

SUMMARY REPORT

Batch 3 - Evaluation of interventions ROP 2014-2020

DECEMBER 2019

Contents

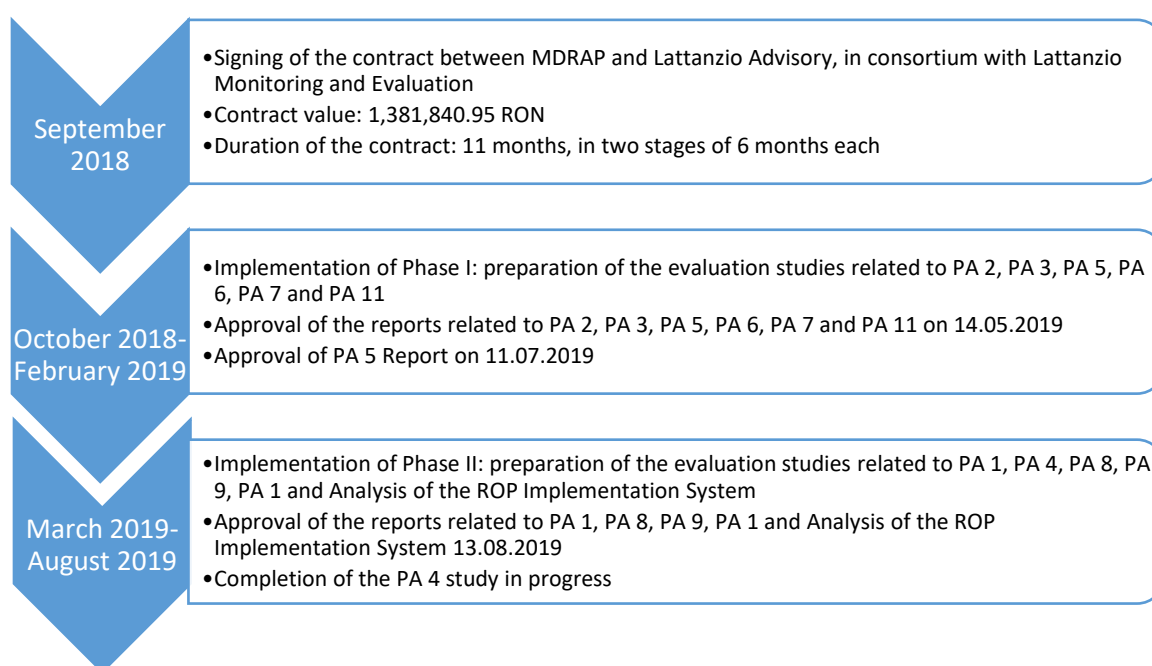
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INTRODUCTION

EVALUATION CONTEXT

This Synthesis Report was prepared in the framework of the services contract signed by Lattanzio Advisory Spa with the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration on September 19, 2018. The project was officially launched on October 9, 2018.

The contract was divided into two stages, each 6 months each, as illustrated by the following chart:



The overall objective of the contract: carrying out an analysis that highlights the progress and performance in the management and implementation of interventions financed under the 2014-2020 Regional Operational Program (ROP) in the period of 2018-2019.

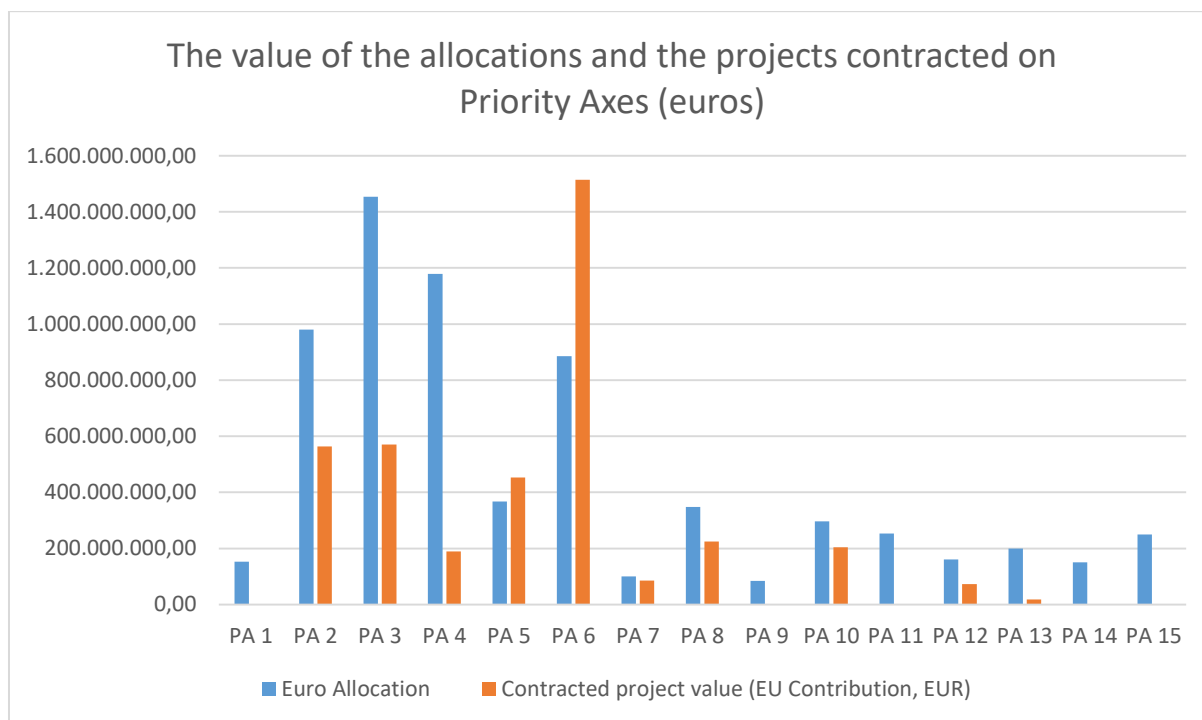
Specific objectives of the contract:

- Supporting the decision-makers based on real information;
- Establishing a source for acquiring new knowledge on the evaluation and implementation of interventions financed under the ROP 2014-2020;
- Preparing proposals on the adequacy of the methodologies used and the databases;
- Consolidating progress reports according to Regulation No 1303/2013

Thus, the object of the evaluation consisted in the analysis of the progresses and the results obtained so far within the implementation of Priority Axes 1-11, as well as the analysis of the ROP implementation system 2014-2020, being focused on the following research topics:

- A. Promoting technology transfer
- B. Improving the Competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises
- C. Supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy
- D. Supporting sustainable urban development
- E. Improving the urban area and conservation, protecting and sustainably capitalizing the cultural heritage
- F. Stimulating regional mobility by improving road infrastructure
- G. The diversification of local economies through sustainable sustainable tourism development
- H. Developing the health and social infrastructure by increasing the accessibility of health services, the efficiency of emergency hospital care and increasing the coverage of social services
- I. Supporting the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in the urban environment
- J. Improving the educational infrastructure
- K. Geographic extension of the system for property registration in the cadastre and land registry
- L. Analysis of the ROP Implementation System

The situation of the progress in implementation of the ROP 2014-2020 on 02.04.2019 shows the following: there are 3,572 projects contracted, finalized or under implementation at national level (without PA 12), amounting to 17.627 billion RON EU contribution (about 3,843 billion euro, respectively about 56% of the EU allocation). Payments to beneficiaries total about 2,475 billion RON (538 million euros respectively, representing about 7.8% of the EU allocation). The value of the allocations and the projects contracted by priority axis (in euros and%) is presented in the following graph:



Methodological approach

The evaluation studies aimed at providing an answer to the following general questions:

To what extent are ROP objectives justified in relation to socio-economic needs and to what extent can the observed progress be attributed to the intervention?

To what extent were the objectives / progress achieved in implementing the program achieved?

For each priority axis a set of specific evaluation questions was defined, which was agreed with MDRAP in the initial phase of each study. The specific evaluation questions have taken into account the stage of implementation of the priority axes, respectively the evaluability of the themes and information requirements expressed by the Client.

Thus, the evaluation methodology was adapted to this context and allowed to reach relevant conclusions, based on robust information obtained by applying a wide set of qualitative and quantitative analysis methods, among which can be mentioned: analysis of the set of indicators; interviews with beneficiaries, implementation system institutions and privileged witnesses; focus groups at national and regional level; investigations, etc. The following table provides an overview of the main methods applied (eg 30 focus groups, 258 interviews, 13 expert panels, 13 opinion polls, etc.), as well as the high number of participants who were involved in the exercise. evaluation (over 2290 people).

	Applied method	Total	
		Total number of applied methods / organized events	Total number of participants/interviewed/ respondents
1	National Focus Groups	9	102
2	Regional Focus Groups	23	182
3	Interviews	258	493
4	Case Studies	61	245
5	Projects included in the Case Studies	137	15
6	Experts Panel	13	83
7	Opinion pools	13	1135
8	Nominal group	4	24
9	Delphi	1	15
	Total	382	2294

To these mainly qualitative methods are added, for each priority axis:

Analysis of intervention logic and theory-based analysis;

Analysis of the set of indicators and monivariate and bivariate data analyzes;

Matrix-based analysis, respectively, internal and external coherence analysis;

Analysis of good practices

In addition, for the axes 11 and the analysis of the implementation system, techniques of process analysis and self-evaluation were adopted, as well as geo-statistical analysis.

Conclusions and lessons learned

- ❑ The technical, financial and procedural progress of the priority axes is differentiated: delays in the start-up at the innovative priority axes: Priority Axis 1 and 9, which involved processes of institutional construction different compared to the previous period;
- ❑ By simplifying the evaluation, selection and contracting phases after the submission of financing applications, the potential beneficiaries, as well as the local communities, will keep their interest in the implementation of the ROP co-financed projects and the project proposals will remain relevant to the local and regional context;

- ☐ Project delays are caused by specific technical, legal and procedural conditions, at sectoral and territorial level, in particular related to the system of property ownership, obtaining approvals, carrying out public procurement procedures. These delays can be prevented by strengthening the help desk function to beneficiaries and further developing the administrative capacity of beneficiaries, including through close collaboration between the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MDRAP) and other institutions involved in these processes (e.g. RDAs at regional level, National Agency of Civil Servants and other governmental structures and national managing authorities).
- ☐ Inter-institutional collaboration at ministerial level is essential for the coherence of regional and national sectoral development policy, as well as in identifying local needs. Starting from the programming stage to the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, this collaboration improves the effectiveness of the results and the performance of the ROP, in line with the objectives of regional development policy and other related government policies;
- ☐ There is also essential a national coordination in terms of legislative measures, so that the legislator supports territorial, economic and social development processes;

Communication, complementarity, information exchange, efficient IT systems, simplification, involvement and taking responsibility by all vertically and horizontally actors are key issues for the success of the Regional Operational Programme and the effectiveness of the regional development policy as a whole.

The following pages present the main findings, conclusions, recommendations and, where appropriate, lessons learned for each study / assessment topic.

PRIORITY AXIS 1 - Promoting technology transfer

Cut-off date: 02/04/2019

1. Conclusions

- ROP 2014-2020 has made a visible contribution to the approach to smart specialization;
- The institutional structures developed by the ROP to support the intelligent specialization process at regional level are perceived as functional;
- RDA activity for improving the degree of involvement of stakeholders and the creation of a participatory process is appreciated by both research organizations and companies.

Research enterprises and organizations in the context of PA 1:

- The promotion of the technological transfer contributes to the intensification of the collaboration between them;
- The regional innovation strategy for smart specialization ensures the most efficient use of the development potential and the competitive advantages;
- The support and guidance received from the RDA for the preparation of the projects were at the level of expectations;
- In the opinion of the representatives of the companies, there is a difference between the expectations regarding the meeting of the partners and the contribution of the ROP on this aspect, while the research organizations consider that this aspect has found the appropriate answer through the ROP - PA1.
- The influence of some barriers on the process of technological transfer of results is confirmed: difficult access to finance and high cost of technological transfer
- The systematic process of consultation between the entrepreneurial sector and the research sector is perceived as functional rather by enterprises than by research organizations;

Sociological research based on an opinion poll attended by 59 companies and 43 research organizations shows the following results. Most consider that:

- Access to finance is difficult;
- The high cost of technology transfer is a barrier;
- Ensuring intellectual property is not a barrier for research organizations, but for businesses;
- The low interest in promoting the TT / research entities for the needs manifested by the market / consumers is a barrier in the creation of partnerships for the economic valorization of the results of the applied research.

