opportunity.

Based on the experiences at European level, reflected by the New European Agenda and highlighted in the report in the section of specialized literature, it is found that the complex, and sometimes complicated, aspects of sustainable urban development, require finding solutions together, cities, associations working with cities. , European actors.

Therefore, the partnership, as a way to contribute more effectively to the sustainable development process, should be promoted at the level of the LPA, and the ROP could identify appropriate measures in this direction.

**The interviews with the privileged witnesses reveal the following conclusions and lessons learned:**

- The recommendations from the 2007-2013 ROP evaluation on the polycentric approach have been taken over in the current programming period only partially, this can be found in the documentation elaborated by the beneficiaries, preserving the importance of the growth poles. PMUs were also developed taking into account metropolitan areas and growth poles;

- SIDU must pay attention to urban, peri-urban, metropolitan areas and how they are financially supported. For example. the financing did not approach the peri-urban area anymore, the communes and the cities in the metropolitan area participated in the elaboration of the SIDU, but they did not benefit from financial allocations (although at their level urban activities are currently carried out, the approach by which the communes are seen is preserved as representatives of the rural economic profile). Mechanisms to support these structures need to be identified because PNDR has a low allocation for public infrastructure.
- It is necessary for the programming mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the metropolitan areas, to capitalize on the experience of the growth poles in terms of SIDU achievement and a greater involvement of the SSDU in the support granted to the beneficiaries, even from the early stage of project preparation; pregătire a proiectelor;
- The current mechanism of project submission has led to the submission of a very large number of financing applications related to the allocations; for this reason it should be replaced by a mechanism in which the submission of projects will stop when the submission reaches a certain threshold in relation to the financial allocation (eg in the NE region, for PI 4.5 it has been submitted that the submission exceeds 900% in relation to financial allocation);
- The mechanisms for prioritizing the projects and the role of the different structures involved in the urban development process in the different phases of the programming and selection of the projects can be improved, eg: the stage up to the prioritization to be done at LPA with the involvement of the Local Council, in correlation with PIDU , the verification and the support to be done by the ADR, the SSDU to extend its activity to the municipalities, cities, growth poles, the continuation of the activity CRESC (constituted within the mechanism for the implementation of the ROP 2007-2013) and its involvement in the evaluation of the quality of the projects before application;
- The integrated approach of PA 4 with other PAs within the ROP but also the continuity of types of interventions initiated through the ROP 2007-2013 is considered beneficial by the IO, and in some regions it is considered that the polycentric approach is somewhat increasing compared to the period previous (eg West region);
- The change of the technical approach on integrated urban development (ie the abandonment of the integrated project package) in the ROP 2014-2020 is not considered to have affected the integrated character of the interventions (IO NV considers that the integration is a synergy between the projects, and the IO Center considers that preserves the integrated character of urban development through complementarity of interventions). The geographical area was narrowed but the support for the other municipalities was extended, but the simpler approach facilitates the absorption process;
- There is no structure superior to the municipalities that will monitor the development, implementation and monitoring of projects (at this moment there is a chapter in each SIDU detailing how to monitor the SIDU and PMUD projects, but at the municipal level). The monitoring of the municipalities regarding the complementarity with the evaluation and monitoring tasks could be delegated to the RDA
- The ROP has so far effectively contributed to promoting the integrated approach in urban development, by:
  - Strengthening the strategic planning capacity of the LPA;
  - Strengthening the administrative capacity of LPA, by changing the organizational culture, cooperation with civil society, economic environment, NGOs, and other relevant actors (LPA being a competitive catalyst, and the connection with civil society was strengthened through meetings, working groups and consultations);

- Development of local inter-institutional and inter-sectoral partnerships (with other public administrations), according to the particularities of each county. For example. in the NE region, there were partnerships of the municipality with transport operators, in the NV region there were partnerships within the AP 1 with clusters and universities, in the Center region there were partnerships of the CJ with hospitals and social services from subordinates ( not within PA 4). However, not all the partnerships were real, in some cases they were a condition of eligibility;
- Creating a list of priority projects (and pipeline projects) is considered a positive aspect, which requires finding additional sources of funding within or outside the ROP.
- SIDU must pay attention to urban, peri-urban, metropolitan areas and how they are financially supported. For example. the financing did not approach the peri-urban area anymore, the communes and the cities in the metropolitan area participated in the elaboration of the SIDU, but they did not benefit from financial allocations (although at their level urban activities are currently carried out, the approach by which the communes are seen is preserved as representatives of the rural economic profile). Mechanisms to support these structures need to be identified because PNDR has a low allocation for public infrastructure.
- It is necessary for the programming mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the metropolitan areas, to capitalize on the experience of the growth poles in terms of SIDU achievement and a greater involvement of the SSDU in the support granted to the beneficiaries, even from the early stage of project preparation;

**EQ 4. What is the level of sustainability of the urban development dimension of the actions promoted by the ROP?**

As highlighted in the literature, urban development is a priority at European level, which is why, by EU Regulation no. 1301/2013 regarding the ERDF, at least 5% of the ERDF allocation for growth and investments in jobs should be allocated at the level of each Member State for integrated urban development.

All the literature reveals that one of the objectives of these two ERDF and FC funds is "A Europe closer to the citizens: sustainable and integrated development through local initiatives that lead to local socio-economic growth and development of urban, rural and coastal areas" .

As a result, opportunities for sustainable development at local level will be present in the new multiannual financial year, which is why, at the LPA level, the process of preparing pipeline projects must continue.

The sustainability of sustainable development interventions is mainly determined by the financial capacity of LPA to ensure the maintenance of investments, to modernize and develop cities based on a realistic vision, and of action plans for the implementation of pragmatic strategies, feasible adapted to the needs but also to the human resources, financial, logistic available to the community.

If projects create synergies, the level of sustainability increases. These aspects were considered from the programming phase by the ROP MA, the selection criteria of the operations required the beneficiaries to demonstrate within the financial models that they will ensure the sustainability of the investment during the financial analysis and described how they will cover the expenses related to the exploitation of the investments. after the funding has ceased.

In addition, it was requested that the operations be part of a local strategy, which expresses the development needs of the community, therefore there is an interest of the authorities to ensure the solution of the identified problems at the community level, which gives a premise for ensuring the sustainability of the interventions.

The data collected through the analysis of the case studies show that investments are sustainable (level 3 on a scale from 1 to 3 where 3 is the higher value); all the interviewed municipalities provided mechanisms in this regard, either through the creation of the transport operators (subordinated to the mayor's office) or through maintenance contracts subordinated to each direction of the mayoralty depending on the type of investment (these are followed and the interventions are correlated, being specified in current expenses) or simply through the appropriate financial allocation. Contracts are approved with the local budget, without the need for individual HCLs.

Preliminary conclusion:

There are mechanisms to ensure sustainability by assuming responsibility in implementing SIDU through:

- creation of transport operators
- maintenance contracts subordinated to each direction of the town hall according to the type of investment (these are monitored and the interventions are correlated, being specified in current expenses)
- the appropriate financial allocation
- approval of the contracts with the local budget allocation.

The level of sustainability of urban development actions through the ROP is considered to be in close connection with the degree of responsibility assumed in the implementation of SIDU by the UAT and with the level of their administrative capacity. The monitoring of investments, although it is the responsibility of the AU, is not carried out, due to lack of staff with expertise and lack of personnel in general. The LPA must allocate the necessary resources for developing the administrative capacity of the staff and calibrating the appropriate staffing scheme with the number of projects under implementation.

