

## **Batch 3 - Evaluation of ROP 2014-2020 interventions**

# **FINAL REPORT**

**Theme 5. Improving the urban area and  
preserving, protecting and sustainably capitalizing  
the cultural heritage**

JULY 2019

## ***Lot 3 - Evaluation of ROP 2014-2020 interventions***

***Contract no. 266/19.09.2018***

### **Theme 5. Improving the urban area and preserving, protecting and sustainably capitalizing the cultural heritage**

## **EVALUATION REPORT - FINAL VERSION**

**July 2019**

#### **DISCLAIMER**

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

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

#### **Name and address of the Beneficiary:**

Ministerul Dezvoltării Regionale și  
Administrației Publice (Ministry of Regional  
Development and Public Administration)  
Str. Libertății nr. 17, Iatru Nord  
050741, Bucharest – 5, ROMANIA  
Tel./Fax: +40372111512

#### **Name and address of the Consultant:**

**Lattanzio Advisory Spa**  
Via Cimarosa, 4, 20144 Milano - ITALY

**Lattanzio Monitoring & Evaluation Srl**  
Via Cimarosa, 4, 20144 Milano – ITALY

**Liliana BOȘNEAGĂ - PA 5 Evaluation Coordinator**

**Anca COVACI - Project Director**

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## List of abbreviations

CA	Contracting Authority
RDA	Regional Development Agency (or plural)
AFCN	Administration of the National Cultural Fund
MA POR	Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Program
AOR	Association of Cities of Romania
ANAP	National Agency for Public Procurement
EIB	European Investment Bank
CEB	Council of Europe Development Bank
BE ROP	Office for the Evaluation of the Regional Operational Program
SB	Contribution from the State budget
CAE	Administrative Compliance and Eligibility
CCE	Evaluation Coordination Committee
CdS	Specifications
CM POR	Monitoring Committee of the Regional Operational Program
CNMI	National Committee of Historical Monuments
DALI	Documentation for the approval of intervention works
DG PCU	Directorate General of Human Resource Development
CLLD	Community-led local development
MAI	Major area of intervention (in relation to ROP 2007-2013)
DCH	Directorate Cultural Heritage
TFA	Technical and Financial Assessment
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
GD	Government decision
IAT	Tourist attractiveness index
IN	Indicator
INFC	National Institute for Research and Cultural Training
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
INP	National Heritage Institute
INS	National Institute of Statistics
EQ	Evaluation question
MNE	Ministry of National Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
IB	Intermediate Body
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization (or plural)
TQ	Technical quotation
PATN	National Zoning Plan
PDR	Regional Development Plan
IP	Investment priority
PME	Multi-annual Evaluation Plan
PNDR	National Rural Development Programme
POCU	Human Capital Operational Program
ROP	Regional Operational Program
POR MySMIS	Monitoring System for the Regional Operational Program
SIDU	Integrated Urban Development Strategy

SNCP	Strategy for Culture and National Heritage
EUSDR	EU Strategy for the Danube Region
TAU	Territorial Administrative Unit
EU	European Union
MU	Measuring Unit
PMU	Project Management Unit
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## 1. Executive summary

This report contains the results of the evaluation of Priority Axis 5 “Improving the urban area and preserving, protecting and sustainably capitalizing the cultural heritage” within the ROP 2014-2020. The Axis comprises two investment priorities (IP), IP 5.1 “ Preserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage” and IP 5.2 “Conducting actions aimed at improving the urban environment, revitalizing cities, regenerating and decontaminating decommissioned industrial land (including reconversion areas), reducing air pollution and promoting noise reduction measures.

The executive summary outlines the findings, conclusions and recommendations obtained and provides answers to the evaluation questions, following the application of the methodology and tools specific to such an evaluation.