2. Recommendations

- Stimulating the participation of professional associations in quadruple helix regional partnership structures (research, entrepreneurship, public authorities, community / civil society) and formalizing these structures in a regional association;
- Creation of an interregional network of CRI within and under the coordination of the Romanian RDA Association <RoReg>;
- Strengthening the institutional memory and sustainability of the CRI through continuous education projects in the preparation and during the programming cycle, with the aim of strengthening the administrative capacity of the regional institutional ecosystem for promoting innovation (partnership structure, RDA, CRI, potential beneficiaries of ROP funding);
- The state aid area remains a critical issue. Ideally, the rules applicable to the programs managed directly by the EC, such as HORIZON, also apply to FESI investments. Dialogue with DG Competition on the issue of state aid for promoting technology transfer and aligning regulations between DG Regio and DG Research is necessary;
- The analysis of the functioning of the governance mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of SNSI 2021+ and RIS3 at the highest level in the state, is necessary for the continuity of the inter-institutional mechanisms at the governmental level;
- Developing the administrative institutional capacity of the MA and the ADR through the continuous training of specialized personnel on S3 and the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of RIS3, as well as to identify and attract innovative financial instruments for the "financial engineering of high value and high risk integrated projects". Financial support for organizing annual innovation fairs in Romania with international participation, etc .;
- Organizing call 2 for operation 1.1.C by simplifying administrative barriers and involving RDA in the process of revising and updating the Applicant's Guide. Making the most of the lessons learned from the first call;
- Elimination of the stage of letters of interest that restricted the access of potential beneficiaries;
- Simplification of the JRC methodology regarding EDP, especially the plenary session, which in some regions does not work due to the lack of entrepreneurial culture, delays or, on the contrary, is considered too standardized in contrast to the creative nature of open innovation;
- It is recommended flexibility in the instrumentation of the JRC methodology in the entrepreneurial discovery processes, in order to favor the adaptation to the regional specificity of the entrepreneurial environment (local entrepreneurial culture, the density of the number of SMEs per 1000 inhabitants, the prevalent business models, etc.) and of the research environment. (the incipient local culture of the partnership with the business sector, the prevalence of some specializations of the university environment in counties or even the shortage of university institutions of technical, technological profile close and concerned with the applied research, etc.);

- Prioritizing waterfall projects, follow up as the transition from a technological maturity level to a higher one compared to the integrated projects. Focus on levels 5-8 of the TRL;
- Encourage the use of already developed research infrastructures that have entered conservation (eg, research infrastructure and laboratories in hospitals could form partnerships that provide services, but they are not income generating entities; at the same time, hospitals cannot finance them during the period ex-post monitoring) and extending the eligibility of the operational parties, including salaries up to 100%, considering the sub-financing of the RDI;
- OPEN DATA SOURCES to ensure the traceability and transparency of the processes carried out;
- Clearer definition of the initial investment within the guidelines;
- Higher predictability for WB projects on the three stages (valorisation of prototype research and market acceptability testing - eg NV and NE regions);
- Specification in clear GS of the supporting documents attesting the completion of the research process and documenting the result that will be the object of economic valorization;
- Elimination of the requirement from GS of 10-year balance sheet financial projections and priority given to cash flow, the ability to generate financial availability flows;
- Correlation of GS provisions with specific requirements on different calls;
- Facilitating partnerships between universities and LPAs for public co-financing, and LPAs should be encouraged to use the research services of the academic environment

3. Lessons learned

- In the perspective of 2021+ sustainable regional development should be focused on regional economic development in accordance with the economic potential and regional development plans (RDPs) and innovation strategies for smart specialization of each region (RIS3);
- The National Strategy for Intelligent Specialization (SNSI) must capitalize on RIS3 and the experience gained at the level of the regional partnership structures and the ADRs that coordinated the participatory processes based on a "bottom-up" initiative;
- There is a need for constant and systematic dialogue at the level of the regions for the uniform understanding of the aspects regarding innovation and intelligent specialization, as well as the co-operation of CRI and ADR in the new project with POCA funding (SIPOCA);
- Progress was made in the preparation of the implementation process to serve and the planning process of the next programming cycle - the ROP prepared with the EC through DG Regio and JRC the implementation process, a true anticipated investment in homogeneous capacity building at the level potential beneficiaries of funding from the eligible regions. Thus, the administrative capacity has been proved at the level of the coordination, management and control system (MA has elaborated a specific and complete regulatory framework, with emphasis on well-drafted guides following iterative processes of consulting

the ADRs, as well as the consortia. regional innovation (CRI) with a role on prioritization and validation of project proposals from regions);

- The stage performances are due to the new tools and mechanisms, such as the methodology for adopting the regional framework document (DCR) and the mechanism for implementing the PA1 in four steps, as well as the technical and financial assistance, guidance and preparation from the ROP and the RP. JRC. To these were added the experience gained by the coordination, management and control system of the ROP and by the potential beneficiaries of the entrepreneurial sector and of the applied research;
- The need to strengthen the administrative capacity is maintained and must be subject to constant concerns, given the need to fulfill the criteria under the favorable conditions both ex-ante programming and during the implementation period.

PRIORITY AXIS 2 - Improving the Competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises

Cut-off date: 31/12/2018

1. Conclusions

- The ROP proposes financing solutions based on the distinct needs of the SME (eg operation 2.2.B financial instruments, venture capital fund, operation 2.1.B business incubators / accelerators, and PA 15 Initiative for SMEs etc.). To the same extent, the ROP is only one of the financial instruments for implementing public policies to support the development of SMEs and cannot come up with financing solutions for all the problems of SMEs in all sectors of the Romanian economy.
- Business incubators are facing great financial difficulties, not being a subject of credit for the banking system, they have no reason to attract their share of co-financing from alternative sources to employ on their own behalf. Income sources of incubators are low, most are established as NGOs or public utilities, permanently subsidized by initiators, founders. Others initially and later, only intermittently, benefited from grant-type financing based on projects. Own revenues are obtained only from the renting of the space and from the provision of general services, usually secretarial services. Their ability to provide specialized or high value-added services is weak, hence their inability to financially support themselves.
- ROP 2014-2020 is the only OP financing investments related to OT 3 - improving the competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector and the fisheries and aquaculture sector.
- The institutional system of the ROP 2014-2020 standardized and simplified the processes of submission, evaluation, contracting, monitoring and control, focused on the needs and responsiveness of the target group of beneficiaries. However, there are administrative obstacles, which are discouraging for SMEs (eg lack of proportionality of administrative requirements with respect to the value of the obtained financing).
- The quality of the guides has increased, being a learning process that the implementation system still goes through with the understanding of the specificity of the SME sector. The participatory and pro-active approach in the preparation of the guides would eliminate the planning errors.

- The partnership principle has been very well implemented in the programming stage and requires its monitoring / improvement and in the implementation stage.
- Help desk information and support offices are a new mechanism, as compared to the previous programming period there is now a service organized in a systematic way. This explains why there is not yet a harmonized, uniform practice in all intermediary bodies. Hence the need to improve the operational procedure, to train and introduce a mechanism for exchanging experience and lessons learned in the communication relationship with SMEs and other categories of beneficiaries of the program.
- The MySMIS application represents a substantial progress, given that it is no longer necessary to submit the required documentation on paper, however, there have been a number of shortcomings, limitations and bottlenecks that require alternative solutions. MySMIS has made an essential contribution to increasing transparency in the management and use of FESI.

2. Recommendations

- Analyze the opportunity of integrated financial mechanisms for SMEs. Coordination of interventions that bring together different financing flows and which allow SMEs to apply individually or in partnership for an integrated global investment covering different needs. But, there are also risks associated with the integrated approach, for example, the complexity of aligning the rules from various funding sources can affect the large-scale implementation.
- Analysis of SMEs' perception of innovation and support through innovation and internationalization consultancy. Specialized consultancy, as well as innovation intermediaries, can act as promotion and / or catalyst factors at SME level to: (i) facilitate understanding of the concept of innovation according to the OECD Oslo Manual, (ii) stimulate interest and focus on innovation. products / services, organizational and marketing processes, (iii) developing the culture of partnership for innovation, etc.
- Financing of other types of business support infrastructures (ISAs) should be extended to innovative clusters or the stimulation of sectoral / specialized incubators in areas of competitiveness (eg, on regional competitiveness areas in the RDP or current smart regional specialization strategies). . In order for the existing incubators to access the funds available in operation 2.1.B, it is necessary to extend the eligibility with the salary expense of the staff employed at the incubator, similar to the situation of the technology transfer centers, at least 50% of the salary fund of the staff from the project management team. At the same time, it is recommended to monitor the range of support services developed and provided by these new entities, considering that through operation 2.1.B new business incubators are created, in fact start-ups of such structures. Monitoring of the indicators of immediate and result realization of the consulting services for residents and non-residents in the incubator is justified by avoiding the risk of providing only hosting services within the material base of the incubator.
- The beneficiary's contribution leads to shared responsibility and risk taking. The differentiation by regions according to their level of development will be made according to the rules regarding the state aid intensity.
- Promote the partnership for the entire duration of the programming period. The monitoring shall be carried out by activating the technical working group according to art. 21 (1) of the ROF of the Monitoring Committee (CM) of the ROP 2014-2020. Moreover, the elaboration of the 2021+ strategy for the FESI requires the greater and more active

involvement of the associations of entrepreneurs, the employers' organizations at all levels, similar to the preparation period for the ROP 2014-2020 or when the evolution of the concept of approach of increasing the competitiveness of the SMEs required the resumption of consultations .

- Analysis and introduction of new public policies in the field of innovation and internationalization of SMEs. There is a need for proactive measures and tools that could be brought to the attention of the Coordination Committee for the Management of the Partnership Agreement (CCMAP), so that future strategic approaches reflect the real development needs of Romania and ensure the improvement and synchronization of policies. public at national level.
- Establishment of the network of information and support offices. It is recommended to introduce in the activity plan of the ADR Association (ROREG) a theme regarding the establishment of the network of information and support offices. It can correlate the activities of preparation of the evaluable projects by the eligible applicants, in the homogenization of the support and counseling practices. It would also facilitate the exchange of experience and case law, contribute to the training of experts on the specific requirements and issues of the types of appeal, both for the SME sector and the business environment, as well as for the other axes;
- Continuing the consultation process with the ADR regarding the establishment of the eligible fields of activity for their better focus on the areas of competitiveness in the RDPs and, for the next programming period, those of the intelligent specialization. The selectivity of the eligible sectors / subsectors and activity areas derives from the need for good strategic coordination and the congruence with the economic and development potential, with the industrial, economic and social tradition of the regions, as well as with development priorities, not being a restriction of access. . Also, being strategic approaches, the consultation process will have to involve high levels of decision from the ADR;
- Introduction of an operational procedure for preparing and certifying the call guides. The guides should be prepared by consulting with the associative business environment, on the segment of consultants with experience in attracting funds;
- Simplification of administrative and eligibility verification. Introducing a new updated statement on its own responsibility of the legal representative with regard to maintaining the shareholding structure from the filing phase and the micro independent size category until contracting. This statement would hold the beneficiaries accountable, would not overload the IB and would speed up the contracting. Verification of the veracity of the declaration to be done by an independent auditor, contractually employed at the closing of the project. The proof of the beneficiary's own contribution must be presented within a maximum of 90 days after the financing contract, similar to the AM ROP instruction regarding the presentation of the building permit. The financing contract should provide for a suspension clause in the event of non-compliance with the indication that it is terminated by law in the absence of presenting the evidence within the time period established by the instruction;
- Simplification of the procedures regarding the subsequent modifications of the financing contract - the rule of the subsequent modifications is the additional act (AA) and not the notification, which prolongs and even stops the implementation of the activities at project level;
- Traceability of applicants - measuring the phenomenon of their return from the beginning by entering a heading in the application form (CF). Thus, it is possible to track the traceability of the applicants on different investment priorities and / or on operations within

a priority. In the absence of traceability elements with the help of CF, the phenomenon can be studied at the sample level in subsequent evaluation exercises or in ex-post monitoring.

- Stimulating the return of beneficiaries through "cascade" financing depending on the stage of development of the company - it offers the possibility of former beneficiaries of the ROP 2007-2013 or SOP CCE 2007-2013 to access the ROP 2014-2020 depending on the developments in their development, respectively modification of the size class of which they belong: 2.1.A - micro-enterprises with market age of at least one year, 2.2.- small and medium-sized enterprises. The approach is feasible, opening up opportunities for companies that have marked growth and development to another category of SMEs even during the current programming cycle. In the next ROP evaluation stages, research is also recommended on the segment of beneficiaries that have registered rapid growth, stimulated by the access to the available funding sources.

3. Lessons learned

- In the perspective of 2021+, sustainable regional development should be focused on regional economic development in accordance with the economic potential and plans for competitive development and specialization of each region.
- SMEs aim to maximize the opportunities in the market, including financing, as their demand mobility is high. The transfer of the results to the region of origin does not lead to their loss from the national economy. The region where it has been granted funding can benefit from a number of advantages of these business relocations: increasing the number of active business units, jobs for a fixed period, the introduction of new business management practices, local taxes and fees. However, the less developed regions are concerned about the objective of reducing regional disparities in the context in which the demand for funding from the more developed regions migrates to those with financial allocations for SMEs. This topic deserves to be brought to the attention of the coordination, management and control system of the ROP.
- The result indicators of AP2 are more synthetic, and the result indicators from the project level are coordinated and congruent with those of the program. The sources of documentation of the indicators are correctly determined, but some differences are maintained in the definition of the result indicator of the ROP 2014-2020 with the definition given by the source of documentation, which is why it is necessary either to align or to set up an own source of documentation at level of project based on conducting systematic investigations at key moments. The foundation of the intervention theory and logic of the future ROP will be done through in-depth context analysis of the situation and dynamics of the SME sector in Romania.
- The unquestionable progress of the 2014-2020 ROP is mainly due to new tools and mechanisms that have supported the implementation of AP 2 in a horizontal manner (specific guides for launched calls, information and support mechanism for applicants in CF preparation, the mechanism for payment requests, etc.). To these are added the experience gained by the coordination, management and control system of the ROP, and by the beneficiaries of SMEs in the previous cycle.