The survey by questionnaire revealed the following results regarding the degree of assuming responsibility in the implementation of SIDU in correlation with the support / contribution brought on the development of the strategic planning capacity of the municipal administration:

- 5 out of 29 respondents consider that the ROP PA 4 approach has contributed little to improving the administrative capacity;
- 7 out of 29 respondents consider that the ROP AP 4 approach has contributed to the improvement of the administrative capacity;
- 11 out of 29 respondents believe that the ROP AP 4 approach has contributed a lot to improving administrative capacity;
- 5 out of 29 respondents consider that the ROP AP 4 approach has greatly contributed to the improvement of administrative capacity.

Thus, it is noted that 16 respondents (55.17% of the total) consider that the ROP PA 4 approach has contributed much and greatly to improving the administrative capacity by developing the

strategic planning capacity of the municipal administration, which determines at least operational sustainability and also technique, thus creating the premises for increasing the degree of responsibility in the implementation of SIDU.

The results of the survey through the questionnaire are complementary to the results obtained from the analysis of the case studies, and contribute to the reinforcement of the opinion that, the interventions within PA 4 are based on mechanisms meant to ensure their sustainability and on a strategic planning capacity of the local administration improved (even if the need for its development is still present and needs further support).

In relation to the leverage effect of the interventions on the capacity of the local administration, the response to the GD 7 will highlight other issues that emerged from the survey.

**EQ 5. Does the integrated approach promoted by this priority axis lead to better results compared to the sectoral approach? In practice (in the implementation of operations) is complementarity guaranteed, ie the integrated approach of the interventions? To what extent is complementarity with other funding sources ensured (eg European, national, local, etc.)?**

It has been shown that the integrated approach responds better to the sustainable development of a territory, nowadays it is necessary to identify the most appropriate way to measure the impact of these interventions. It was found that the sectoral approach currently used by measuring the impact of integrated interventions by using domain-specific indicators (eg km, no. Of people) is not the most appropriate, and that it is necessary to focus rather on evaluating how integrated interventions have an impact on territorial development as a whole across several sectors of intervention.

The problem of the indicators used for sustainable development interventions, already raised in the evaluation, would not allow a quantifiable answer to the question whether the integrated approach brings better results than the sectoral one even if we had actions implemented, let alone in the current stage of implementation. of operations. However, answers can be provided, based on the qualitative analyzes made based on the information collected in the case studies, focus groups or following the interviews with the privileged witnesses, analyzes that also answer the question related to the complementarity of the operations (the integrated character of the interventions). Regarding the complementarity with other sources of financing, the existing situation was analyzed and a conclusion was drawn.

The following aspects and conclusions were highlighted from the analysis of the case studies:

- The integrated approach is ensured by the eligibility and selection criteria of the interventions, which emphasize the internal complementarity of the interventions financed within the PA. In this regard, both FESI and SIDU supporting documents analyzed have sections dedicated to the description of this integrated character. The operations financed by PA 4 are integrated between them (the value of the qualitative indicator was between 3

and 5, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is the highest value), each intervention being correlated with at least 2 specific objectives.

Preliminary conclusions:

The mechanisms by which the ROP ensures the integrated approach are clear.  
The integrated approach and complementarity with other sources of financing is well defined and assumed by the beneficiaries/

**Focus groups led to the following findings:**

- Ensuring complementarity within the proposed integrated package is considered essential for achieving the strategic objectives. The municipality of Baia Mare exemplified how, situations within the contracting and post-contacting process endanger the implementation of the integrated approach (within a package of 4 projects, a certain situation was considered acceptable in the case of 3 projects, while in the other 4th project this was no longer valid and demanded the refund of the amounts paid in the previous 3 projects);
- The integrated approach from the current programming period must be supported by financial resources commensurate with their needs and justifications, consisting of the number and complexity of the proposed interventions.

Regarding the aspect related to the integrated approach promoted through this priority axis that could lead to better results compared to the sectoral approach, the following issues were drawn from the questionnaire survey in correlation with the compliance / eligibility / selection criteria that directly refer or indirect to the integrated approach:

- 12 out of 25 respondents rated the eligibility criteria as only partially supporting the needs of the community, mentioning that the projects submitted on OS4.1 could not include investment objectives such as corridors, corridors (mixed motorized) and car parks as they emerged from corroborated PMUD. with the fact that the allocations are much lower than the coverage of identified needs;
- 7 out of 25 respondents appreciate the eligibility criteria as fully supporting the needs of the community;

The recommendations for revising the eligibility criteria to better meet the needs of the communities were presented in the GG 2 regarding the logic of the intervention, but can be summarized in the following conclusion:

There is also the need to complement the basic needs regarding the infrastructure that ensures the sustainable mobility and connectivity by increasing the allocation within OS4.1, in conjunction with the diversification of the types of interventions and eligible costs requested by the eligibility and selection criteria. over 50% of respondents; again underlining the fact that in the previous programming period only part of the problems identified at the level of local communities were solved.

**The interviews with the privileged witnesses led to the following observations and considerations:**

- The polycentric approach is a key aspect for the harmonious development of the national territory and must be promoted and oriented at the central government level;
- PATN, PUG, PATJ contain a medium and long term strategic vision that is essential for the success of the regional development policy and integrated interventions;
- Integrated strategic planning must be based on the creation of entities with legal personality, which have sufficient administrative capacity to support this process. This is achieved to a certain extent by the possibility of creating Associations of intercommunity development of type metropolitan area or urban agglomeration, according to Law 215/2001 on the local public administration;
- The results of the ROP are affected by the lack of coherence and the unpredictability of the action of the potential beneficiaries, who apply to obtain the financing sometimes without having a strategic and integrated vision on the priority investments, despite the existence of the local development strategies;
- The experience gained in the ROP 2007-2013 PA 1 regarding the polycentric approach and the integrated approach in the sustainable urban development was somewhat wasted during the current programming period, due to the fragmentation of the ROP intervention logic;
- The integrated approach depends on the capacity and willingness to involve the interest groups;
- Since the Local Council can change the list of initial priorities, it should be the Local Authority that uses the specialized compartment of the mayor's office;
- A major factor is the modification of the law of regional development, in order to recognize the region as an administrative unit. administrativă.

The corroboration of the conclusions obtained from analyzing the data obtained by applying the different instruments confirms that the integrated approach promoted by PA 4 responds better to the needs of the communities. In the planning process, the real needs of the community must be considered, ensuring first and foremost the basic needs, prioritizing in this regard. A rethinking of the entity responsible for the integrated strategic planning would be beneficial to the process of preparation, selection and implementation of sustainable urban development projects. The beneficiaries considered within the strategies and other sources of complementary financing PA 4, both within the ROP and outside it.

The office research analyzed the financing sources available to the beneficiaries of PA 4 for investments in the field of sustainable development, or related to this objective. The data and matrix of internal and external complementarity are provided in Annex 10.

Analyzing the type of operations financed under the ROP, POIM, POCU, POCA, PNDL and URABN Innovative actions the following can be seen:

- There are activities that have common objectives with those of PA 4 within the ROP (other RAPs within the ROP and the URBAN Innovative Actions program) but address different needs of potential beneficiaries, different categories of beneficiaries (eg UAT level);
- The accessibility of the URBAN Innovative Actions program is somewhat limited: in time (calls in different areas are unique in general), it requires the preparation of the

project in English, especially projects with innovative solutions for regeneration or conversion of urban spaces and other solutions to improve the air quality that can be complemented by ROP;

- POCA and POCU target software interventions, which ensure the development of the administrative capacity of local administrations, being practically complementary to the interventions within PA 4;
- The POIMM and PNDL finance ineligible infrastructure within the ROP, but the interventions in the 3 programs must be viewed as complementary and considered unitary within the urban planning at the UAT or regional level (through cooperation between the UAT).

Details of the complementarities for operations are presented in the matrix in the annex.