### 1. Conclusions

- The restoration of the heritage (PA 5.1 interventions’ envisaged results), in the medium and long term, correlated with a coherent and sustained set of policies at central and local level, will determine the development and diversification of the local economies. In the beneficiaries’ and stakeholders’ opinion, these interventions are 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 under the PND, the Ro-Cultura programme, but also the European URBAN Innovative Actions programme. Partnerships in project implementation, beneficiaries’ financial capacity and ensuring a professional project management are the premises of the sustainability of the interventions;
- Regarding the current state of ROP implementation, 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 programme, 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 the majority of beneficiaries has 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 rate slightly below this average (21.91%);
- The intermediate financial target for 2018, amounting to Euro 54,117,647, assumed under the Performance Framework, regarding the total amount of eligible expenses resulting 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 to highlight the most recent version of the financing request in MySMIS after modifications, in order to consolidate the package of documents needed for 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 in view to avoid multiple uploads of information / documents. It is recommended to check the existing data in the system, in particular regarding 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 shall respect the regional specificity (i.e. the allocations for cultural heritage shall be correlated with the potential of historical monuments within each development region), but also other types of financing and operations (i.e. the SPIRE project), with a high degree of sustainability and potential efficiency shall be also considered;
- Improving the indicators set for a realistic and accurate quantification of the effects (i.e. differentiation of output indicators - sqm rehabilitated - and result indicators - no objectives, no tourists; use of composite indicators - such as the patrimony / sites supported attractiveness index) can determine PA effectiveness;
- In order to increase capacities related to the regional policies' elaboration and implementation, there is the need to adopt measures for enhancing administrative and territorial units' (UAT) capacities, especially in the field of public procurement and project

management, as well as in the field of promoting the partnership at local level between beneficiaries, especially among small local public administrations.

For efficient growth of implementation management processes, we recommend:

- ☐ Launching calls for proposals immediately after ROP approval;
- ☐ Broader consultation on the guidelines for applicants, for a clearer and easier to complete content of the application;
- ☐ Preparatory sessions with the applicants to clarify the content of the applicant's guidelines (eligibility criteria, eligible costs and classification of certain cases);
- ☐ Dimensioning of staff resources at the level of MA and IBs according to the work-load levels;
- ☐ Sustained use of technical assistance resources during peak periods;
- ☐ Periodic evaluation of ROP promotion campaigns to determine the effectiveness on different promotion channels (for example, through surveys at the level of target groups).

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

- Elaborating territorial and local landscape plans integrated with those related to 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.;
- Including the cultural dimension and the issue of housing quality under existing urban and rural regeneration programmes;
- Strengthening the interinstitutional cooperation for the realization of a unitary framework for the establishment of a system for the protection of the built and natural heritage and landscape, including the training of restorers and heritage site managers. An action plan to increase the number of accredited experts, who can intervene on the patrimony, shall be elaborated together with the relevant authorities (Ministry of Culture and National Identity and decentralized units at county level);
- Initiating pilot projects / framework programmes for local and regional development that include the built heritage and other elements of intangible cultural heritage, in order to integrate the conservation dimension with the transmission of intangible cultural heritage to the new generations (i.e. Limanu).



### 3. Lessons learned

- The good collaboration between ROP MA and IBs led to the improvement of the eligibility conditions (i.e. the 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 title, for project submission; accepting the extension works; accepting the parish as legal representative not only the tenant; the elimination of the obligation to digitize the site); under the launch of different calls (eg "unfinished" projects), as compared to the first calls launched in 2016;
- Merging different project cycle stages (i.e. the realisation of fields visits at ETF level) has reduced the evaluation and selection duration;
- Shortening the period of ROP implementation by signing the contract at the SF / TP stage;
- The new mechanism of payment requests, introduced in April 2013, generated a substantial impact on the increase in absorption.
- Better planning of the activities from the financing applications' design stage 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 for constant communication with the different departments involved in the ROP implementation system;
- In the case of projects involving the application of concepts with a large amount of solutions that can be defined only within the execution details included in the TP stage, the beneficiary should assign the SF / DALI provider also the task of performing the TP;
- The direct involvement of the beneficiary in all phases of the project (including monitoring the activity of the consulting firm) is a basic condition of success;

## 2. Current situation

Priority Axis 5 “Improving the urban area and preserving, protecting and sustainably capitalizing the cultural heritage” addresses the following investment priorities:

- Investment Priority 5.1 - Conservation, protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage;
- Investment Priority 5.2 “Conducting actions aimed at improving the urban environment, revitalizing cities, regenerating and decontaminating decommissioned industrial land (including reconversion areas), reducing air pollution and promoting noise reduction measures.