PRIORITY AXIS 3 - Supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy

Cut-off date: 31/12/2018

1. Findings

- Implementation of PA3 satisfactory from the point of view of the capacity for launching the calls and the allocation of the budget, but delayed regarding the commencement of the works within the 408 contracted projects. There are achievements in terms of energy efficiency, mainly in terms of buildings (especially residential ones), while interventions on sustainable urban mobility and street lighting are still delayed;
- Although the rate of real progress in the implementation of projects is very low (less than 4% of the budget has been spent so far), the non-reimbursable budget for the projects contracted until the end of 2018 registers a satisfactory level (38.7% of the financial allocation at the axis level, comparable to the progress made at European level) and is growing rapidly, taking into account the number of projects still under contract (283) and evaluation (427);
- In the remaining 5 years for contracting and using the funds, the conclusion of the evaluator shows that it is possible to achieve an absorption level of at least 80% of the allocation.
- Up to the moment of this report, 34 projects in the field of energy efficiency in residential buildings have been completed (PI 3.1.A). Investments in street lighting and urban mobility could only be analyzed from the perspective of the information in the financing applications related to the contracted projects;
- The interventions have not yet reached the expected and potential effects (they can be quite large in terms of energy savings and the reduction of GHG emissions); the number of households with an improved energy rating (on average 40% compared to the ex-ante situation) is constantly increasing, but the data on the actual energy consumption of the households in the sample tested indicate mixed trends. This can be determined by a variety of reasons, but it certainly suggests that intense action is advisable to raise awareness of changing attitudes toward energy use among final consumers;
- It is necessary to improve the skills of the human resources involved from the companies responsible for carrying out the works, the external consultants of the beneficiaries, the end users.
- The improvement of energy efficiency as a result of the rehabilitation of residential buildings and investments in street lighting is at the level of European standards (in both types of operations the potential for a 50% reduction in energy consumption was reached). The increase of the efficiency in the case of the rehabilitation of the public buildings is even greater (71%), but this may be determined by the high degree of deterioration of the buildings before the intervention;
- In terms of efficiency (cost / tonne CO2 equivalent), improving the energy efficiency of buildings has the best cost / benefit ratio for reductions in CO2 emissions (average cost of € 2,939 / tonne CO2 equivalent for residential buildings and € 11,956 / tonne CO2 equivalent for public buildings). In addition, the improvements in this sector have reached a high level of standardization, the works are carried out quite smoothly, without major delays or problems. On the other hand, street lighting and urban mobility interventions have a much higher unit cost for reducing CO2 emissions (67,742 € / tonne CO2 equivalent, respectively 177,358 € / tonne CO2 equivalent);

- SMIS does not allow proper monitoring of the key aspects of the project life cycle. It seems more geared towards meeting the reporting requirements for the EU than providing information on each key aspect of the project. The number of projects between the reports produced through SMIS differs, in many cases, missing the data regarding the target indicators or the achieved indicators and / or the quality of the data that can be found in the system does not seem adequate. In addition, there is no information available about the time required to reach certain stages (eg completion of the evaluation, signing the contract, starting the project, etc.). The MA should receive a clear alert signal at the time of a blockage in the general project cycle (eg longer time is recorded for the implementation of a procedure).

2. Conclusions

- PA 3 responds to social needs, there is a balance in the allocation of funds, a strong interest in calls and limited problems in implementing interventions. The results of the four investment priorities (IP) regarding the reduction of energy consumption are comparable with the European standards;
- It is necessary to accelerate the overall progress of the axis: overall, the progress is limited, and the cost effectiveness of the different PIs needs to be considered in more detail. Taking into account the delay in launching the first calls, this may also cause delays in implementation. Thus, a control of the expenditures made until the end of 2019 can provide a clearer estimate of progress: if the pace does not accelerate, the MA should consider the redistribution of funds between regions and the IP;
- There is a strategic need to simplify the procedures for some stages of the project: the submission of financing applications, contracting and reporting face obstacles that slow down the progress of the axis in technical and financial terms. Long durations (even more than one year) were recorded for evaluating the applications for financing and contracting for the four PIs. As a result, much of the documents submitted must be updated or revised, and spending at the axis level is thus limited;
- Although the implementation of the axis is delayed, it can be stated that the implementation experience from the first two years (2017 and 2018) will prove especially beneficial for PI 3.1.C and 3.2. These are the areas where technological and organizational innovations are developing faster, so the following calls could promote more innovative proposals by increasing the level of quality selection criteria. In general terms, these types of interventions could be the focus of attention for the next programming period, together with the investments related to the current PI 3.1.B, where the demand is still very strong. On the other hand, interventions for saving energy in residential buildings could be the focus of the current national program of energy performance of residential buildings, with procedural and implementation rules that are easier compared to the current ROP;
- Evaluation highlights the major problems faced by a large part of the beneficiaries in managing the projects financed by PA3. Some of them consider that the situation has worsened compared to the previous programming period;
- The implementation stage does not pose significant problems, according to the financing beneficiaries;
- Beneficiaries should focus on value-added operations and be informed of best practices. They often spend more time solving procedural problems than properly monitoring the implementation of the project, making new proposals and / or connecting with users;
- End users need to be more involved in the project cycle. The actual impact of each PA 3 investment depends to a large extent on the behavior of the end users. However, the attention paid to them so far seems limited;

- It cannot be assumed that the tenants will change their habits regarding the consumption of energy or that the citizens will use the new means of urban transport as soon as they become available. For this it is necessary to carefully evaluate the degree of awareness and their availability to join the new projects in Axis 3 except 3.1.C, whose final result does not depend on the behavior of the end users;
- Adequate support for the technical dimension of sustainability is needed. The evaluation highlighted the danger that in the near future the skilled workforce will become insufficient. This potential problem becomes even more serious, given the fact that AP3 is aimed at using relatively new materials and technologies for SMEs in the country. In addition, it should be kept in mind that in the next 2-3 years a large number of new projects will be financed;
- Also, ensuring a good maintenance of all the interventions carried out will be of critical importance, which requires the availability of a qualified workforce.

3. Recommendations

- Increasing the degree of synergy with other axes of the ROP and between all administrative levels. Giving more attention to potential synergies with other ROP axes (eg, AP2 - SME competitiveness, AP4 - Sustainable urban development) at a higher hierarchical level can prove extremely beneficial for Axis 3. If Axis 2 implementation is successful, the availability of labor force in the areas where Axis 3 intervenes can increase; if there are valuable projects in Axis 4, it can provide pilot cases for new proposals under Axis 3. It is recommended to improve the communication between all administrative levels: a timely response to a clarification can largely support the success of a proposal. project or project implementation.
- Shortening the duration of the evaluation and contracting stages will facilitate the start of projects and will increase the rate of absorption of the funds allocated to the axis.
- Maintain flexibility regarding the reallocation between IP and improve the process of monitoring and evaluating the cost effectiveness of each major investment. The situation of the projects submitted in the regions is somewhat similar to the one registered in the DMI 1.2 of the ROP 2007-2013, when all the three regions in the South were slower in accessing the funds allocated in relation to Bucharest, which proved extremely active. Thus, more long-term actions are needed to reduce this imbalance. Each PI presents specific problems and potential benefits, so evaluation is more difficult. In this respect, it is recommended that the MA maintain a high level of flexibility for managing and possibly reallocating the budget, taking into account the rate of submission / contracting of the projects and the evolution of the cost effectiveness in each intervention at the IP level.
- Repeated review of the documents related to the calls after their opening has a negative impact on the PA implementation, eg. guides, list of eligible expenses, etc. Although this type of problem can often occur in the initial phase of the implementation of an axis, these situations should be avoided for future calls.
- A two-tiered selection system, as other EU-funded programs already do, can reduce the time required to evaluate projects and reduce the load of beneficiaries (eg the LIFE program). This involves the initial presentation of a project file (max. 5-6 pages) with a minimum set of financial data. Only the best project files can present the full version of the application. This recommendation is especially valid for PI 3.2 (and partially for 3.1.C), where the complexity of preparing the financing applications is higher.
- Hiring more evaluators would reduce the evaluation duration of the funding application, would ensure a uniform approach to the evaluation and regular verification of the evaluators' results. (at the end of 2018, the ratio between the number of pending applications and the number of approved projects was 170%);

- Increasing the level of pre-financing (currently 10% of the project's eligible value), although complex (requires modification of GEO 40/2015), would have two advantages: it would support the beneficiaries more strongly at the beginning of the project; would accelerate the overall financial progress of the operations. Currently the EU structural funds allow 30% pre-financing to beneficiaries;
- Avoiding the need to re-approve projects by local councils if the changes do not substantially change the initial approach and structure and if the results from the point of view of energy efficiency are improved;
- Reducing the number of on-site visits to the project sites before signing contracts with the MA;
- Simplifying the reimbursement procedures by reducing the volume of documents or by reducing the frequency of reimbursement requests (eg, from 3 to 4 months: keeping the reimbursed amounts annually would reduce the administrative burden of the beneficiaries by 25%).
- It is necessary to harmonize the format of the modules in MySMIS to monitor the progress of the projects. Differences in terms and formats used are the cause of significant workload for preparing and submitting documentation for reimbursement. An interdisciplinary working group could facilitate solutions within a reasonably short time.
- Improving SMIS by paying attention to the quality of the data and extending its use to obtain reporting documents. SMIS has the potential to assist the MA in monitoring the entire life cycle of the project, and simple improvements regarding the introduction of several control points for data reliability, calculation of progress and indirect indicators (and their unit costs) and greater flexibility in creating reports can greatly contribute to the overall management of the axis. The other beneficial change would be the possibility to upload the reporting documents through MySMIS, without having to send them every three months in paper format. Although this is already feasible, it has not yet become a standard practice. Also, a simplification of the current workflow, by using two parallel systems to monitor the progress of projects (one through the records kept by ADR - with weekly updates to MA and other information with traceable data in SMIS) can be very useful;
- Supporting vocational training, updating knowledge and exchanging best practices among Axis staff. Due to the delay in the implementation of the projects (except PI 3.1.A), the identification of the best practices has proved quite difficult. Two cases can be mentioned in the NW region:
 - setting up a web platform by the RDA through which the beneficiaries present and monitor the projects;
 - organizing a large and consistent set of activities of awareness and participation of the final beneficiaries by the Turda City Hall in the PI3.2 project

However, there is no database for pilot examples and no apparent incentive / system to detect and test them. Therefore, it is recommended to initiate a program to identify and highlight them, thus facilitating the exchange of experience (and solutions) between the most advanced and least developed authorities;

- Implementation of awareness-raising / awareness actions of potential beneficiaries at the level of all PIs. Contacting and involving the end users of the AP 3 projects can take place at various stages: the first contact while consulting the strategy and planning the services that affect the neighborhood and / or the city in which they live, or they can be involved at a later stage, before Decides which technology to use to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings. The essential aspect is understanding their interest in the projector and the willingness to improve the "environmental footprint".

- In order to sustain the ROP interventions, it is extremely useful to invest in increasing the awareness of the end users (tenants in the case of residential buildings and administrators of public buildings) through various tools, such as organizing activities adapted for both administrators and for homeowners, who seem to be sensitive enough to the growing concern for environmental issues.
- The same approach applies in the urban mobility sector, which is based on the increase in the number of passengers using public transport. If this expected change in stakeholder behavior fails to materialize, then the initial gains, limited in CO2 reductions, may prove too optimistic.
- Cooperation with ESF and other national funds for the provision of quality workforce. Improving the average quality of the workforce involved in the projects on AP3 is the third pillar of its successful implementation, together with the improvement of the quality of the internal staff and the awareness of the end users. Joint action with the MFE is required to plan the training and updating of appropriate skills. In a similar approach, all other nationally funded programs operating on similar issues should be contacted and activated. Otherwise, the risks of not having enough human resources to complete the funded activities will become real.
- When contracting companies for the implementation of the works, the beneficiaries should pay more attention to their ability to provide maintenance services after the completion of the works. This can be a permanent additional condition in the specifications.

In conclusion, the clarity of the calls for project proposals, the clear and stable guides (without repeated reviews) and the quick response to the clarification requests of the potential beneficiaries remain extremely important for the submission of a large number of quality financing applications. Simplifying the public procurement procedures would greatly help the beneficiaries, as well as streamlining the current reporting procedures (eg MySMIS module format, frequency of reports, etc.) would be very useful. Also, improving internal and external human resources and end-user behavior are two key horizontal priorities for ROP success.

PRIORITY AXIS 4 - Supporting sustainable urban development

Cut-off date AP 4 - 31.03.2019

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.

Until 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% compared 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-refundable 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%.

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.

1. 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.

The support for urban development took place in the financial year 2007-2013 and contributed to the acquisition of an experience at the 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 several projects within the current ROP, other municipalities still face a more limited capacity.