#### Conclusion:

The initiatives funded under PA 4 do not overlap with other actions financed under other programs, but on the contrary, they are complementary and may synergize with them. Potential beneficiaries have the opportunity to access simultaneously, or in a logical sequence, several of the instruments made available through the different programs, which will stimulate the acceleration of the development process of the local or regional geographical area, with positive effects on the quality of life from the community perspectives.

#### **EQ 6. Do these complementarities create synergies? What should be improved to achieve synergies and increase the impact of integrated interventions?**

The office research analyzed the typologies of actions available through other programs for the beneficiaries of PA 4 and found that accessing these available sources of funding can ensure not only complementarity but also generate a synergistic effect that multiplies the effect of the intervention. For example. While POCU finances the training of teachers, counselors, the development of the educational offer, of modern learning tools and thus leads to the access of students to an attractive offer, ROP finances the provision of laboratories, the realization and modernization of the school infrastructure, including physical access to the units. of education. The two programs, together, lead to a quality education, to the improvement of the indicators regarding the rate of school dropout, the increase of the school participation and the increase of the school performances.

The analysis of the case studies revealed that the integrated approach and the complementarity with other financing sources create synergies that can be increased with the participation of the interested actors. More specifically, the following conclusions were drawn:

- All the municipalities interviewed stated that the interventions of ROP PA 4 are complementary with other sources external to the beneficiary, especially the interventions of

the County Councils and national financing, in the field of transport (for example the Oradea municipality);

- All municipalities have emphasized the synergistic character of the projects financed from ROP PA 4 (for example, the municipality of Oradea has specified that the budget constraints have been addressed including by dividing by components that were financed in the same specific objective on different projects, thus that internal synergy was enhanced).

Focus groups revealed the following considerations:

- Ensuring complementarity within the proposed integrated package is essential for achieving the strategic objectives. The municipality of Baia Mare exemplified how, situations within the contracting and post-contacting process endanger the implementation of the integrated approach (within a package of 4 projects, a certain situation was considered acceptable in the case of 3 projects, while in the other 4th project this was no longer valid and demanded the refund of the amounts paid in the previous 3 projects);
- It is important to find solutions by the MA ROP, and implicitly the financial resources, to finance all the integrated and complementary projects from the list of proposed priority projects. The expenses incurred for feasibility studies or other documentation necessary for the elaboration of projects that will no longer be implemented lead to legal situations, with serious legal consequences, following the control of the Court of Accounts.

Following the survey by questionnaire, regarding the aspect related to obtaining synergies and increasing the impact of integrated interventions, the following issues were revealed in correlation with the degree of complementarity with other sources of financing provided by beneficiaries (through SIDU):

- ROP interventions, in relation to other sources of funding, are:
  - not at all complementary, 2 out of 28 respondents;
  - a little complementary - only one specific objective for AP4 is funded from other complementary sources, 5 out of 28 respondents;
  - partially complementary: - 2 specific ROP AP4 objectives are financed from other complementary sources, 3 out of 28 respondents - 3 specific ROP AP4 objectives are financed from other complementary sources, 11 out of 28 respondents;
  - complementary: - each specific objective is financed from different sources, 7 out of 29 respondents;
  - In relation to other initiatives existing at county or regional level promoted by the County Council: - they are not complementary, 4 of 28 respondents; - are complementary, 23 out of 28 respondents;
  - They are complementary to: - existing initiatives at county level, 11 out of 28 respondents; existing initiatives at national level, 10 out of 28 respondents; other European projects, 15 out of 28 respondents; - other interventions, for example those financed from the local budget, 7 out of 28 respondents;
- In relation to the experience of the 2007-2013 programming period and that SIDU is the continuation of the PIDU experience;
  - derives from these: - in total, 22 out of 29 respondents; - part of the submitted projects are those not completed from the previous period, 1 of 29 respondents; - have

other connections with the period 2007-2013 (respectively the fact that SIDU is applied at the level of the whole UAT and not only on an intervention area as applied by PIDU), 3 of 29 respondents

- does not derive from the experience of the 2007-2013 programming period, 4 out of 29 respondents.

The findings from the respondents' responses are as follows:

- A quarter of the beneficiaries consider that the interventions are not at all or little complementary to other sources of financing;
- Half of the beneficiaries consider that the interventions are partially complementary with other sources of financing;
- About a quarter of the beneficiaries consider that the interventions are complementary to other sources of financing;
- Most beneficiaries consider the complementarity provided by initiatives promoted by the County Council, more than half of European sources, a quarter from other local sources;
- The vast majority of beneficiaries appreciate that SIDU builds on the experience of PIDU and about a quarter that SIDU does not derive from the experience of the previous programming period, which can be a positive thing, from the perspective of a new strategic approach from UAT.

The following considerations were obtained from the interviews with the privileged witnesses:

- Complementarity and coordination at all levels of governance, both vertically and horizontally, is a key factor in the success of integrated policies and strategies; this, together with strengthening the link between territorial needs, government policies and planned investments in the territory, can ensure the efficiency of integrated development policies at local level.

Based on these findings it can be concluded that :

The complementarity between the interventions carried out through PA4 and other initiatives carried out by the beneficiary from own sources and / or internal or external non-reimbursable funds is evident and it is also evident that the projects derive from the experience of the 2007-2013 programming period, either by continuing / the completion of those, either through the experience gained and the generation of others, for the new identified needs; the realization of PIDU was a good exercise implemented at the level of a limited area, while the realization of SIDU gave the possibility to put on a larger scale (the whole UAT) of the experience that was capitalized through PIDU. At the same time, the complementarity of projects funded under AP4 is jeopardized if no additional financial resources are identified. The beneficiaries selected for the case studies appreciated that the projects have a high degree of synergy, the funding applications submitted for various specific objectives are very well correlated.

**EQ 7. Has it contributed so far and will the approach promoted through this priority axis contribute to improving the administrative capacity at local level in the future? (change of organizational culture, cooperation with civil society, economic environment, NGOs, etc.)**

The case studies show that the PA 4 approach has greatly contributed to the increase of the strategic planning capacity, especially among the municipalities that had not already developed this capacity in the previous period, by developing PIDU.

Although all the municipalities have structures dedicated to the management of projects with external financing, which are involved in the phase of drafting SIDU and project submission, the extent to which the internal teams actually work on these documents varies. The municipality of Galati has within the implementation department projects within the organizational chart of 34 positions but only 19 are occupied. Oradea Municipality also has a consolidated structure, where 18 people are permanently employed, being responsible for preparing all the documents related to internationally funded projects. Other municipalities (eg Târgoviște and Miercurea Ciuc), on the other hand, relied heavily on external consultants, especially during the submission phase.

Following the analysis it can be concluded that::

The local public administrations facilitated the participation and involvement of the actors in the territory in the programming phase of the SIDU / ROP interventions.  
The local public authorities have developed internal structures and stable collaborations with consultants in order to increase the capacity of strategic planning.

From the survey through the questionnaire the following issues were identified in correlation with the development of the capacity for programming and delivery of public services locally:

- Regarding the aspect related to the contribution made so far and the one planned to be realized in the future in improving the administrative capacity at local level (estimated leverage effect of PA 4)
  - 17 out of 29 respondents are of the opinion that POR PA 4 projects will stimulate the development of new social services;
  - 22 out of 29 respondents are of the opinion that the ROP PA 4 projects will stimulate the improvement of the quality and supply of the local education system;
  - 26 out of 29 respondents are of the opinion that the ROP PA 4 projects will stimulate the re-planning / redesign of the public services for urban mobility;
  - 19 out of 29 respondents are of the opinion that POR PA 4 projects will stimulate the creation of cultural / sports / leisure activities within the spaces created for the benefit of the community.

The findings and conclusion from the respondents' answers are as follows:

Most beneficiaries believe that a better administrative capacity of the LPA will stimulate:

- development of new social services
- improving the quality and supply of the local education system
- redesigning / redesigning public services for urban mobility

- creation of cultural / sports / leisure activities within the spaces created for the benefit of the community

Improved administrative capacity leads to an increase in the standard of living of citizens and their level of satisfaction, due to better local governance.