Operations under the PA 5 fall under the **Thematic Objective 6** - Environmental protection and promoting effective use of resources.

Until 31/12/2018 (this is the reference date for all the statistics in this study), **13 calls for proposals have been launched. Total allocation of the ROP (ERDF + SB) for PA 5 is EUR 435,122,890..**

**Table 1 - Total PA 5 allocations (amount in Euro)**

Alocare, Euro	Total Axa 5			5.1.			5.2.		
	Total	FEDR	Buget Stat	Total	FEDR	Buget Stat	Total	FEDR	Buget Stat
1. Nord-Est	56,099,936	47,684,946	8,414,990	43,733,362	37,173,358	6,560,004	12,366,574	10,511,588	1,854,986
2. Sud-Est	47,609,655	40,468,206	7,141,449	37,114,664	31,547,464	5,567,200	10,494,991	8,920,742	1,574,249
3. Sud - Muntenia	50,429,069	42,864,708	7,564,361	39,312,571	33,415,685	5,896,886	11,116,498	9,449,023	1,667,475
4. Sud-Vest Oltenia	38,350,441	32,597,875	5,752,566	29,896,535	25,412,055	4,484,480	8,453,906	7,185,820	1,268,086
5. Vest	37,709,666	32,053,216	5,656,450	29,397,012	24,987,460	4,409,552	8,312,654	7,065,756	1,246,898
6. Nord - Vest	40,771,278	32,617,022	8,154,256	26,595,745	21,276,596	5,319,149	14,175,533	11,340,426	2,835,107
7. Centru	45,911,598	39,024,858	6,886,740	35,790,924	30,422,285	5,368,639	10,120,674	8,602,573	1,518,101
8. București - Ilfov	44,277,620	37,635,978	6,641,642	34,517,136	29,339,566	5,177,570	9,760,484	8,296,412	1,464,072
ITI	42,599,422	36,209,509	6,389,913	32,027,534	27,223,404	4,804,130	10,571,888	8,986,105	1,585,783
SUERD	31,364,205	26,659,574	4,704,631	18,585,732	15,797,872	2,787,860	12,778,473	10,861,702	1,916,771
<b>Total</b>	<b>435,122,890</b>	<b>367,815,892</b>	<b>67,306,998</b>	<b>326,971,215</b>	<b>276,595,745</b>	<b>50,375,470</b>	<b>108,151,675</b>	<b>91,220,147</b>	<b>16,931,528</b>

Source: Data taken from MySMIS by the Valuer

NB: Distribution of indicative financial allocations at regional level related to the ROP 2014-2020 change (written procedure as of June 2018): EUR 435.1 million, of which EUR 327.0 million (about 75%) for the specific objective 5.1. Improving local development by preserving, protecting and capitalizing on cultural heritage and cultural identity and 108.1 million Euro (about 25%) for the specific objective 5.2. Reconversion and functional change of degraded, vacant or unused land and areas in small, medium cities and the municipality of Bucharest.

**373 projects were submitted under these calls, of which 275 projects under IP 5.1 and 98 projects under IP 5.2. The value of these projects is of Lei 3,771,100,728.**

**Table 2 - Projects submitted under PA 5 (value in Lei)<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> The calculations of ROP allocation in RON were based on the average exchange rate of 4.6611 RON/EUR for June 2018 (the date for the distribution of the indicative financial allocations, at regional level, related to the change of ROP 2014-2020.

Year	Call name	Budget for the projects submitted under Axis 5		
		EQ 1	EQ 2	Total
2016	ROP/2016/5/5.1/1 historical call 7 regions	1,943,518,106		1,943,518,106
	ROP/2016/5/5.1/1 historical call BI	25,540,480		25,540,480
	ROP/2016/5/5.2/1 historical call 7 regions	1,888,719	254,214,273	256,102,992
2017	ROP/2017/5/5.1/1/2	194,410,514		194,410,514
	ROP/2017/5/5.1/3	111,808,802		111,808,802
	ROP/2017/5/5.1/ITI/1	131,308,351		131,308,351
	POR/2017/5/5.1/SUERD/1	275,730,338		275,730,338
	ROP/2017/5/5.2/2 BI		77,664,844	77,664,844
	ROP/2017/5/5.2/2 REGIONS		353,335,063	353,335,063
	ROP/2017/5/5.2/SUERD/1		37,638,016	37,638,016
2018	ROP/2018/5/5.1/4	160,283,665		160,283,665
	ROP/2018/5/5.1/7 regions/unfinished projects	190,418,855		190,418,855
	ROP/2018/5/5.1/BI/unfinished projects	13,340,702		13,340,702
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,048,248,532</b>	<b>722,852,196</b>	<b>3,771,100,728</b>