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.

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 proposed areas for financing through the launched calls corresponded to the realities of the LPA, these submitting projects covering all the OSs targeted within the axis; the allocations for OS 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) I 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 LPA level, a number of tools are available to finance investment needs that can ensure, based on a realistic prioritization, sustainable urban development.

2. Conclusions

1. Based on the existing data and the analyzes made based on the indicators available at the level of the analyzed applications, it is appreciated that the objectives of PA 4 (to reduce pollution by using 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.
2. 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 was largely verified in implementation (the typology of the actions to be financed was covered 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 survey through the questionnaire highlighted other needs at local level not covered by 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 indoor parking city or heritage buildings with a destination other than sightseeing).
4. 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 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.

5. Prioritization must bring to light the "true" priorities, focusing interventions on projects with added value for the regional or subregional interest, of the functional urban area. Integrated urban development interventions must also include the economic component, in order to stimulate socio-economic growth based on improved infrastructure conditions.
6. 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.
7. 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 the 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).
8. The integrated approach promoted by PA 4 responds better to the needs of 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.
9. 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.
10. Improving the administrative capacity at local level is probably the most important indirect effect of PA interventions 4. This indirect effect has created multiple 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.

3. Recommendations

- It is necessary to develop a unitary, procedural and technical approach of the same topics between different PIs (eg ownership);
- Analyzing the opportunity to replace the current mechanism of calls;
- 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.
- A revision of the AU concept approach is required;
- Regional development policy and regional development plans need to be directly substantiated by existing strategic documents in the area of spatial planning, strategic planning efforts should be more focused on the basic needs (which the spatial planning documents have identified)
- Prioritization of projects must be adapted by category of cities and municipalities, depending on their administrative capacity, their needs and resources;
- 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;
- Strengthening of support measures for increasing administrative capacity at the ATU level;
- A real and as wide a process of consultation as possible in the development of programmatic documents;
- Promoting partnerships;

4. Lessons learned

At the level of MA and IB ROP

- Good collaboration between MA and IB ROP led to the improvement of eligibility conditions, a new mechanism for payment applications introduced in April 2013
- Reintroduction of project pre-verification by SSDU;
- A procedure and prioritization criteria could be achieved through SSDU / SSDL, without these structures having an interference at the local level;
- Encouraging the participation of civil society through consultation meetings has contributed to the responsibility of the LPA to prioritize the projects;
- Efficient and proactive communication in the relationship with the beneficiaries, led to the improvement of the quality of the projects;

At the beneficiary level

- The need to identify a more appropriate implementation mechanism;
- The process of project preparation in SIDU and PMUD must be collaborative
- The updating of the strategic documents must be done during the course;
- A real consultation process is a success factor in integrated urban planning;
- The lack of updated PUG, the green space register, the cadastral register and the ownership documents were failure factors in order to benefit from the interventions within the ROP;
- The selection of designers and consultants at different stages are factors of failure.

5. Good practice models

- ✓ LPA with good administrative capacity (quality and number of resources), continuously updates strategies and submits timely and good quality projects (eg Bistrița Municipality) and prepares a large number of good quality projects (NW region);
- ✓ 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 (NW region);
- ✓ Use of virtual information (social networks) in defining needs and strategy (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 (Cluj-Napoca, Oradea).

PRIORITY AXIS 5 - Improving the urban area and conservation, protecting and sustainably capitalizing the cultural heritage

Cut-off date: 31/12/2018

1. Conclusions

- The restoration of the heritage (the results of PA 5.1 interventions), in the medium and long term, with a coherent and sustained set of policies at central and local level, will determine the development and diversification of the local economies. These interventions

are, in the opinion of the beneficiaries and the stakeholders, of great importance, given the potential held by Romania. For smaller localities, integrating ROP-funded objectives into tourist circuits and obtaining the status of a tourist resort, may be the engine of economic revitalization with real impact on the living standards of the communities. However, assessing how interventions will contribute to the diversification of local economies is difficult to quantify, in the absence of indicators and their sources of collection;

- The ROP interventions are complementary to other measures funded within the PND, with the Ro-Cultura program, but also with the European URBAN Innovative Actions program. Partnerships in project implementation, financial capacity and ensuring a professional project management are the premises of the sustainability of the interventions;
- Regarding the current state of implementation of the ROP, it can be stated that no reasons are outlined in order to assess that the financed operations will not be completed within the stipulated term. Although there were delays in starting the program, the interventions within AP5 are almost entirely in line with the activity plans. Based on the analysis performed, it was found that only about 8% of the contracts had delays, but most of the beneficiaries concerned updated the activity plan. There are a small number of contracts (1.27%) that were considered at moderate or high risk;
- At the regional level, the NW region has a higher absorption rate than the European average (27.13% compared to 27% at the same time) and the SW Oltenia region has a slightly below this average (21.91%);
- The intermediate financial target for 2018 of Euro 54,117,647, assumed through the Performance Framework, regarding the total amount of eligible expenses from the Certification Authority system, is achieved in the proportion of 73.86%. Considering the delay in launching calls for proposals, the result is a positive one.

2. Recommendations

- In order to reduce the contracting period, it is recommended to use the technical assistance resources to supplement the internal staff, as well as highlighting the most recent version in MySMIS of the financing request resulting from the changes, in order to consolidate the package of documents needed for the contracting;
- Waiving the request for documents that already exist in the contract file, would make the payment / reimbursement requests more efficient;
- More efficient use of MySMIS is needed by avoiding multiple uploads of information / documents. It is recommended to check the existing data in the system, in particular of the indicators, in order to prevent inconsistencies in relation to the data existing at the IB level and the information provided in the financing applications;
- In order to increase the relevance of ROP interventions and to reduce regional disparities, budgetary allocations must respect the regional specificity (eg the allocations for cultural heritage are correlated with the potential of historical monuments within each development region), but also the consideration of financing and other types of operations, with a high degree of sustainability and more efficient (eg the SPIRE project);
- Improvement of the system of indicators for a realistic and accurate quantification of the effects (eg differentiation of the performance indicators - sqm rehabilitated and of the result - no objectives, no tourists; use of composite indicators - the attractiveness index of the patrimony / sites supported) can determine PA effectiveness;
- In order to increase the capacity for elaboration and implementation of regional policies, measures are needed to increase the administrative capacity at UAT level, especially in the

field of public procurement and project management, but in terms of promoting the partnership at local level between beneficiaries, especially at small LPA level.

In order to increase the efficiency of the implementation management process, we recommend:

- Opening of financing lines immediately after ROP approval;
- Broader consultation of the applicant's guide for a clearer and easier to complete content of the application;
- Preparatory sessions with the applicants to clarify the content of the applicant's guide, (eligibility criteria, eligible costs and classification of certain species);
- Dimensioning of personnel resources at the level of MA and OI according to the degree of task load;
- Sustained use of technical assistance resources during peak times;
- Periodic evaluation of ROP promotion campaigns to determine the effectiveness on different promotion channels (for example, by target group survey).

Other measures of interest to the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration:

- Elaboration of territorial and local landscape plans integrated to those of spatial planning and management of monuments and historical sites;
- Carrying out integrated urban development plans, by including the cultural reconversion of areas in creative neighborhoods, cultural centers, etc.;
- Inclusion of the cultural dimension and the issue of housing quality in the developed urban and rural regeneration programs;
- Strengthening the interinstitutional cooperation for the realization of a unitary framework regarding the system of protection of the built natural heritage and of the landscape and training of restorers, heritage site managers. An action plan to increase the number of accredited experts, who can intervene on the patrimony, must be elaborated together with the relevant authorities (Ministry of Culture and National Identity and decentralized units at county level);
- Initiation of pilot projects / framework programs for local and regional development that include the built heritage and other elements of intangible cultural heritage, to integrate the conservation dimension and that of transmitting the intangible cultural heritage to the new generations (eg Limanu).

3. Lessons learned

- The good collaboration between MA and OI ROR led to the improvement of the eligibility conditions during the launch of the different calls (eg "unfinished" projects) in relation to the first launches in 2016 (eg: introduction of a new category of applicants, acceptance of the construction permit and the works contract signed in place of the documents proving the property when submitting the project, accepting the extension works, accepting as legal

representative and the parish not only the tenant, eliminating the obligation to digitize the site);

- Accumulation of project stages has reduced the evaluation and selection period
- Shortening the period of ROP implementation by signing the contract at the SF / TP stage;
- A new mechanism of payment applications, introduced in April 2013, with a substantial impact on the increase in absorption.
- Better planning of the activities from the design stage of the funding application has a higher margin of safety. Also, consulting the opinion of an experienced builder / contractor can make the difference between a realistic plan and one that is too ambitious;
- The beneficiaries were aware of the need for permanent collaboration with professional suppliers, as well as of communication with the departments in the ROP implementation system;
- In the case of projects involving the application of concepts with a large amount of solutions that can be finalized only by the execution details related to the TP stage, the beneficiary should ask the SF / DALI provider and a specification for performing the TP;
- The direct involvement of the beneficiary in all phases of the project is a basic condition of success (monitoring the activity of the consulting firm);
- If the beneficiary chooses to detail the solution estimated in SF / DALI through a solution contest, it is necessary to ask: detailing the concept, detailing the component objects, materials, solutions, appropriate technologies, criteria for selecting the suppliers.

PRIORITY AXIS 6 - Stimulating regional mobility by improving road infrastructure

Cut-off date: 31/12/2018

1. Conclusions

- Both the development and modernization of the county roads, as well as the access to the TEN-T corridors and, implicitly to the cities and municipalities, continue to be of great and very high relevance for the beneficiaries;
- Prioritizing at regional level the projects for the modernization of the road infrastructure represents a success factor for PA 6, creating a favorable framework for their early preparation;
- By implementing the projects contracted until 31.12.2018, the ROP will contribute by about 16% to the reduction of the share of non-modernized roads from total county roads at national level until 2023;
- The calls for projects have reached their purpose, until the analyzed date being submitted 172 financing applications from all regions, for all types of projects, the requested budget covering the ERDF budget allocated in proportion of 282%. The degree of coverage of the financial allocation through the contracted budgets is of 165.8%, until 31.12.2018, being made payments amounting to 463.2 million lei, that is about 9.6% of the total non-reimbursable allocation at PA level;
- At the time of reference, the contracted projects did not cover all the regions and / or project types, while the SUERD and BI are still under evaluation. Up to the time of drafting the report, 16 contracts were signed;

- The contracted projects will determine a significant impact on the increase of the accessibility of the rural and urban areas located near the TEN-T network and on reaching the targets of the result indicators related to the Specific Objective;
- In the case of the less developed regions (including ITI), the degree of contracting of the ERDF eligible budget until 31.12.2018 (169.2%) and the structure of the contracted projects creates the premises for achieving the assumed objectives. SMIS data shows that 106 financing applications were submitted by 36 County Councils. Thus, the total values for the results and achievement indicators are expected to be achieved by 2023;
- The non-contracting until the reference date of the study of any project from the Bucharest-Ilfov region (developed region) indicates a high risk regarding the achievement of the targets assumed for this category of region;
- According to the information provided by the beneficiaries, the rate of response to the calls launched was influenced by the difficulty of being included in the delivery terms determined mainly by the strict requirements regarding the proof of the property status, especially the first call, but also by the successive modifications of the applicant's guides and the high technical complexity and the large number of forms / documents required;
- Ordonance 30/2018 regarding the establishment of measures in the field of European funds and for the completion of some normative acts had positive effects on the degree of contracting and the attainment of the targets assumed for the results and achievement indicators, by consecrating the takeover mechanism for ROP financing 2014-2020 of the projects initiated by other types of financing and whose degree of maturity is minimum at the stage of works contract (unfinished projects - NF);
- The long duration of the procurement procedures for the works and the low capacity of the construction companies (from the financial and labor point of view) are the main risk factors regarding the achievement of the set objectives.
- The decision to take on ERDF funding for projects initiated through other sources (unfinished projects) had a positive impact on:
 - The level of payments made from the total non-refundable allocation;
 - The final number of projects contracted at national level;
 - Dynamics of contracting ERDF budgets at national level;
 - The value of the amounts refunded;
 - The number of modernized km contracted, representing 28.9% of the total modernized km contracted until 31.12.2018;
 - The number of inhabitants benefiting from the improved transport, with a contribution of 19.82% of the total population at national level benefiting from improved transport.
- The important contribution of the unfinished projects contracted is mainly due to the fact that they were in an advanced stage of the works, and the applicant's guide has answered the needs of the applicants and has not undergone changes during the course.
- MySMIS, managed at the MFE level still needs adjustments, thus becoming an effective tool in the progress monitoring process.

2. Recommendations

a. Recommendations regarding the reduction of the evaluation time of the applications for funding for the projects in this phase (BI, SUERD, ITI, 7R):

- Increasing the number of people involved in evaluating the applications for financing;
- Launching earlier the process of purchasing the evaluation services by the IO and / or hiring the evaluators for a fixed term.

b. Recommendations regarding the reduction of the contracting period

- The introduction in MySMIS of appropriate framework contracts for PA 6;
- Marking in MySMIS the latest version of the documents (results after multiple clarifications and updates) in order to consolidate the set of contractual documents;
- Increasing the number of persons involved in the contract elaboration process.

c. Recommendations on increasing the speed of transmission of Payment Requests / Reimbursement Requests

- Consultation and consideration of the beneficiaries' requests regarding the renunciation to the annexation requirement of the documents that do not change during the period between two CR submissions and the acceptance of the scanning of the documents before the creation and numbering of the CR file;
- Updating the procedures according to the result of the consultations.