- Regarding the aspect related to the contribution made so far and the one planned to be carried out in the future to improve the administrative capacity at the local level, the following issues were revealed from the survey in correlation with the degree of improvement of the administrative capacity following the programming phase of the ROP interventions.
- The projects were elaborated mainly by:
  - Contractarea hiring external consultants, 13 out of 25 respondents;
  - the internal strategic planning office or the internal project management services, 13 out of 25 respondents;
  - help desk assistance, 3 out of 25 respondents.
- The beneficiaries encountered procedural problems in the preparation phase consisting of:
  - delays in the preparation of the technical annexes, 17 out of 29 respondents;
  - delays in obtaining the necessary authorizations, 14 out of 29 respondents;
  - resistance of the local community, 2 out of 29 respondents;
  - lack of collaboration with the (sector) profile institutions, 6 out of 29 respondents;
  - legislative changes (regarding the field of public and environmental procurement) or delays in the launch of calls, 6 out of 29 respondents; 5 out of 29 respondents did not have procedural problems during the project preparation phase.

#### Preliminary conclusions:

Future needs can be prioritized on sectoral areas that will require non-reimbursable financing through mechanisms similar to those in AP4. It can also be concluded that the previous programming exercise led to a lower percentage of beneficiaries resorting to outsourced services for project development than that of the beneficiaries who carry out projects, the difference being realized internally and with the support of the bodies in the territory of the lender and that we can enjoy a percentage of 17.24% of the respondents who did not have procedural problems in the preparation phase of the projects, the difference up to 100% but experiencing difficulties of different natures.

The qualitative data collected in the focus groups reveals the following:

- The municipalities agree that the ROP 2007-2015 has increased the capacity of administrations in the strategic planning process and that, through the interventions made at the level of UAT in the field of increasing administrative capacity, the number and quality of public services delivered to the community has increased;
- Although local administrations consider that they are improving their capacity with each programming period in which they are invited to develop projects, only a part of the administrations have found the way they consider it appropriate to manage a higher number of projects.

In the North-East region, the LPA is available to try different examples of good practice:

- Iași City - close collaboration with the Iași Metropolitan Area Association;
- Bacău Municipality - close collaboration with the Bacău Local Development Agency but also internally by involving all the directions;
- Piatra Neamț Municipality - capitalizing on the transfer of know-how carried out by external consultants over time, determining the improvement of the skills of the internal staff) and it is recommended to adapt them to their own situations.

Interviews with privileged witnesses confirmed that the ROP mobilized and empowered UA, changed and will change the mentality of LPAs and citizens, orienting them to the human nature of the interventions and less for cars and road infrastructure, for collaboration, changing the way of thinking. , approach to problem solving. SSDU has undoubtedly contributed through consulting to the increase of administrative capacity at the level of municipalities, in different phases of programming and project development. The SSDU could carry out ex-post monitoring actions, a responsibility according to the current institutional framework under UA responsibility.

Corroborating the conclusions of the analyzes of the data collected following the application of the various tools, it can be stated that, undoubtedly, the approach promoted by PA 4 has contributed, and will contribute to the improvement of the administrative capacity at local level, both at the level of the beneficiaries and at the level of the services provided at provision for local communities, but also for the change of organizational culture, in particular cooperation with civil society and NGOs. However, only a part of the administrations have found the way they deem fit to manage a higher number of projects. The type of professionalism of the LPA depends on the typology and quality of investments and how they respond to the needs of the communities, therefore the measures to support them must be continued and strengthened.

## b) The results, the findings following the analysis

Following the analysis of the different information obtained during the evaluation process through the different evaluation tools used, the following considerations have been outlined, in connection with the evaluation questions:

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| 1  | Given the current state of implementation of PA 4, to what extent will the ROP promote / contribute to sustainable urban | Quantitative analyzes based on the data from MySMIS until 08.08.2019 show that there is a good degree of coverage of allocations on all OS, with significant differences between OS. Specifically, in relation to the allocations, projects representing 229.4% of the value of the allocations for OS 4.1 "Urban mobility" were submitted, 105.9% of the value of the allocations for OS 4.2 "Urban revitalization", 124.4% of the value of the |

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|    | <p>development in Romania by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>urban mobility plans, use of public transport?</li> <li>improving the quality of urban life and generating urban spaces?</li> <li>conversion of degraded land into green spaces?</li> <li>physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized areas and communities related?</li> <li>a general improvement of the quality of the educational infrastructure concerned?</li> </ul> | <p>allocations for OS 4.3 "Regeneration of the disadvantaged community" and 176, 2% of the value of the allocations for OS 4.4. It can be seen that the interventions financed under OS 4.1 will best contribute to sustainable urban development, while, at the opposite end, the operations financed under OS 4.2 which are slightly higher than the allocations.</p> <p>Until 08.08.2019, 486 financing applications were submitted in the total amount of the non-reimbursable contribution of 13,630,266,343 lei, which represents 210.90% of the total allocation of 6,464,286,504 lei at PA level 4. The report differs between the development regions thus : 124.30% in the North-East region, 144.30% in the South-East region, 138.40% in the South-Muntenia region, 150.90% in the South-West Oltenia region, 196.70% in the West region, 381.70% in the North-West region and 134.10% in the Center region. All regions have shown positive results, but the North-West region has a value of projects submitted by approximately four times the value of the financial allocation. At the level of this region, good practice models were identified, which consisted of actions supported to promote ROP interventions, which determined the municipalities to become increasingly involved in the preparation of projects and participatory budgeting. To this is added also the obtaining in a short period of time the ownership documents, due to the existence of a quality Cadastre.</p> <p>56 financing contracts in total value of the EU contribution of 1,504,592,451 lei were signed, out of the total non-reimbursable contribution of 1,734,541,995 lei. At the level of the development regions the number of contracts is distributed as follows: 2 contracts in the North-East region, 4 contracts in the South-East region, 1 contract in the South-Muntenia region, 3 contracts in the South-West Oltenia region, 7 contracts in the West region , 36 contracts in the North-West region, 1 contract in the Center region and 2 contracts in the Bucharest-Ilfov region (projects in partnership with MDRAP, even if the Bucharest-Ilfov region has no budget allocated). The number of operations financed on each IP on 08.08.2019 is as follows: PI 4.1 - 31 operations (of which 16 projects in the "unfinished" category and 2 projects in partnership); PI 4.3 - 5 operations; PI 4.4 - 16 operations; PI 4.5 - 4 operations. Launching calls for these types of operations has proven to be a beneficial solution to eliminate the risk of disengagement of funds from the EC side. There were made payments in the amount of 46,209,640 lei, which represents 2.66% of the allocation of 1,734,541,995 lei totally non-refundable.</p> <p>From the questionnaire-based survey conducted at the level of all municipalities with contracts within PA 4 (22 UAT), it was found that almost all beneficiaries of PA 4 approached investment projects related to urban mobility, which shows that there are still unmet needs in previous</p> |