Source: Data taken from MySMIS by the Valuer

**Table 3 - Projects submitted under PA 5 (number)<sup>2</sup>**

Year	Call name	Number of projects submitted under Axis 5		
		SO 1	SO 2	Total
2016	ROP/2016/5/5.1/1 historical call 7 regions	182		182
	ROP/2016/5/5.1/1 historical call BI	2		2
	ROP/2016/5/5.2/1 historical call 7 regions	1	34	35
2017	ROP/2017/5/5.1/1/2	19		19
	ROP/2017/5/5.1/3	8		8
	ROP/2017/5/5.1/ITI/1	9		9
	POR/2017/5/5.1/SUERD/1	30		30
	POR/2017/5/5.2/2 BI		5	5
	ROP/2017/5/5.2/2 REGIONS		53	53
	POR/2017/5/5.2/SUERD/1		6	6
2018	ROP/2018/5/5.1/4	11		11
	ROP/2018/5/5.1/7 regions/unfinished projects	12		12
	ROP/2018/5/5.1/BI/unfinished projects	1		1
<b>Total</b>		<b>275</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Data taken from MySMIS by the Valuer

<sup>2</sup> Except for SMIS 119730 (5.1. SUERD) and SMIS 118851 5.2 projects Regions that do not have the budget in the database.

**48 projects were rejected** (44 were rejected after administrative and eligibility check, 2 were rejected after the technical-financial assessment and 2 others were withdrawn).

The ratio between the ERDF and SB allocation of submitted projects and the ERDF + SB ROP allocation is **182.5%** at the PA level and **196.6%** at IP 5.1 level **140.0%** at IP 5.2 level, respectively.

**Table 4 - Relation between the amount granted by ERDF, SB, FEDER + SB submitted applications and allocations**

Value of submitted projects / POR allocation	ERDF	BS	TOTAL
5.1.	200.3%	176.0%	196.6%
5.2.	127.5%	207.6%	140.0%
<b>Total Axis 5</b>	<b>182.2%</b>	<b>184.0%</b>	<b>182.5%</b>

Source: Data taken from MySMIS by the Valuer

**236 projects were contracted** with a total eligible amount of Lei 2,478,596,667, of which a European contribution of Lei 2,051,264,774.7 representing 82.76% of the ROP allocation (EU contribution). Within the **IP 5.1, 188 projects were contracted** with a total eligible amount of Lei 2,131,190,181, while under the **PI 5.2, 48 projects<sup>3</sup>** with a total eligible value of Lei 347,406,486 were contracted.

The ratio between the ERDF and SB allocation of contracted projects and the ERDF + SB ROP allocation is **119.1%** at the PA level and **136.2%** at IP 5.1 level **67.2%** at IP 5.2 level, respectively.

According to the data in MySMIS, the situation of the indicators is as follows:

**Target value of the 1S23 indicator - Restored cultural heritage objectives: 177 objectives.**

**Target value of indicator CO09 Sustainable tourism:** Increase in the expected number of visits to sites part of the cultural and natural heritage and attractions benefiting from support: **2,187,953 visits/year<sup>4</sup>.**

**Target value of the CO38 indicator Urban development::** Open space created or rehabilitated in urban areas: **1,773,356 sqm.** The projects were not completed by 31/12/2018, the deadline to collect the database, and no results were produced until the study was completed (no project indicator registered in MySMIS).

### 3. Stages of the study

<sup>3</sup> There may be a difference of 2 projects that is being clarified; see the note in the tables.

<sup>4</sup> The value of this indicator may be vitiated by the erroneous insertion of the applicants in the historical call, which will be detailed in Section 3 b.