Recommendations on improving the use of MySMIS

- Uploading progress reports by beneficiaries directly to MySMIS;
- Optimizing the functioning and use of MySMIS, in order to eliminate the need to send paper documents (eg documents related to the procurement procedures);
- Creating the possibility of accessing documents between different modules of the application, in order to eliminate multiple uploads of the same document;
- Conducting a survey among the beneficiaries of financing regarding the problems encountered in using MySMIS;
- Organizing training sessions on the use of MySMIS by RDA addressed to the beneficiaries of financing for the purpose of unitary operation and to avoid the introduction of inconsistent or incorrect information;
- Reviewing the way of updating MySMIS in order to reduce the load level in the OI ROP staff;
- The analysis by the MA ROP of the information entered in the SMIS regarding projects in terms of their accuracy and completeness.

Recommendations regarding the next programming stage

- Improvement of the relevant legislative framework for reducing the duration of the tabulation process, modification of the government decision on the certification of the public domain owned by the ATUs, government decision on the classification of roads, modification of the Water Law allowing the County Councils to carry out construction work on bridges in the riverbeds and reducing the duration of the elaboration of the report elaborated by ANEVAR in the cases in which the expropriation for the cause of public utility is necessary.
- Clarification of the aspects concerning the property at the level of the County Councils;

- Prior consultation of the beneficiaries regarding the content of the applicant's guides in order to define a clear and easy-to-fill content of the application forms, in the sections on the budget and on the procurement plan;
- Establishing the necessary documents for the application for financing (property titles, notices, etc.);
- Clearly establish the categories of eligible and non-eligible expenses;
- Avoidance of modification of the guides between calls;
- Organizing training sessions on the content of the applicant's guide, how to interpret the eligibility criteria, the content and how to fill in the application forms, the classification of the expenses in eligible and ineligible expenses or lessons learned from the previous programming period.
- Including the unfinished projects on the eligibility list from the first calls, in order to ensure an increased value of the volume of expenses starting with the first year of program implementation.
- Improving the legislation on public procurement regarding the establishment of selection criteria to support the participation in the procurement procedures of the bidders with the appropriate technical and financial capacity and the faster resolution of the appeals.
- Initiate the process of identifying and prioritizing projects at regional level for the next period.
- The early launch by the beneficiaries of the public procurement procedures related to the implementation of the projects, with the condition of a resolution.
- Ensuring the continuity of the modernization process along the entire route of the roads included in the priority project portfolio, by encouraging stronger partnerships between the County Councils in the same region and the approach of interregional projects.

PRIORITY AXIS 7 - The diversification of local economies through sustainable sustainable tourism development

Cut-off date : 30/09/2018 for the methodology of case studies; 14/02/2019 for monitoring data analysis

1. Findings and conclusions

- Priority axis will reach the set targets, the value of the projects submitted exceeding more than 3 times the value allocated to this axis;
- Although RDAs generally consider the quality of funding applications and documents submitted to be satisfactory, the success rate of the projects is differentiated at regional level;
- However, there were often highlighted situations of blocking the investments, especially due to delays in approving the award documentation or finalizing the public procurement procedures (eg, appeals or cancellations);
- Regarding the level of integration and internal coherence of the investments financed by ROP PA 7, the sustainability of investments and the complementarity with other local initiatives, the evaluation suggests the following:
 - The funded projects are mainly focused on accessibility issues, improvement of community spaces, development of recreational structures;

- Although the marketing plan is a mandatory document, only a part of the beneficiaries inserted the ROP investment in a truly "tourist" marketing strategy of the locality, with a "post-investment" promotion perspective;
- In the proximity of the localities interested in ROP investments, there are various other relevant infrastructural investments, county roads or bypasses of the main cities in the proximity of the locality, the rehabilitation of the cultural heritage and private investments in tourist reception structures.
- In the absence of a common analysis and interpretation tool on the initial situation and the one after the intervention, there is a risk that the selection of projects will be based exclusively on the potential for increasing the number of visitors and employees within the public spa-climatic structures;
- Identifying the initial tourist segment of a resort and the target group targeted by the intervention would allow the review of the tourist strategies even from the perspective of the tourist destination management, highlighting, for example, if, through the financed investments, the tourist stations consider that they will expand their target group of tourists already targeted or if they want to reach a different target group of tourists;
- There is an overlap between the concept of visitors and tourists, although there are different terms. Through the additional tourists it is possible to reconstruct the value of the total expenditure that the tourists will be able to generate, starting from the turnover, finally being able to build the additional occupational impact. Instead, visitors are a "hybrid" typology of "tourists" who frequent the tourist structures, but do not stay overnight in the locality, thus generating a limited tourist expense;
- A set of interventions was identified from basic services (health services for citizens and tourists), to sustainable mobility, the re-qualification of historic buildings, in addition to the investments of private operators (on reception structures, tourist services, SPA and commercial services). Complementarities concern other ROP Axes and other national programs (eg POCU, PNDR, national funds);
- Marketing strategies for capitalizing on ROP intervention have only local coverage, at most county. The promotion of funded projects should take into account the tourism segment and the target group of tourists at a higher level, regionally and nationally, so as to create a critical mass of tourism supply that can be promoted on the national and international reference tourist markets (spa-climatic, mountain, recreational, cultural and so on) and by target groups of specific tourists;
- On the tourism segments with a low tourist attractiveness index, the forecasts for the growth of tourist flows after 2023 are stable and in line with the current evolution;
- From the perspective of the ex post evaluation, special attention will have to be paid to the analysis of the tourist flows for the localities included in the segment characterized by low index of touristic attractiveness(IAT) .

2. Recommendations and lessons learned

- It is necessary to use a common tool for analyzing and interpreting the tourism context such as index of touristic attractiveness , to identify the situation of "starting" of investment projects.

- When developing tourism strategies, consideration should also be given to the starting tourist segments and the target groups, in order to understand to what extent the beneficiaries decide to strengthen their tourism offer to already targeted groups or to diversify their offer to new target groups. .
- The future program should address the topic of tourism within an axis of individual tourism development, with public and private beneficiaries, including tourist destination management organizations, with selection criteria that take into account the synergy between the funded interventions. This requires the promotion of participatory processes for developing a common vision on tourism development strategies for 2021-2027 programming period at local, regional and national level.
- It is necessary to update the national strategic and policy framework in the tourism field, starting from the lessons learned and the results obtained from the elaboration of the Master Plan in the tourism field 2007-2026. This process should involve strong participation from private environmental associations, in addition to local public authorities.
- It is necessary to develop tourism strategies at the segment level to address the international markets. In this context, the promotion and marketing tools may also be programmed within a tourist destination logic, within a system approach, in relation to wider markets.
- It is recommended to use at program level the number of projects funded as an achievement indicator, the number of additional tourists as a result indicator and the number of people employed as an impact indicator. At project level, it is recommended to use the areas (sqm) targeted by the interventions as an indicator of achievement, km of roads / rehabilitation / created and the number of additional tourists as a result indicator.
- The evaluator considers that the surface area indicator in sqm is not suitable to be linked to the performance and recommends identifying an alternative performance indicator that is related to the number of projects funded.
- Employment is an impact indicator that in the ex ante phase requires quantification at program level by the evaluator and not by the beneficiaries or MA ROP.
- The achievement indicators should take into account the tourism policy target: eg. the surface in sqm is an achievement indicator, which can be quantified only after the selection of the projects, being otherwise used to verify the actual implementation of the project. The number of funded projects can be a target set at the program level, taking into account the allocation of financial resources. The number of additional visitors is, a result indicator, as it manifests as an effect of the investment made.
- The increase in the number of employees is an indicator that could be used as a result indicator only if the investment concerns a specific tourism structure that employs employees.
- The ex post evaluation will have to take into account the potential scenarios of tourism development of the localities, through the interaction of other axes from the ROP and with financing from other sources. The analysis will have to focus on verifying the ROP's contribution to the growth of tourist flows, analyzing the data series on the evolution at county level, as well as how the funded interventions were able to activate new tourist flows.

- By analyzing the tourism segments characterized by the lower IAT, it will be verified whether the expert scenarios confirm or not the stabilization of the flows and a relevant weight of the visitors' components, as compared to that of the tourists, with the consequent limitation of the capacity to develop the tourism expenses and to activate the new jobs.
- Strengthening the help-desk functions of RDAs both in the orientation / preparation phase and in the implementation phase, especially on the public procurement procedural aspects. The JASPER approach could be adopted for large projects with itinerant task force or the inclusion as an eligible expense of contracting specific expertise in the field of public procurement.
- Analyzing the opportunity not to waste the administrative effort made by the administrations that had unapproved projects, by reallocating resources from other less performing axes, taking into account the possibility of transposing unreported expenses in the 2021-2027 programming period.
- For the next period, we recommend analyzing the opportunity of decentralizing at regional level the function of managing the calls for project proposals (in the next period) in order to ensure a greater personalization of the calls according to the local / regional specific needs, capacity of eligible beneficiaries etc.)

PRIORITY AXIS 8 - Developing the health and social infrastructure by increasing the accessibility of health services, the efficiency of emergency hospital care and increasing the coverage of social services

Cut-off date : AP 8 - 25/02/2019

1. Findings

- There is a constant tendency to increase the number of high performance equipment purchased and the number of investigations / treatments performed with these equipments;
- The territorial distribution of the created / renovated medical services is extensive at national level;
- Accessibility is premature to quantify and extremely difficult, if not impossible to quantify the quality and efficiency of services;
- The rate of continuous hospitalization decreased steadily during the analyzed period;
- The process of reforming large residential institutions for adults with disabilities is successfully carried out;
- Progress in the process of deinstitutionalization of children in the special protection system is delayed. Providing the elderly with improved social services is also delayed;
- The availability and retention of the medical and technical human resources necessary to properly use the purchased equipment influence the effectiveness of the projects.
- In the social field, the most efficient mechanism for ensuring the implementation of the interventions (project initiation by the DGASPC) was the impetus to reform the system through legislative changes;
- ATUs in the urban area have the capacity to ensure the sustainability of the services to be provided within the social infrastructure developed through the projects financed from

PA 8. The administrative-territorial units in the rural area seem to have difficulties in ensuring the sustainability, despite the contractual commitments.

2. Conclusions

- Positive effect by decreasing the unmet need for medical services for the lower quintile from the initial value of 13.3%, to the value of 8% in 2015 and, more recently to the value of 3.4% in 2018 according to Eurostat. The value already exceeds the proposed target for 2023 (9.3%), and the population served by improved medical services far exceeds the proposed target value for 2023 (500,000 people). The evolution must be considered as the result of several factors, such as the projects completed in the ROP 2007-2013, legislative changes in the field of health, fiscal changes, etc.;
- Reducing the response time requires improvements: two thirds of the ambulance park is physically advanced, the available staff is insufficient, and the road infrastructure has not improved significantly;
- In the absence of a relevant indicator it can be considered that new or multiple equipment increases the quality and reliability of the services offered, decreases the waiting time and, in certain situations, are positioned in a healthcare unit near the patient's home, factors that should increase the satisfaction of the services received by the beneficiaries;
- Even if the rate of admissions decreased steadily during the analyzed period, approx. 30% of the hospitalizations are for conditions that could be treated in the outpatient (family doctor or specialized outpatient) if the services were available and efficient;
- The target of achieving the number of beneficiaries (persons with disabilities) of deinstitutionalization infrastructure built / rehabilitated / modernized / extended / equipped was achieved in a proportion of 45%, but the progress of the indicator regarding the provision of social services as close to the place of living is low (3%);
- Increased availability of efficient outpatient services is essential for relieving UPU and hospitals of cases that do not require care at that level;
- The analysis of the progress regarding deinstitutionalization of children in the special protection system is premature: at the deadline of the evaluation there was only one contracted project. However, more recently 7 projects have been contracted and another 15 are in preparation, which ensures the premises for meeting the proposed targets;
- The creation of social services for the elderly is far behind the target, with an achievement level of 9%;
- Effective interventions are those with integrated activities: construction services / rehabilitations / upgrades / equipments, as well as attracting and training additional staff, and the resources come from complementary projects financed and from other operational programs;
- In the social field, when the call for projects is competitive, the communities that have experience in the process of project development and administration benefit the most, and the disadvantaged communities are lagging behind;
- The resources were distributed mainly for the regions of development with social needs and the demand for social services accentuated. However, at the level of the distribution of resources within the development region, most investments are made at urban level, although the need for social services is, first and foremost, at the rural level;
- The medico-social integrated community centers distinctively mentioned in the National Health Strategy 2014 - 2020 and one of the important links on which the logic of the ROP intervention was built, have not been funded so far;

- Reintegration of persons with disabilities requires financial resources for awareness / development of tolerance in the community and for the provision of social services for all members of the community;
- The role of public funders, respectively CNSAS and the Ministry of Health, is essential in the sustainability of the rehabilitated and endowed health units through the ROP;
- The concern of local public administrations in rural areas to ensure the sustainability of the social services created is high, if it is dependent on the existence of a financing instrument.