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|    |                                   | <p>programming period, regarding this type of infrastructure. Through the portfolios of projects submitted and under evaluation, all AP4 objectives are covered at national level with a percentage of coverage of each objective by over 50% of the beneficiaries. This fact demonstrates the need to complement investments in infrastructure that ensure sustainable mobility and connectivity, by almost unanimously involving beneficiaries in OS 4.1 interventions. The survey also reveals that the average number of projects submitted and under evaluation in AP4 per beneficiary interviewed is 11 projects (the lowest number of projects submitted and under evaluation in AP4 per beneficiary is 4 in Miercurea Ciuc (which is why UAT has been selected as a case study), and the highest number of projects submitted and under evaluation in AP4 per beneficiary is 24, in Drobeta-Turnu Severin. The average number of projects under preparation in AP4 per interviewed beneficiary is about 1.4 projects (where Bacau stands out, with 3 projects, given that the same beneficiary has 13 projects submitted and under evaluation. It was confirmed by the corroboration of the various data collected and analyzed through the different instruments, that only a few UAT manage to manage a number. large number of projects; this is due to a good administrative capacity but also to the application of mechanisms that allow the generation of certain projects. alitate: a good consultation process, involving professional consultants or partnerships at local level with local operators or subordinate units.</p> <p>To analyze to what extent indicators assumed by the ROP will be achieved, and because in MySMIS no indicators were identified, 40 financing applications were analyzed: based on the collected indicators and extrapolating to the total allocations it can be concluded that, if the targets assumed through projects will be fulfilled to the value provided in the financing contracts, there are all the premises that they lead to the fulfillment of the ROP indicators.</p> <p>At the level of the whole PA it can be stated that the interventions within PI 4.1 contribute to a very good extent to the sustainable urban development in Romania through the plans of urban mobility and the use of public transport, to a moderate extent to the regeneration of the degraded spaces, and in the a good measure for the physical, economic and social regeneration of the marginalized areas and of the communities, of the related areas and for the overall improvement of the quality of the educational infrastructure concerned.</p> |

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| 2  | <p>Was the intervention logic of the Priority Axis verified in implementation? If not, which elements need improvement (eg expected results, implementation mechanisms / types of interventions)? Are there examples of good practices in terms of interventions to promote urban development and what are their main features, which can be taken up in the future?</p> | <p>On one side of the analysis of the intervention logic, the results were provided within the GIs 1, taking into account the identified needs, the eligible operations, the estimated targets (results) and the degree of response of the target group to which the interventions are addressed, the financial allocations. It can be concluded that the prerequisites for establishing the types of operations eligible for funding have largely been verified in implementation. Apart from the fact that the allocations for most of the PIs (but especially PI 4.1) prove insufficient and should be supplemented by the ROP or by identifying other resources from the national budget (the municipalities generally have limited financial capacity) we will summarize the findings as much as possible. regarding the mechanisms and procedures of implementation, as part of the intervention logic.</p> <p>The process of financing the interventions under PA 4 is a process that completes several stages of strategic planning at the local level and which involves several stages for potential beneficiaries, stages that involve procedures and a legally regulated institutional framework. Due to this complexity, due to the fact that the calls for proposals were launched later compared to the calls from other PAs, but also due to a mechanism for elaborating, submitting and selecting perfectly, the projects within the PA are slow, mainly due to a process. duration of completion of the technical documentation (within the duration of implementation of the financing contract).The documentation of the calls has been considerably improved and is very responsive to the needs; the eligibility criteria have largely responded to the needs of the communities, however proposals for improvement will be formulated in Chapter 5.</p> <p>Generally, the lack / insufficiency of a thorough substantiation of the information that had to be included in the project sheets, in relation to the provisions of the specific guides, fact which determined that a significant number of project files, selected and prioritized by AU, included in the list annexed to DJ FESI, could not be realized.</p> <p>At LPA level, with or without the support of OI, different typologies of consultative actions were organized with civil society, the economic environment, for the development strategies, working meetings; OI to provide support in the preparation of SSDU / SSDL pin projects. In the South-Muntenia region, 9 events were organized with the participation of 380 participants; In the South-West Oltenia region, 10 training meetings were organized with AU, 20 working meetings with the beneficiaries in the project preparation phase and 3 training meetings for the implementation of the contracted projects; The Center region organized a working meeting</p> |

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|    |   | <p>on urban development and the stage of the implementation of AP 4 with JASPERS representatives, one meeting in each county resident municipality to discuss the development of SIDU and PMUD. Good practice examples have been identified in the North West region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ UAT o UAT Baia Mare used social networks to define the needs and strategy of the municipality, a large number of people participated in the organized events, especially young people, also providing written contributions and</li> <li>○ North-West region, which registered on 08.08.2019 a contracting rate of 116.80% (total ERDF + BS non-reimbursable funds related to the allocation), compared to the average of 26.80% in the regions.</li> </ul>  |
| 3  | <p>What programming and selection mechanisms have proven to be effective and for what reason? What are the lessons learned from the perspective of the PA implementation strategy? What types of interventions / implementation mechanisms have proven to be effective and why?</p> | <p>The data collected from the application of the evaluation tools and techniques (a very important role in this case had the privileged witnesses), came out numerous proposals to improve the institutional framework, legislation, procedures and mechanisms, documentation. The following findings have emerged as a result of the analyzes carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The national regional development strategy is based on the regional development strategies drawn up at regional level. However, the law of regional development does not surprise the innovative aspects related to integrated territorial development, and one of the problems encountered by the local public administrations is that the law of the public administration does not allow them to make investments within the administrative territory outside its territory. Thus, the polycentric approach is difficult to implement and the role of the inter-community associations must be enhanced to promote this approach;</li> <li>▪ It is necessary in the programming mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the metropolitan areas, to capitalize on the experience of the growth poles regarding the achievement of SIDU and a greater involvement of the SSDU in the support granted to the beneficiaries, even from the beginning phase of project preparation;</li> <li>▪ SIDU must pay attention to urban, peri-urban, metropolitan areas and how they are financially supported;</li> <li>▪ Even if the selection mechanisms are perfectable (and the mechanisms of project prioritization and the role of the different structures involved in the urban development process in the different phases of the programming and selection of the projects - for example the Local Council, based on the existing strategies, could elaborate the criteria for selection), all the 29 respondents of the survey by questionnaire considered that the projects selected to be submitted within the AP4 have a truly priority character for the sustainable urban development of the municipality;</li> <li>▪ The documentation of the calls is very complex, it covers many of the situations in practice, leaving little flexibility, but only 9 of the 29</li> </ul> |

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|    |  | <p>respondents of the survey through the questionnaire consider it clear and very clear;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The current mechanism of project submission has led to the submission of a very large number of funding applications related to the allocations; this should be replaced by a mechanism whereby the submission of projects stops when the submission reaches a certain threshold in relation to the financial allocation;</li> <li>▪ The eligibility criteria are largely responsive to the needs, but in the case of certain IPs their enlargement is needed;lor;</li> </ul> <p>It can be stated with certainty that the ROP has contributed (so far) effectively to promoting the integrated approach in urban development, by: strengthening the planning and administrative capacity of the LPA, developing the local inter-institutional and inter-sectoral partnerships, creating a list of priority projects (and pipeline projects) this requires finding additional sources of funding within, or outside, the ROP.</p>   |
| 4  | What is the level of sustainability of the urban development dimension of the actions promoted by the ROP? | <p>The financial sustainability is ensured through PIDU and verified in the evaluation process. Potential beneficiaries must provide, for the 10 year investment period, the cash flow of the project. The financial statements must contain all the costs of operating the investment. Once included in the list of priority projects, UAT automatically allocates resources, without the need for a HCL. For this reason, financial sustainability is ensured. This fact was also confirmed by the analysis of the case studies, for which it was appreciated that the projects have a level 3 sustainability (on a scale from 1 to 3, where 3 is the higher value).</p> <p>Organizational sustainability is a key factor in ensuring sustainable development; with all the progress made at the LPA level, the ability to program, prioritize, prepare and update strategic documents, project management, procurement expertise (or the selection and monitoring of service providers and / or works) is still deficient in many municipalities, The resources allocated to services for publicly funded programs are small in number, with limited knowledge and experience; the staff assigned to AU is not paid for additional tasks, which can lead to a low interest rate. Other findings regarding the administrative capacity, the partnerships will be approached within the EQ 7.</p> |
| 5  | Does the integrated approach promoted by this priority axis lead to better results compared to the         | <p>The opinions among the privileged witnesses (IOs) are contradictory regarding the extent to which the change of the technical approach on integrated urban development, namely the abandonment of the integrated project package in the ROP 2014-2020, has influenced the integrated character of the interventions. While at the level of an IB, it is appreciated that in the current period the integrated nature of the interventions has</p>   |

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|    | <p>sectoral approach? In practice (in the implementation of operations) is complementarity guaranteed, ie the integrated approach of the interventions? To what extent is complementarity with other funding sources ensured (eg European, national, local, etc.)?</p> | <p>been strengthened, other IBs appreciate that either nothing has changed or that it has been diluted. Probably all opinions are justified and correct, because the realities differ from context to context. For the local communities that have not been able to cover the basic needs with the different infrastructures, talking about the integrated approach of the interventions does not seem a priority, while for the communities that have done this much needed work for the community, the integral approach is vital.</p> <p>The analyzes revealed the following results regarding the integrated approach of the interventions and the complementarity of the financing sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is ensured by the eligibility and selection criteria of the interventions, which emphasize the internal complementarity of the interventions financed within the PA. In this regard, both the FESI and SIDU supporting documents analyzed have sections dedicated to the description of this integrated character. The operations financed by PA 4 are highly integrated (the value of the qualitative indicator was between 3 and 5, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is the highest value), each intervention being correlated with at least two specific objectives, reveals the analysis of the case studies, the confirmed level and the analysis of the results of the survey through a questionnaire where 24.11% of the beneficiaries of PA 4 financed the interventions from each specific objective from different sources each and 39.14% financed the interventions from the 3 specific objectives from other complementary sources.</li> <li>▪ It depends on the capacity and the willingness to involve the interest groups and it must be based on the creation of entities with legal personality, which have sufficient administrative capacity to support this process;</li> <li>▪ The complementarity between the interventions carried out through PA4 and other initiatives carried out by the beneficiary from own sources and / or internal or external non-reimbursable funds and projects financed within PA4 is evident and it is also evident that the projects derive from the experience of the programming period. 2007-2013;</li> <li>▪ SIDU capitalized on the experience of achieving PIDU, which was a good exercise implemented at the level of a limited area, and extended it to the level of a larger area, respectively at the level of UAT;</li> <li>▪ The interventions under PA 4 ROP are largely complementary to existing initiatives at county or regional level and promoted by the County Council, to a lesser extent with other European projects and with existing initiatives at county level, and even more modest with the initiatives funded from the local budget.</li> </ul> |
| 6  | Do these   | From the analysis of the external complementarity it can be observed that   |

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|    | <p>complementarities create synergies? What should be improved to achieve synergies and increase the impact of integrated interventions?</p>  | <p>there are sources of financing of the interventions of sustainable development that address needs that are not financed by the ROP ed ex. Urban Program Innovative Actions); The use of these complementary financing sources can lead to synergies in the sense that they allow to cover needs that were not considered in SIDU, but are of interest to the local community (which will lead to updating the strategy and finally to a level of satisfaction of needs. community).</p> <p>Among the beneficiaries of the PA, the case study of Oradea municipality revealed that due to the budgetary constraints of the investment, the municipality came with a new approach to the financing mode, respectively, decided to divide by components that were financed in the same specific objective on projects. different, so internal synergy was enhanced.</p> <p>As regards the measures to increase the impact of integrated interventions, it has emerged as a pressing necessity in the current ROP, the need to identify sources of funding that cover the value of all integrated and complementary projects within a package proposed by UAT.</p> <p>At the institutional level, rethinking the authority responsible for managing interventions - by expanding the area of expertise - would allow for large investment projects with regional and not just local impact.</p>   |
| 7  | <p>Has it contributed so far and will the approach promoted through this priority axis contribute to improving the administrative capacity at local level in the future? (change of organizational culture, cooperation with civil society, economic environment, NGOs, etc.)</p> | <p>Following the discussions with the privileged witnesses and with the beneficiaries, it was observed that the approach promoted through this axis led to the improvement of the administrative capacity at local level; not only new models of approach to financing the interventions, which were the most pressing needs of the LPA, were created and developed, but also new ways of involving and empowering citizens and institutions in the "life of the city" (eg the consultation process and participation in defining strategic development priorities at local level, participatory budget, partnerships).</p> <p>This results from the analysis of all the data collected in the evaluation process. Specifically, the following findings were revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The LPA facilitated the participation and involvement of the actors in the territory in the programming phase of SIDU / ROP interventions;</li> <li>▪ LPAs have developed internal structures and stable collaborations with consultants in order to increase the capacity of strategic planning;</li> <li>▪ The previous programming exercise led to a lower percentage of beneficiaries resorting to outsourced services for project development;</li> <li>▪ The increase of the administrative capacity of the LPA has led to the new services to the population and implicitly to the increase of the</li> </ul> |

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|    |                                   | <p>quality of life of citizens;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Although the LPA agrees that there has been an improvement of the administrative capacity at local level, only a part of the administrations have found the way to manage a higher number of projects;</li> <li>▪ The professionalism level of the LPA is crucial in the typology and quality of investments and the way they respond to the needs of the communities, therefore,</li> <li>▪ The measures to support LPA capacity must be continued and strengthened.</li> </ul> |

## 5. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

### Conclusions

Considering the implementation stage of all the projects within AP4, ie that no project is finalized, the evaluation focused mainly on the aspects related to the intervention logic and the implementation mechanisms, but also on the analysis of the premises for achieving the results proposed by the program.

1. At the current stage of implementation of the interventions in PA 4, in view of the number of projects submitted within each OS and the value of the projects accepted for funding (which is double the value of the existing allocations), it is found that there is a special interest of the LPA to access the interventions through ROP. The interest regarding the typology of the proposed interventions is different, the most accessed being the interventions through OS 4.1. Based on existing data and analyzes based on available indicators, PA 4 objectives (to reduce pollution through the use of public transport, to improve the quality of urban life and to generate urban spaces, to convert degraded lands into green spaces, to physical, economic and social regeneration of marginalized areas and related communities, the overall improvement of the quality of the educational infrastructure concerned) will be achieved, and the indicators assumed through the ROP will be achieved.
2. The projects financed by PA 4 concern investments of different types, most of them targeting investments in urban transport infrastructure but also educational infrastructure. The effects of the projects, which will take place after the completion of the implementation, will mainly contribute to the increase of the quality of life, but also of the attractiveness of the cities, which creates the premises of their socio-economic development, by attracting the population and the entrepreneurs.
3. The logic of the intervention has been largely verified in implementation. The typology of the actions to be financed was covering the needs of the LPA and leads to the achievement of the results; the eligible costs largely covered the investment needs, although not for all the beneficiaries - the case studies and some of the beneficiaries who answered the survey through the questionnaire highlighted other needs at the local level not covered by public financing (the study provides these needs / costs ). The implementation mechanisms lead to the achievement of the results, but their efficiency and effectiveness can be improved; factors have been identified that may contribute in this regard.
4. The selected indicators respond largely to the typology of the inventions but the system is perfectable, both for the achievement indicators and for the result indicators.
5. The beneficiaries consider that certain needs of the community have not been met by the public financing: paved streets, intermodal centers, road crossings and parking lots, rehabilitation of existing playgrounds and green areas, new agri-food markets, residential centers for the elderly, thermal utilities. and car parks within the city or heritage buildings with a different destination than the ones to visit).
6. The launch of calls for "unfinished" type projects and projects in partnership with MDRAP had the effect of accelerating the degree of implementation of interventions within the axis. Interventions in transport and educational infrastructure have best responded to the needs of local communities.