3. Recommendations

- Financing projects to reduce the inequity gradient between people with high socio-economic status and disadvantaged people by developing integrated community centers and community health care for the vulnerable population;
- Remodeling and transforming of small and medium healthcare units into specialized outpatient / comprehensive diagnostic and treatment centers, including with the capacity for day hospitalization in order to reduce the difference between equipping different regions and the model where ambulatory services are concentrated in certain cities. the same endowment model to the detriment of smaller centers;
- Involvement of the Ministry of Health in defining the intervention monitoring framework, aligning the indicators with those commonly used by the medical units, limiting their number to those considered absolutely necessary and relevant, considering that a large part of the indicators of immediate and even realization chosen the result were not completed;
- Reconfiguring outpatient services (consultations and investigations offered during the same visit) and updating the tariffs, taking into account their effectiveness and sustainability in increasing access to health services especially for the vulnerable population;
- Developing county-level partnerships and defining the project portfolio: DGASPC together with the ATUs and social service providers should conduct an analysis of the needs of the beneficiaries at the county level in order to identify the priorities and elaborate the project concepts. Estimating the real need for the types of social services for each target group is essential, as well as developing a list of institutions, centers that need to be rehabilitated, but also the communities in which new centers must be created;
- Conducting a solution competition by the DGASPC for ATUs, and those selected to serve as a basis for the elaboration of a larger project by the DGASPC in which to be leader;
- Strategic planning between the MA ROP and the Ministry of Health (MS) should promote the correlation of county / regional / national and sectoral development strategies and of feasibility studies / opportunity studies / impact studies updated and available at the level of the health institution. for major investments;
- Developing clear and sustained coordination mechanisms and tools at national level for standardizing instruments that can assess infrastructure, equipment, human resources needs, prioritizing investments, variability of equipment acquisition costs and similar work;
- The equitable development of these services should include providing ROP support to local public authorities, especially those from disadvantaged communities, with opportunities, resources and tools through a call for projects dedicated to this theme. The call should not be competitive because the quality of the application development or the innovative aspect of the project is not important, but the need for concrete social services in certain localities. The current legislation provides that integrated community centers can be set up only as public entities in the subordination or structure of the local public administration authority;

- Launching a call for projects from the ROP for setting up integrated community service centers and day centers in rural communities, but also providing technical support for building partnerships at county level and defining the project portfolio for better coverage of these services. communities. Also, it is recommended to correlate with the NRDP interventions with social objectives;
- Clarification of the status and institutional role of the community centers integrated in the functional architecture of the health system and of the decentralization process in health, imperative necessary to improve the logic of the intervention of this program;
- Increasing the role of the line ministries (Health Ministry and the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice) in monitoring the provision of services that maintain or increase inequalities of access for disadvantaged groups and the possibility of intervention when this happens;
- For the effectiveness of projects for people with disabilities, it is necessary to involve a large number of stakeholders from the respective community. This involves planning more complex consultation processes, with appropriate allocation of time and resources;
- Strengthening the role of the management team and the local decision maker in the optimal planning of the activity of the integrated ambulatories, the hiring of the necessary personnel for the new equipments and the additional contracting of the services that can be offered;
- MA ROP should support the Health Ministry which, together with the local decision makers, will promote the remodeling and transformation of some of the small and medium healthcare units into specialized outpatient / comprehensive diagnostic and treatment centers, including with the capacity for day hospitalization according to the objectives SNS and the funding sources identified for its implementation (eg, ROP 2014-2020).

PRIORITY AXIS 9 - Supporting the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in the urban environment

Cut-off date : 02/04/2019

1. Findings

- Implementarea The implementation of the DLRC mechanism in Romania has been prepared since 2014 by the elaboration of working tools by the ROP: Atlas of marginalized urban areas and Integrated intervention tool. Strategies for integrating marginalized urban communities. The atlas defines the marginalized urban areas, establishes the criteria for identifying the MUZ and identifies them based on the NSI data from the 2011 Population and Housing Census and the qualitative research data in these MUZ. The integrated intervention instrument operationalizes the DLRC mechanism in Romania. These documents were used in the elaboration of the applicant's guides for the implementation of PA 5 POCU and PA 9 ROP and were the starting point of the documents that regulate the elaboration of the LDSs (National Guidelines eg);
- However, only in April 2017 was published by AP5 POCU, the Specific Guide "Preparatory support for the elaboration of Local Development Strategies", which established the main benchmarks of using the DLRC tool in the fight against poverty in cities / towns with population. of more than 20,000 inhabitants, the procedure of contracting by the LAG of the preparatory support for the elaboration of the LDS is officially launched, process concluded in December 2017 by the approval of 37 LDSs;
- In June 2019, the Joint Selection Committee was set up to verify and approve the LAG procedures for the selection of project files and to monitor the complementarity of the ROP - POCU interventions. The procedures for contracting the ROP and POCU projects remain

distinct even in MySMIS, and for the PA 9 ROP projects, the LAG carries out the selection of project files, and their validation will be at the level of the CCSR / PA 9 ROP;

- The integrated mechanism has been implemented to a very small extent by the date of this report, most of the measures being carried out by POCU, the functioning of the LAG, also being fully ensured through POCU. Only the LDS evaluation was jointly carried out by PA 9 ROP and PA 5 POCU through CCSR, which ceased its existence once the evaluation of the 49 submitted LDSs was completed.
- The process of creating the LAG was conceived according to the DLRC methodology, as a bottom-up type, and its implementation was significantly influenced by the local context, the lack of a culture of public participation, the absence of community leaders. For this reason, in many cases the creation of the LAG was not initiated and led by MUZ members, but by the local public administration. This approach was an important factor for the involvement of other community actors, even outside the respective localities within the LAG. Community animation has attracted new members to the LAG, increasing their number of debates / meetings at local level.
- From 95 urban localities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, according to the Atlas of the marginalized areas of 2014 they comprise 605 MUZ, only 49 cities and municipalities have prepared the LDS, being approved for financing 37 of them, which provide interventions financed from PA 9 ROP and PA 5 POCU for a number of 132 MUZ.
- Short period of time, the complexity of the documentation and the process of developing the LDS required the involvement of the consulting firms that helped in the elaboration of the documents, in some cases these becoming even members of the LAG. The consulting firms contributed to the achievement of 70% of the 37 LDSs analyzed.
- LDS only includes the projects eligible for funding through PA 9 ROP and AP5 POCU, any other projects considered community priority were included only if at the time of strategy development the source of funding could be identified. In most cases, the projects financed by the ATU on the territory of the LDS were included in the LDS, which in the small and medium municipalities is equivalent to the whole locality, the average ratio of inhabitants between MUZ and LDS populations being 1:9;
- The causes of delays in the contracting procedures of the projects included in the LDS are bureaucratic in nature, due to the insufficient preparation of the entire process. For example, in July 2018, at the date of publication for consultation of GS PA 9 ROP, ROP 2014-2020 was being modified including regarding PA 9, in parallel and PA 5 POCU required changes to accommodate the procedures of the program with SDL, so that 18 months after the approval of the LDS, no project calls were launched

2. Conclusions

- For the first time in the current programming period, the use of the DLRC tool in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants was foreseen. It is worth noting that, at EU level, there is a dispersion of the implementation models, without "success stories" yet. Some states have chosen the financing variant of the single-fund DLRC, others have set up a multi-fund management authority for projects dedicated to the inclusion of these urban centers;
- Targeting investments in urban infrastructure, housing, education and social services in the marginalized areas of cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants is a beneficial initiative, while using the DLRC tool to identify and prioritize eligible projects can lead to the sustainability of the planned interventions. Generally, the marginalized areas of the cities benefited to a lesser extent from public interventions compared to the rest of the territory;

- In the absence of projects and the operating budget, the capacity of the LAG to manage the interventions (organizing the selection and monitoring of complementarity of the ROP - POCU) was not strengthened, some of the LAG managers and facilitators employed in September 2017 for the development of the LDS leaving these structures. Also, the contact with the marginalized communities was reduced, with the risk of generating a feeling of apathy and discouragement among the residents who participated in the public consultations organized by the LAG;
- The interventions envisaged in the LDS are addressed to a population that, in some cases, covers the entire territory of the localities. Removing poverty from a number of people through complementary measures ROP-POCU would involve interventions focused on a smaller numerical target group and not the entire population of the city. From this perspective, the 9:1 ratio between the LDS population and the MUZ population can be considered relatively high;
- The integrated mechanism POCU - ROP is positively appreciated in terms of the complementary character of the interventions at the local level, the ability to stimulate and involve community members in the problem solving process and the involvement of the whole community in the decision-making process on community problems;
- The result indicators for the two axes, PA9 ROP and PA POCU, are specific to each type of fund, the ERDF and the ESF, without harmonizing with each other and without aiming at increasing the quality of life of ZUM residents. The lack of specific outcome indicators for the DLRC mechanism, which take into account its characteristics, makes the intervention of the two funds not seem complementary, but rather different.

3. Recommendations

- The introduction of the LDS elaborated by the LAG as a section within the Strategy for urban development of urban localities with over 20,000 inhabitants. Thus, SDL, assumed by the local actors, would gain greater visibility and relevance at the local level, the risk of segregation could be avoided and greater sustainability of the interventions would be ensured.
- In general, for the development of an SDL it takes an average of 12 months, which is subject to public consultation in multiple sessions organized both with citizens and with companies, NGOs, academia, cultural etc. This elaboration term ensures the rigorous analysis of the target groups in MUZ as well as the integration of the necessary investment projects. The representative reference study at the population level in the LDS territory will remain a precondition for correctly identifying the needs of the population in these areas and the measures that are required. Thus, the development of the LDS requires careful planning by the managing authorities regarding the implementation stages, avoiding the false demobilizing expectations in the community. This would also allow campaigns to inform and raise awareness of the community in ZUM before organizing meetings to identify needs and other residents. Attracting the media in this process is necessary;
- Develop a flexible LDS procedure for changes in the targeted territories, with a focus on the target groups in MUZ (significant migration / demographic fluctuations in the target group - temporary or permanent migration of part of the target group is between 5 and 25%);
- In order to increase the efficiency, quality and relevance of LDS development, greater flexibility of the LAG is recommended: 1) in employing human resources, without constraints regarding the minimum number and type of experts involved; 2) in choosing the animation activities according to the local specificity and the target group or those of data collection to substantiate the needs; 3) in drawing up the list of intervention priorities that are not limited to those provided in the POCU or ROP, even without indicating the sources of

financing, in order to ensure a better representativeness of the needs and their integration at local level;

- Conducting a survey among the approximately 50 localities with over 20,000 inhabitants who did not elaborate and submit the LDS within the PA 9 POR - PA 5 POCU in order to understand and adjust the elaboration and selection criteria, so that in the future, to participate as many as possible municipalities. The survey could also be extended for urban areas with a population between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, which are included in the Atlas of marginalized urban areas and could not apply, since they were below the minimum threshold set by the guide;
- Developing a strict timetable for the development of the mechanism and announcing it from the beginning of the process, clearly establishing the responsibilities of all the involved institutions (RDA, OIR, MA POCU, MA ROP), elaborating and launching all GS (not sequentially for differences over 2 years) to quickly start the procedures for project development at local level and to simplify the procedures for evaluation, selection, contracting and eventual implementation and payments;
- Increasing the administrative capacity of management through constant financing of the functioning of the LAG structures, national and international cooperation for the exchange of experience, lessons learned, problem solving, training courses for LAG employees on project monitoring and evaluation, staffing. with experience and appropriate remuneration, dissemination of good practices, monitoring and consultancy by the managing authorities;
- Adaptation of the result indicators to the specificities of the DLRC, reflecting the integration / complementarity of the measures in the area of LDS and especially from MUZ. The present result indicators aim, globally, to marginalize a certain number of people, without pursuing aspects related to the increase of the quality of life of the persons from ZUM, such as housing, employment, education, health. Creation of specific outcome indicators DLRC that take into account its characteristics and aim to increase the quality of life of people in MUZ. These indicators could target the characteristics of DLRC, such as local government and how it has improved as a result of LAG partnership, innovation, use of local resources, community cooperation and relationships, capacity building at the community level (not just adult qualification). At the same time, quality of life indicators must be objective and subjective and target various dimensions - housing, human capital (education and health), employment, social relations, trust in institutions, quality of public services;
- Analyze the opportunity of setting up a single Managing Authority dedicated to inclusion through the use of urban DLRC with multi-fund financing. This would avoid delays inherent in the synchronization of the functioning of two managing authorities that are guided by different procedures and follow different performance and outcome indicators;

4. Lessons learned

- The key message for the LAG and the authorities is that local development strategies for the inclusion of urban marginalized areas should be determined by local needs and not just respond to the funding opportunities available from European funds. The strategies should include other projects that can be financed through the PA 9 ROP - AP5 POCU mechanism and from local budgets. They should reflect both the needs of the local community and where the community wants to reach a certain time horizon, not just take on the outcome indicators imposed by the funders.
- The interaction between the LAG and the local communities should be permanent, guaranteeing the successful implementation of the projects included in the LDS. Through community animating activities, the LAG should become the linking factor between disadvantaged communities and local authorities. At the same time, central authorities should be more responsive to the needs of local communities, especially marginalized ones.