7. The main limitation identified in the programming mechanism, and for which it is appreciated that solutions must be identified quickly, is that the preparation part of the projects has not been sufficiently correlated with the allocations; the municipalities were asked to prepare a critical mass of projects, without considering the implications on local budgets and legal consequences (budget allocation, spending on project preparation, for investments that do not take place are sanctioned according to the law of local public finances). Thus, the strategic planning and project preparation efforts of the mayors should be harnessed so that alternative financing sources not covered by the ROP can be found. The aspect of complementarity of funds must be reinforced from the perspective of "certainty of financing", which is a precondition for substantiating local budgets.
8. Another aspect, also under the relatively low availability of funds, is related to the correlation of the priority investments with the local situation: the prioritization must bring to the surface the stringent priorities, concentrating the interventions on the projects with added value for the regional or subregional interest, of the area. functional urban. In this sense it must start from the PUG and from the vision of polycentric development in Romania.
9. The specialists in urban planning, spatial planning and the academic environment interviewed agree that the approach of interventions only at the level of territorial administrative units leads to projects that do not contribute to regional development, but to local development, without real impact on reducing regional disparities and that the current law of regional development does not respond to current development challenges. In this regard, integrated urban development interventions must also include the economic component, in order to stimulate socio-economic growth based on improved infrastructure conditions.
10. At the institutional level, rethinking the authority responsible for managing interventions - by expanding the area of expertise - would allow for large investment projects with regional and not just local impact.
11. The level of sustainability of the urban development dimension of the actions promoted by the ROP is ensured by the selection criteria of the operations, by assuming responsibility in the implementation of SIDU, through the mechanisms created at the level of municipalities, such as eg. creation of transport operators, maintenance contracts subordinated to each direction of the town hall according to the type of investment, the appropriate financial allocation. The results of the survey through a questionnaire, complementary to the results obtained from the analysis of the case studies, contribute to the strengthening of the opinion that, the interventions within PA 4 are based on mechanisms meant to ensure their sustainability and on a strategic planning capacity of the local administration improved.
12. The integrated approach to interventions is undoubtedly a way that contributes to sustainable urban development more efficiently and effectively if criteria for prioritizing, evaluating and selecting customized types of interventions and local administrative capacity, and the necessary funding are provided. The corroboration of the conclusions obtained from analyzing the data obtained by applying different instruments confirms that the integrated approach promoted by PA 4 responds better to the needs of the communities than the sectoral approach.
13. Within the ROP, complementarity is largely ensured, but the high investment needs of the LPA, demonstrated by the value of the projects prepared and accepted for financing, require finding alternative sources of financing not covered by the current allocations within the ROP, in order to ensure the integrated approach of the ROP. project package of municipalities.

14. Improving the administrative capacity at local level is probably the most important indirect effect of PA interventions 4. This fact is supported by the opinions expressed by questionnaires of the 29 beneficiaries who responded to the survey, covering the entire portfolio of projects contracted within the deadline. of 31.08.2019 considered for evaluation; the opinion is also supported by representatives of the SSDU within the OI. This indirect effect has created more synergies: new models for approaching the financing of interventions have been created and developed, the degree of involvement and accountability of citizens and institutions has increased, it has led to better quality projects and new services to population, and implicitly in increasing the quality of life of citizens.

## Recommendations

Following the experiences gained from the implementation of the ROP 2007-2013 but also of the calls launched from the ROP 2014-2020, MA ROR, OI, other privileged witnesses / stakeholders and the beneficiaries made recommendations. From these experiences, lessons learned, key success factors and failure factors emerged. Therefore, there is a determination and interference between these sections of the report; where the lesson learned also includes the related recommendation, it was not provided for in the "recommendations" section, except to the extent that it brings another element of added value, in another context.

### *Recommendations for the current programming period*

To reduce the contracting period:

- Use of technical assistance resources to supplement internal staff resources;
- Highlighting the most recent version of MySMIS resulting from the various modifications of the funding application and the annexes, in order to consolidate the package of documents required for contracting.

To increase the efficiency of the processing of payment requests / reimbursement requests:

- Waiving the request for documents that already exist in the contract file.

To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation management process::

- More efficient use of MySMIS through:
  - Adapting the system to the needs of all categories of users (consulting users in relation to problems encountered);
  - Taking in a field of information already registered in MySMIS, even if it has been entered in another field of another menu, in order to avoid multiple uploads of information / documents;
  - Verification of existing data in the system. especially of the indicators (the projects did not load the indicators).
  - The interpretation of the eligibility criteria to be done in the permissive sense, ie what is not forbidden, must be considered permissible;
  - A unitary procedural and technical approach of the same issues between different Pls (eg ownership) is required

- Reintroducing the obligation of PT verification by the SSDU would reduce the possibility of presenting some non-compliant or incomplete projects;
- Analyze the opportunity to replace the current mechanism of calls; replacement of calls with a deadline for submission with open calls, with the submission and selection of financing applications to stop when a certain threshold is reached, in relation to the financial allocation, an evaluation process carried out on the first-come-first-served basis;
- Sustained use of technical assistance resources during peak times when internal resources at the level of MA and / or OI are not sufficient (eg maintaining support services through the Help Desk offices until the contracting period to help mature project;
- In the process of project selection, the assessment of the legality of the documents and their validity should not be the responsibility of the ADR but of the LPA (according to the provisions of the current Applicant Guide, this task is the responsibility of the IB).
- (these recommendations also apply for the future programming period).

To ensure an integrated approach to interventions:

- Reallocating the amounts from the budget allocated to AP4 with the amounts necessary to ensure all integrated and complementary interventions, as they have been proposed and accepted by DJ so that current interventions can generate future interventions of a higher complexity.

#### *Recommendations for the next programming period*

To increase the impact of the urban development process::

- Improving the planning process by carrying out a real consultative process, which precedes the negotiation with the European Commission.

To ensure greater effectiveness of ROP intervention:

- A revision of the AU concept approach is required. Existing structures, such as ZM or ADI, can carry out AU functions, and can better ensure an integrative role of policies in the territory. Also, apart from their role in strategic planning, they could also play a role in project monitoring, a function that is currently somewhat deficient at UA level.

To increase the capacity for elaboration and implementation of regional policies:

- Regional development policy and regional development plans must be directly substantiated through existing strategic documents in the field of spatial planning;
- Strategic planning efforts should be more focused on basic needs (which the spatial planning documents have mapped), before any other development objective, which will not reach its purpose if these basic needs are not met;
- Prioritization of projects must be adapted by category of cities and municipalities, depending on their administrative capacity, their needs and resources;
- Integrated territorial mechanisms should be designed taking into account the optimal level of "critical mass" needed to ensure the functionality of the urban and peri-urban area;
- It is necessary in the programming mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the metropolitan areas, to capitalize on the experience of the growth poles regarding the achievement of SIDU and a greater involvement of the SSDU in the support granted to the beneficiaries, even from the beginning phase of project preparation;

- It is necessary in the programming mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the metropolitan areas, to capitalize on the experience of the growth poles regarding the achievement of SIDU and a greater involvement of the SSDU in the support granted to the beneficiaries, even from the beginning phase of project preparation;
- SIDU must pay attention to urban, peri-urban, metropolitan areas and how they are financially supported;
- The integrated approach of urban development actions could use as an example other EU Member States where it was gradually developed, through various pilot experiences from the URBAN initiative (eg based on neighborhoods) and continued during the current period based on the mechanisms. participatory and previously activated partnerships;
- To promote the polycentric approach it is necessary to have the strategic vision continuity at central and local government level;
- The programming mechanisms to ensure: the support of urban, peri-urban, metropolitan areas and the financial support granted to these structures in SIDU, to capitalize on the experience of the growth poles and a greater involvement of the SSDU in the support of the potential beneficiaries, even from the early stage of project preparation; updating the existing strategic documents, in the form of a single strategic document at the level of each targeted UAT, which contains both the mandatory elements of a strategy and the essential elements of a PMUD / PAED / PIEE / etc, but eliminating overlaps and replay, both within the framework the document as well as in the process of verification, evaluation of it;
- Improvement of the mechanisms for prioritizing the projects and the role of the different structures involved in the urban development process in the different phases of project programming and selection;;
- Strengthening support measures for increasing administrative capacity at the UAT level, especially in the field of public procurement and project management, by raising awareness of the beneficiaries of the financing availability through POCA (PA 1 and PA 2), POAT (PA 1) and ROP (PA 12), but also dpdv programmatic. This should be a permanent priority, both at local level and especially at central level, where regional policies can be combined with those for administrative capacity support. Therefore, measures to support LPA capacity must be continued and strengthened.
- A real and broad process of consultation in the phase of the development of the programmatic documents would allow a more effective process of identifying the needs of the communities but also of empowering as many members of the economic environment, civil society, academia, etc. . which will contribute to a better sustainability of the interventions. As well as the realization of partnerships, where the typology of the projects imposes it.

To increase the efficiency of the implementation management process:

- Opening of financing lines immediately after ROP approval;
- A broader consultation for the realization of the applicant's guide in order to obtain a clearer, simplified, easy-to-complete content of the application for financing, especially with the potential beneficiaries;
- More precise formulations that avoid multiple interpretations;
- Training sessions with applicants to clarify the content of the applicant's guide, focusing on eligibility criteria, eligible costs and the classification of certain species, as they emerged from the current programming period;
- Sizing personnel resources at the level of MA and OI according to the degree of task load;
- Generally: the procedures, planning and programming (including the legislative framework) should be clear and not change from day to day without implementation methodology (this recommendation is the consequence of a lesson learned).

Other measures, including legislation. which may be of interest to the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration::

- Changing the law of regional development, in the sense of recognizing the region as an administrative unit, would significantly contribute to major investments, made at the level of several TAUs, which may represent integrated investments with real strategic effect;
- Carrying out integrated urban development plans, including by including the cultural reconversion of areas in creative neighborhoods, cultural centers, etc .;etc.;

## Lessons learned, best practice models

### At the level of AM and OI ROP

- ✓ The good collaboration between MA and OI ROR led to the improvement of the eligibility conditions during the launch of the different calls (especially for the "unfinished" projects) in relation to the first launches of 2016 such as: acceptance of the provisional ownership title, including the expenses with the works. of infrastructure for utilities;
- ✓ The capitalization of the experience from previous exercises is minimal. Although the AP 4 guides were released later, they did not include previous experiences;
- ✓ Shortening the evaluation and selection period, by accumulating some stages (on-site visit to the ETF). The prolonged duration of these processes diminishes the implementation period;
- ✓ The signing of the contract at the SF / PT stage led to the shortening of the period of implementation of the ROP and entailed the extension of the duration of implementation by additional acts. Since the beneficiaries start the procurement after contracting, the completion of these documents is a long process. Contracting could be carried out in different design phases and applicants could submit projects with completed PT (this would entail expenses without having the certainty of accepting funding) or it could reduce the deadline for beneficiaries to launch PT ( currently it is 6 months);
- ✓ A new mechanism for payment applications introduced in April 2013 (by accepting payment applications), with a substantial impact on the increase in absorption;
- ✓ □ Because there was no obligation to check PT at SSDU, most of the projects did not go through the SSDU filter and beneficiaries did not benefit from consulting. Even though this modification of the procedures was seen by the beneficiaries as an opportunity to save time, it actually led to the submission of incomplete or incomplete projects. A preview of the projects developed by the AP4 beneficiaries by the SSDU, based on a schedule, would lead to the improvement of the quality of the projects and would reduce the duration of the evaluation process;
- ✓ The procedure and the prioritization criteria limited the communities in defining the local needs, the large number of criteria limited the chance to apply for funding. An appropriate prioritization procedure could be achieved through SSDU / SSDL, without these structures having local interference;
- ✓ Encouraging the participation of civil society through consultation meetings contributed to the LPA's responsibility to prioritize projects;
- ✓ Effective and proactive communication in relation with the beneficiaries, led to the improvement of the quality of the projects;
- ✓ Not only are these two programming periods sufficient to meet general basic needs (needs are constrained under the umbrella of mobility and full effective needs are not met), these needs must continue to be supported by funding under the ROP.POR.

#### At the level of the beneficiaries

- ✓ The need to identify a more appropriate implementation mechanism because the establishment of the AU as a Level 2 IB involved additional and unpaid work and the key persons in the municipality who are in conflict of interest in relation to the projects being submitted that could participate in the constitution body. In any case, by establishing the AU, it was understood the importance of prioritizing and maturing the projects, the existing risks;
- ✓ The process of preparing the projects in SIDU and PMUD must be collaborative, involving the economic environment, the citizen, the champ, and then involving AU, taking into account the particular needs, using the flexibility to create criteria, in the financial envelope. ;
- ✓ The updating of the strategic documents must be done during the course, when it is required and not ad-hoc, and together with all the factors that contributed to these documents in order to harmonize their opinions and visions (eg UAT Bistrita has done so). The correlation between SIDU and PMUD was difficult due to the public procurement procedures (SIDU and PMUD were elaborated by different types of suppliers, the procurement was done in different stages, and the elaboration of the documentation began to be phased out. SIDU with PMUD scenarios, which were eventually realized and thought completely different.);
- ✓ The sub-criteria and the scoring method have determined the beneficiaries to learn that they must present well the objectives and the reasons on which the projects and the long-term results are based;
- ✓ A real consultation process, with the support of the community (civil society, economic agents), are success factors in integrated urban planning, ensure sustainable interventions that contribute to increasing the quality of life of citizens, as a general objective of development;
- ✓ Some needs have been identified as defective. For example. the favorable opinion of the MEN was received for certain schools to be restructured / closed and financed;
- ✓ The complexity of the projects within the PA 4 interventions requires a long period of time for their preparation, so that in the future the process must be started early, as the topics are very sensitive (eg urban mobility by public transport);
- ✓ The lack of updated PUG, of the green space register, of the cadastral register and of the property documents were failure factors in order to benefit from the interventions within the ROP;
- ✓ The selection of the designer and the consultants at different stages (their capacity and experience) and the failure to take into account all the information (eg land ownership) are failure factors in project preparation.

#### Best practice models:

- ✓ LPA with good administrative capacity (quality and number of resources), continuously updates strategies and submits projects on time and of good quality (eg Bistrița Municipality);
  - The administrative capacity of the LPA in the North-West region led to the preparation of a large number of good quality projects, contracted in a short time, which started the activity and made the certified payments with the highest value in the country.

- ✓ Projects that include partnerships ensure a high degree of accountability of local structures and create the premises of sustainable projects;
  - Iași City - close collaboration with the Iași Metropolitan Area Association
  - Bacău Municipality in close collaboration with the Bacău Local Development Agency but also internally, by involving all directions
  - Piatra Neamț Municipality - capitalizing on the transfer of know-how carried out by external consultants over time, determining the improvement of the internal staff competences
- ✓ A sustained process of promotion of interventions and of support through consultancy by SSDU / SSDL at local level, leads to the preparation of a high number of projects accepted for funding;
  - The sustained promotion campaign in the NV region, for informing and raising the awareness of the potential beneficiaries of the financial opportunities within the AP 4 ROR, led to the highest number of applications at the country level.
- ✓ Use of virtual information (social networks) in defining the needs and strategy at the level of UAT Baia Mare;
- ✓ The initiative of the participatory budget by which the citizens are consulted in the way of spending the budgetary resources at local level in Cluj-Napoca, model "recently imported" by Oradea.

## ANNEXES

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