PRIORITY AXIS 10 - Improving the educational infrastructure

Cut-off date AP 10 - 25/02/2019

1. Findings

- Generally, the projects contribute to achieving the specific objectives of PA 10;
- All investment categories have beneficiaries in more developed regions, in a greater proportion than the ROP stipulates, with the exception of kindergarten projects;
- Until the completion date of this study, there were no interventions aimed at nursery investments (SO 10.1.);
- Regarding vocational and technical education and lifelong learning (SO 10.2), there are no projects that can explicitly contribute to the achievement of the ROP indicator "Capacity of the education infrastructure that benefits from support - lifelong learning", even if, by implication, the new / rehabilitated infrastructure can also be used for adult education (respectively, for continuing vocational training);
- There are significant differences between centralized interventions (MNE beneficiary) and decentralized interventions (TAU beneficiaries and universities). Centralized projects have unit costs (per preschool / student / student) lower than decentralized ones;
- The obstacles to implementation (especially regarding compliance with approved budgets and deadlines) are generated by the legislative instability and differences of interpretation of the legislation at the level of localities, counties and regions - for example, regarding fire safety procedures, public health, construction discipline;
- Integration into local development projects differentiates ATU and university projects in the direction of sustainability (projects with ATU beneficiary) or institutional (projects with universities);
- The rehabilitated school and university structures, at high standards, can contribute to stopping the decline and stabilizing the school population;
- The demographic evolutions negatively influenced the sustainability of the interventions through PA 10, especially those initiated long ago (centralized projects);
- The investment objectives with ATU beneficiaries, respond better to the sustainability requirements, being elaborated on the basis of local needs, identified including by consulting the residents of the respective neighborhoods or localities (this being confirmed by the analysis of the evolution of the school population presented above);
- There are few projects with ATU beneficiaries from the rural area - one of the probable causes being the lack of resources (including institutional capacity);

- Educational infrastructure needs are influenced by the educational policy measures with effect on the evolution of the school population;

2. Conclusions

- The interventions in kindergartens and schools will contribute to the implementation of SO 10.1, a good part of the budget being already contracted and a significant proportion of it being also reimbursed;
- There is a risk that some ATU investments may not be fully realized or delayed, due to the lack of capacity, in particular, the necessary qualified human resources;
- The unit cost (per preschool / student / student) differs from one project to another: this (eg, square meter of built area) can be indicative only if the constructions are similar. At the same time, by imposing maximum prices some investments will be made with poor quality materials, with an effect on the subsequent costs of maintaining the respective objectives;
- The legislative instability affects the development of the approved projects, slowing their implementation. For example.:
 - changes in public procurement procedures and their difficulty;
 - major changes, in recent years, of the wage legislation, which have led to the increase of the costs of the construction works, above the level anticipated in the applications for financing;
 - changes regarding the ISU legislation or the construction discipline: works started on the basis of fire safety notices issued before 2016 are in danger of not receiving at the end of the fire safety authorization, provided that no additional funds can be allocated for redesign or for bringing the investment to the parameters provided in the new regulations.
- As the projects were approved in the year 2018 and none is finalized, it is not possible to estimate the achievement of the target values regarding the increase of the participation rate in education established for the PA 10 ROP indicators, (gross enrollment rate for preschool, primary and secondary education, technical and professional and superior). For the time being, an increase in the gross enrollment rate in education or, at least, a less pronounced decrease (most investment objectives) can be anticipated, a further impact assessment is needed with a specific methodology, eg counterfactual analysis
- The impact of the negative evolution of the school population on the participation rate for all levels of education cannot be anticipated. Until 2017 (the last year for which NSI provided statistical data), the decrease of the school population was correlated with an increase of the gross enrollment rate, until 2016, followed by a decrease in 2017. There is not enough data to extrapolate the downward trend of the gross coverage rate, started in 2017 compared to 2016;
- In the course of the investments, the experience of the management team of the infrastructure projects, the thorough knowledge of the objectives, the legislation that favors / hinders the optimal development of the projects were counted. Thus, the beneficiary and partner ATUs face the lack of specialized technical personnel in the field of construction;
- Large centralized projects (MNE beneficiary, in partnership with ATU), the most consistent part of the budget related to the specific objective of SO 10.1, can be considered effective (they are the most advanced, as achievement level) and efficient (unit costs are lower). Most of the investment objectives are completed, much of the expenses being reimbursed. In terms of the relationship between objectives and results, these projects are the most advanced;

- On the educational dimension, projects are sustainable. Thus, a certain number of preschoolers, students and students will learn in renovated buildings, which provide comfort and well-being previously absent, and will benefit from additional facilities. These will have an effect on school and university participation (they will contribute to reducing school / university dropout), but also on learning outcomes;
- The projects with ATU beneficiaries correlated with the demographic evolutions a positive evolution of the school population, a tendency contrary to the one from county, regional and national level;
- The degree of sustainability of the projects increases if they are part of the local development strategies, the investment in the educational infrastructure being correlated with the investment in other areas of the local development (eg with the transport infrastructure, telecommunications, health and from the economic sectors: through the created jobs, will contribute to the stabilization / growth of the population and to the reduction of the phenomenon of internal and external migration;
- The school population decreased during the life of the project in an even larger proportion than the school population at national level and the counties of which the respective ATU is a member. As a result, there is no certainty that the respective educational units are sustainable in the medium and long term, even if, in the short term, no alarming problems are anticipated;
- The correlation either with the previous interventions or with the national, regional and local plans / strategies, as well as the continuity regarding the criteria used in selecting the educational units subject to the interventions is a strong point of the interventions;
- Interesul The beneficiaries' interest in vocational and technical education (in general) is increased. Thus, the investments in the related infrastructure are sustainable in the long term, especially if the infrastructure created is used from the perspective of lifelong learning.

3. Recommendations

- Providing the additional technical support for ATU beneficiaries who do not have the institutional capacity, nor the personnel needed to carry out the projects, usually preschoolers, students and students belong to the disadvantaged categories located in such ATU;
- Collaboration between actors (beneficiaries, MA, RDA) is essential, previous experience and the existence of qualified human resources is also very important;
- **The legislative stability**, or at least the reduction of the impact of the legislative changes on the investments in progress: for example, the amendments of the Ordinance 114/2018 require clarifications regarding the expected implementation for each of them, as well as an in-depth analysis to what extent the changes correspond to the European regulations. , as well as the impact on the implementation of large European-funded investment projects;
- **Reducing bureaucracy at all stages of the project**, simplifying the selection process of projects in the pre-contracting stage. This would require the introduction of a pre-selection stage, made on the basis of a simplified application and, and the complete documentation, including the approvals, will be required once the project file is accepted. This would reduce the risks of potential beneficiaries investing in a complex demand for which there is no certainty of financing;
- Reducing bureaucracy and improving MySMIS operation: some documents are required to be uploaded to MySMIS twice or there are documents circulating both physically and electronically. The efficiency of the MySMIS application should be analyzed so that this tool can really help them in their work;

- Rigorous data base is a desire for the subsequent calls of Axis 10;
- The investments that will be financed in the future will have multiple addressability (they can be used by several categories of beneficiaries - for example, investments for vocational and technical education can also be used for adult vocational training);
- Accurate and realistic estimation of the impact of the investment on the local budget (and on the beneficiary's budget in general) - an essential condition of the sustainability of any project;
- Rigorous focus of the projects, both of those already contracted, and, especially, of the future ones, on vulnerable groups;
- Systematic monitoring of the demographic developments at the level of the localities and educational institutions beneficiaries of the intervention. Planning the assessment of the impact of the intervention, must consider the analysis of whether and to what extent the existence of a quality infrastructure for education, has contributed to the diminution of the phenomenon of internal and external migration;
- Field visits of RDAs, as well as those of MA ROP monitoring should include monitoring the use of the built / rehabilitated material base, in order to avoid changing the destination of the rehabilitated buildings, especially in the kindergartens and schools where the school population will decrease under 50 preschoolers / students;
- In a more mature stage of the implementation of the projects, it is necessary to carry out an evaluation that aims at the progress of the indicators of immediate realization (output) and of result;
- The correlation with other projects contributes to ensuring the maximum sustainability and impact of the project. Experience shows that the development of educational infrastructure projects must be correlated with other infrastructure projects (road, public transport, utilities), especially in the case of projects in new neighborhoods, under development;
- Future projects should focus on the rehabilitation of school infrastructure at secondary, high school and professional levels, given the evolution of the gross enrollment rate, for each level of education, preserving the results regarding the inclusion of children in pre-school and primary education and building interventions. on this positive evolution;
- Flexibility is needed regarding the construction solutions: the imposition of certain solutions, under the conditions in which new more efficient construction technologies appear permanently, is not always desirable. Thus, it is recommended to focus on results (eg, a certain level of lighting or ambient temperature), leaving the designer to find the best and most economically efficient solution;
- The sustainability of the interventions can be increased by a more accurate calculation of the budgetary impact (at the beneficiary level) of the necessary costs;
- There is a need for a sharpened focus on less developed regions for Axis 10.

PRIORITY AXIS 11 - Geographic extension of the system for property registration in the cadastre and land registry

Cut-off date: 31/12/2018

1. Conclusions

- The systematic registration of the properties in the cadastre and the land book will have a positive impact and an essential contribution in unlocking the investments in the territory,

but also in facilitating the access of the funds directly by the local communities, following the clarification of the property right on the real estate and land;

- The progress of PA 11 is relatively low at the time of writing this report, the performance indicators for 2018 have not been reached and the major project requires a strong impulse to accelerate the implementation;
- The procurement procedures at centralized level ensure the standardization of the services, but they are not sufficiently personalized to the local needs, at the level of TAU. TAUs are a passive part of the process, which often generates a low level of interest and collaboration with OCPI and the service provider;
- After the modification of the Ordinance no. 114/2018 the final decision on the operational implementation of the new provisions in the field of ex-ante verification of the award documentation must be followed;
- Good collaboration with the providers is a key aspect of the major project implementation and must be taken into account through a "paradigm" change that provides for the real implementation problems;
- The institution involved must provide its own specialized personnel on the cadastre issue. At the level of the service provider, the personnel problem is closely related to the adequacy of the contractual conditions to the market conditions (the payment of the corresponding fees), as well as to the appropriate professional training;
- There is a need to review the legal basis for the systematic registration, through a correlation that ensures the legality of the final cadastral documents through the appropriate involvement of all parties (eg land fund commissions);
- The tenderer participating in the tender must take into account the specific conditions and methodological aspects in the territory from the moment of the preparation of the specifications and have to consider from the methodological point of view (implementation time, techniques and budget). The analysis of these aspects only in the beginning phase of the effective works may be a late measure for the adequacy of the implementation methodology;
- There is a need to adopt administrative and procedural solutions (before reaching the court) to solve certain problems of form and substance, able to block the registration procedures;
- The procedures for obtaining and verifying the documents necessary to carry out the systematic registration procedure (eg from city halls to the service provider) are inefficient due to the lack of interoperability of the information systems
- There is a need to strengthen the market for systematic registration services, in terms of reference prices and quality assurance of services.

2. Recommendations

- Continuing the dialogue with the service providers involved in carrying out the contracts (eg negotiating the revision of the contractual conditions, extending the terms of implementation, ensuring the collaboration in relation with other public institutions and so on). Specifically, OCPI should develop unitary working procedures with systematic registration service providers in order to support the communication and monitoring process of the delivered services, the achievement of the performance targets, the observance of the implementation time and the effective accomplishment of the works;
- Creation of a technical group with the participation of ANCPI / OCPI in order to analyze the revision of the system of public tenders for entrusting the works of systematic registration;

- Drawing up a SWOT analysis of the existing system and revising the public procurement strategy based on the lessons learned;
- Improving the capacity for inter-institutional cooperation and communication (ANCPI / OCPI) can strengthen the unitary cadastral system and optimize the systematic registration procedure. Information and involvement of local communities is needed to:
 - discuss the revision of the framework content of the award documentation and of the service contracts, increasing their adaptability to the local context (eg geomorphological conditions, pre-existing land book system, etc.);
 - identify relevant, competent reference persons with delegated tasks in the field of cadastre. In the absence of these, ANCPI / OCPI must provide the appropriate support, specialized counseling, to solve the problems of collaboration with the suppliers or technical / legal problems that appear during the systematic registration process;
 - define an active role of local administrations in the systematic registration procedure.
- Establishment of an interinstitutional dialogue and exchange experience committee with the participation of LPA associations, ANCPI / OCPI system, prefectures, APIA and other relevant organizations for solving problems in the systematic registration process. The Committee could act as the Major Project Coordination Committee;
- Organizing a campaign to publicize PA 11 / PNCCF at national level;
- Updating and customizing the information materials addressed to the mayors (more attractive and personalized, with emphasis on the benefits provided in the specific territory) for both the public administration and the local population.
- Supporting the providers in the initial stages by informing / raising the population for the presentation of the requested documents in the process of systematic registration of the properties;
- The adequacy of the tariffs of the systematic registration works that allow the recruitment of the corresponding specialized personnel;
- Revising the legislation in the field in collaboration with institutions and experts involved in the field, such as prefects, legal experts, mediators, notaries and so on;
- Introducing the mechanism of administrative solution for simplifying the procedures for solving "secondary" errors (after defining them);
- Promoting the intervention of the Ombudsman institution to resolve disputes and appeals amicably, before reaching the court, thus reducing the time for resolution. This implies the insertion of the mediation in the procedures for solving the corrections, but also the clarification of the remuneration of the mediator (eg in charge of the ANCPI / UAT / provider system);
- Promoting the dialogue with the Ministry of Communications and Information Society and the MRDPA to accelerate Romania's Digital Agenda through electronic public services;
- Development of a detailed price catalog according to the specific tasks of the accredited supplier within the systematic registration procedure;
- The revision of the occupational standard of the cadastre technician, taking into account the evolution of the profession and the procedural needs deriving from the current legislation;
- Inserting in the procedure of authorization of the cadastral service providers the specific requirements regarding the training of the specialized personnel, taking into account the necessary competences and professional experience;
- Ex-post verification of the real impact of the systematic registration process on the increase of the absorption rate of the European funds destined for the transport, sewerage

and so on infrastructure. The ex-post analysis should also include components related to access to agricultural funds from local communities.

Theme 12 - Analysis of the ROP Implementation System

Cut-off date 02/04/2019

1. Findings and conclusions

- There are clear regulations in the field of regional development, which need to be adapted to the current institutional context: national coordination structures are mentioned (CNDR and the National Fund for regional development), which currently do not exist, but there are no inter-territorial or public private partnership structures (inter-community development associations, LAGs) that have a role in the processes of regional and territorial development;
- The current legislation is appropriate to assume the responsibilities related to the regional development policy, especially in the case of the ROP (MA / OI ROP, delegated functions, organisation and functioning regulation and system procedures);
- There is a need for a clearer definition of the horizontal collaboration of the MA / OI ROP departments in order to implement the program and reduce staff overload;
- The connection between central and local level (territorial needs) is regulated, but the strategic planning function at regional level requires clarification from the perspective of local needs and capacities;
- The actors involved at local level in the implementation of the ROP (ITI, LAG and UA structures) would assume new responsibilities in the implementation of the regional development policy and the decentralization process provided there is a formalized institutional framework and adequate financial resources. Participatory processes can enhance their capacity to assume responsibilities in strategic planning and implementation of regional development policy;
- It is necessary to clearly define the national coordination relations (MDRAP / MA ROP and other structures involved in the ROP system and in the management of FESI) and regional (CDR / RDA / county offices of RDAs) through the decision-making process;
- Assuming joint responsibility of the ministries responsible for sectoral policies: the sectoral contribution to the regional development policy is not sufficiently formalized;
- The human, logistical and technical resources allocated to the MA ROP are below the level of needs (overload during peak periods), which recommends in the next period a detailed analysis of the real needs;
- At the regional / OI ROP level, human resources are adequate from all points of view (qualitative and quantitative); however, financial resources represent a challenge for the

future, which must be addressed in parallel with ensuring the strategic linking function between the central level and the territorial level of the regional development policy;

- The ROP operational procedures comply with the requirements of the European regulations, as well as the institutional framework and the delegation agreements for functions developed by the national legislation;
- The complexity of the 2014-2020 ROP also had an impact on the resources and organization of the RDAs. Compared to the previous period, there is a significant increase in the tasks related to other functions at regional level (development of offices at county level, establishment of IO PO EC, etc.), highlighting the ability to adapt and assume responsibilities related to complex objectives, aspects of which are may take into account a future review of the relevant legislation;
- RDAs are the only entities that can sustain a strategic vision on regional development, exceeding administrative boundaries, for the benefit of all communities in the regions;
- The ROP has significantly contributed to the development of the strategic planning capacity at the level of the potential beneficiaries. This aspect is emphasized especially within the mechanisms of integrated development, where the created structures (Urban Authorities, ADI, ITI DD and LAGs) have the responsibility of prioritizing the interventions;
- The mechanisms of integrated territorial development contributed to the identification and selection of the interventions, but also to the development of the partnership and support structures. ROP, based on the integrated strategies, adopted at the level of the local partnership, has also contributed to the capacity of the decision-makers to identify and select the priority projects for the communities;
- The increase of the administrative capacity of the ROP beneficiaries, of the local public administrations has not been until now oriented towards the competences related to the decentralization process. Therefore, the contribution of the ROP to these processes is limited and indirect, being related to the improvement of the public services delivered by the local public administrations;
- The ROP's contribution to decentralization can only be reinforced under the conditions of adequate coordination of the ROP implementation system (eg through accessing conditions) with the methodology and instruments adopted to facilitate administrative decentralization (eg quality and cost standards of public services)
- Este Stronger synergy is needed with other complementary funding programs and sources (eg, by matching the priorities and content of actions aimed at building capacity according to the needs identified for the implementation of the ROP).

2. Recommendations

- Strengthening the coordination function of government policies, by establishing a strong link between them and the governmental responsibilities arising from the signing of the Partnership Agreement: for example, a mechanism for monitoring and alerting delays in fulfilling the "favorable conditions" in the start-up phase of operational programs;
- Increasing the degree of responsibility assumed by the line ministries, regarding the contribution of national sectoral policies to the regional development policy;
- Given the increased importance of integrated territorial interventions, the need to review the legislation in the field of regional development is required. For this it is recommended to initiate an institutional framework (working group) to substantiate the decisions of legislative review and coordination with other governmental initiatives (eg, the National Fund for Local Development and the Code of Public Administration, approved on 26.06.2019). This institutional framework will include, but is not limited to, the following

institutions and departments: MDRAP, MA ROP, DG AP, DG Regional Development. This inter-ministerial working group will have the role of analyzing the impact of the regulations on the ROP implementation system (and, in general, EFSI).

- The legislative changes will have to ensure:
 - the functionality of some structures for coordinating the regional development policy with adequate financial resources, so that the regional development policy is not seen only through the ROP / ERDF prism;
 - a close and strategic correlation at the level of the governmental policies that intersect with the regional development policy;
 - fulfilling the strategic role of connection between the central and local level by the regional structures established by law, respectively the RDAs;
 - Strengthening the role of regional structures (RDAs) in the function of programming, monitoring and evaluating regional development policy in the territory, establishing policy coordination mechanisms at top-down and bottom-up levels of competence, oriented towards achieving regional development goals, for the continuity of the functions that the RDAs perform, in addition to the tasks delegated in the ROP implementation system. The necessary resources could be provided by (re) operationalizing the National Regional Development Fund and / or any other financial system / mechanism (the National Local Development Fund or the national budget, on a special financing line). In any case, the source should be national and not related to the management of European funds (eg not to be ROP through the TA axis), because the respective function would be related to a national policy and would not derive from the tasks performed in the ROP system (although the approach will obviously contribute to the improvement of this system);
 - the base the regional development policy should be on the basis of the spatial planning plans at national, regional, sub-regional level;
 - strengthening the link between regional policy interventions and administrative decentralization processes, so that LPA projects have a greater and more direct impact on improving the delivery of public policies at local level.

It is also necessary:

- Development of strategic coordination mechanisms at governmental level, which will bring sectoral policies closer to territorial needs, and this will be reflected in the regional development policy and specifically in the ROP;
- The methodological coordination by the GSG of the ministries in order to promote the processes of administrative decentralization;
- Reducing the complexity (measures / axes) of the ROP by concentrating the development objectives according to the priorities of the regional and sectoral development policy;
- Transposition of the institutional management system of ROP 2014-2020 in the next programming period, without new accreditations or other administrative procedures;
- Extending the participatory nature of programming by strengthening the role of regional structures, such as the Regional Planning Committee, RDAs and sectoral committees in the identification phase of the priority projects portfolio;
- Ensuring the continuity of the ROP AM structures and capitalizing on the experience gained, avoiding reorganizations that destabilize the ROP implementation system;
- Carrying out an analysis of the horizontal functional relationships, both at the MA level and at the OI ROP level, so that the support structures (eg legal departments, public procurement, county offices) help the implementation of the program in a more systematic

way , from the perspective of reducing the tasks at the level of DG AM / OI ROP and systematizing the approval and decision-making process;

- Ensuring the correlation of ROP human and financial resources with the evolution of ROP allocation and structure, so that the organization of specialized services reflects the complexity of the program;
- Providing adequate spaces and equipment for the functioning of the implementation system;
- Simplification of procedures (reducing situations that require approval and / or validation, adopting a better information exchange system - ensuring the functionality of the "implementation" mode of SMIS) but also by early involving actors at central and local level in planning priorities and respecting the implementation schedule for all;
- Analysis of the degree of loading according to the implementation process, its duration and the expected work volume (eg, number of projects submitted for contracts, number of expected reimbursement requests, etc.), at least quarterly;
- Analyzing the opportunity of reintroducing the Implementation Framework Document, thus, operational aspects of the program implementation can be defined from the beginning, detailing the selection and prioritization criteria, as well as the eligibility conditions of the activities and the expenditures on types of interventions. In this way, the conditions would remain, as far as possible, in force throughout the implementation, and the predictability of the program would be increased;
- Simplification of the contracting procedure with a view to reducing administrative burdens (eg, inter-institutional agreements with entities responsible for issuing the necessary administrative documents in the contracting phase);
- Extend the adoption of the simplified cost option (in particular the flat rates option on cost lines), according to the proposed common regulation for 2021-2027;
- Ensure the functioning of the implementation module from MySMIS;
- Defining a timetable for the preparation and launch of calls for project proposals and its compliance, so that the estimation of the necessary resources at the system level is correct and the potential beneficiaries are able to prepare their projects in time;
- Continue the effort to strengthen the helpdesk function, including by involving support structures and structuring it according to the ROP implementation processes;
- Analysis of the information and training needs of potential beneficiaries, on strategic planning issues, project management, public procurement, etc. The analysis could be coordinated at national level (eg by DG AP / MRDAP or NACS) and facilitated by LPA associations;
- Supporting the LPA in order to increase the capacity for strategic planning and the capacity to correlate local policies with financing programs, especially among small towns;
- Allocation of reserve resources (eg, state budget, other government programs) to cover the costs derived from the strategic planning activity of the LPA (eg, exceeding the allocations on specific objectives within PA 4, in order to integrate) ;
- Promoting integrated territorial interventions based on the lessons learned from the 2014-2020 pilot exercise (LAG, urban authorities, ITI);
- Simplifying the conditions for accessing integrated interventions, at the same time strengthening the DLRC approach and the role of LAGs, by integrating local development strategies within integrated strategy for urban development and other strategic documents at territorial administrative unit level;
- Strengthening the role of the Urban Authorities in the monitoring and evaluation phase of integrated strategy for urban development;
- Urgently ensure the functionality of the SMIS system to become a basic tool in simplifying the implementation processes. If all SMIS implementation modules were functional, they

would reduce the volume and circulation of paper documents, thus minimizing administrative burdens for all parties involved (eg, reimbursement documents are transmitted on paper and loaded into the scanned system, the monitoring module does not allow the issuance of reports useful for the purpose of monitoring, the different interfaces for the different types of users do not facilitate the process of supporting the beneficiaries in implementation).

3. Lessons learned

- Participarea Participation and involvement of actors with attributions in the ROP implementation system at various levels of governance (vertically) and in various fields of activity (horizontal), as well as ensuring the integrated character of these are key aspects for the effectiveness of this policy. Only through an integrated approach, hierarchical coordination implemented from the bottom up, as well as by assuming the responsibility of the actors at all levels in formulating and implementing development strategies, programs, plans and projects the success of regional development can be ensured;
- Actors at local level need continuous support in understanding and implementing the principles of balanced territorial development, including from the perspective of assuming the responsibilities of administrative decentralization. For LPAs with low human and financial resources, this support must include additional support, going beyond the administrative limits, in order to create that critical mass needed for the delivery of public services at the optimum level depending on the final beneficiaries, respectively the local communities. In this context, the association between the local actors is essential to the success of the regional development policy;
- The regional level of governance needs to be strengthened to ensure the strategic vision and "catalyzing" resources and potential at the local level from a regional perspective. The role of RDAs and other regional structures of partnership and associative type is essential and should be further exploited, in order to avoid dispersion of resources and fragmentation of results;
- The function of monitoring and evaluating regional development strategies must be strengthened and closely linked to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of governmental, sectoral, local and regional strategies and policies. This aspect can be assured only under the conditions in which the line ministries assume their specific responsibility in the regional development policy, under the coordination of the MRDPA, in its capacity as a governmental structure responsible for the regional development policy;
- For these reasons, the main lesson learned from the evaluation of the 2014-2020 ROP implementation system is that in order to achieve the expected results, the regional development policy must exceed both the local administrative limits and the ROP limits and become an integrated tool of all government policies, reflected at regional level.