## a). Literature

The list of literature is grouped into national, EU and international, and is detailed in [Annex 1](#). The documents analysed took into account the topic addressed and relevance to the evaluation questions.

### In relation to the intervention logic

In order to carry out the evaluation study, the programmatic documents were studied in order to understand the objectives to be achieved by the proposed operations for financing, as well as the reasoning for their inclusion in the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020, namely the needs met by those operations.

In this respect, the “*Updating of the mid-term evaluation of the Regional Operational Program 2007 - 2013*” report was studied.

From the “*Development of a common indicator system for ERDF and CF interventions after 2020*” document, suggestions can be derived on indicators that can be used in the new budget exercise and can lead to better monitoring and analysis of the effects of interventions (see [Annex 2](#))

In order to analyse the extent to which proposed operations are in line with national or European policies, a number of documents have been drawn up: The “*Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018)*” adopted by the EU Council of Ministers of Culture in December 2014, the “*European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century*”, the “*Strategy for National Culture and Heritage (SNCH) 2016-2022*” subject to the interministerial endorsement process).

Several recent studies highlight the role of culture in sustainable development, hence the **need to integrate regional and cultural development strategies**. The most important considerations following the ROP 2014-2020 are presented below, plus a specification of the reference document.

The “*Biodiversity Conservation National Strategy and Action Plan for 2014-2020*” identifies a number of problematic areas in terms of architecture, zoning, urbanism and cultural and natural landscape, including **lack of coherence in public policies, legislative shortcomings and a weak institutional framework**. Thus, Study 12 - “Protection of cultural and natural heritage and landscape” drafted in 2014 in order to substantiate Romania's Territorial Development Strategy, states that even since 2008 the current Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration has developed the “*Methodology for Landscape Identification and Assessment*”, it was not promoted by a normative act.

In a national programmatic document, “*National strategic guidelines for the sustainable development of disadvantaged mountain areas 2014-2020*”, a number of negative aspects are identified that affect the rural environment in particular: population migration trend, lack of funds for the restoration of historical monuments and the rehabilitation of the related

infrastructure, the lack of markets for craft products and the lack of interest of young people in crafts and traditional methods in various areas of activity.

The “*Urban Regenerative Information Guide*” made in 2007 by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing introduces new EU concepts that help revitalize urban areas in difficulty: strategic planning, integrated urban regeneration projects, urban governance, sustainable urban development.

The “*Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities*”, adopted in 2007, presents the following key elements: using the integrated approach to urban development policies; focus on less-favoured urban areas: inclusion of housing components, energy efficiency and sustainability, promoting efficient and affordable urban transport; creating quality public spaces; rehabilitation of the physical environment; correlation of physical rehabilitation with social and economic measures; participation of the population in the elaboration of urban development strategies; innovative pro-active policies and population education.

The World Health Organization published in 2016 an analysis study on “*Urban green spaces and health. A review of evidence*”, a study that highlights the link between urban green spaces and improved health and quality of life.

#### In relation to sustainability of interventions

The publication “*The EU Budget for the Future*” was reviewed and it was found that the programs for regional development and cohesion will be foreseen in Priority II of the Financial Framework 2021-2027, which refers to “Cohesion and Values”. These programs will invest in the following areas: regional development and cohesion; the achievement of the Economic and Monetary Union; people, social cohesion and values, which will ensure the sustainability of the results obtained from the financing of the ROP operations 2014-2020. One of the objectives of these two funds is “Europe closer to citizens by fostering the **sustainable and integrated development** of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives”.

#### In relation to the types of intervention and mechanisms

Study of similar programs in other Member States (eg. ROP Campania, ROP Marche, ROP Sicily, Italy, Axis 6) <sup>5</sup> (see **Annex 3**) or at Community level (eg. URBAN INNOVATIVE ACTIONS<sup>6</sup>) allowed the provision of suggestions for new operations responding to PA 5 objectives, as well as providing benchmarking for IP 5.2, as anticipated in the Initial Report (**Annex 4**). These indicators are currently purely informative (Annex 2).

#### **Conclusions:**

<sup>5</sup><http://porfesr.regione.campania.it/it/por-in-sintesi/assi/asse-6-tutela-e-valorizzazione-del-patrimonio-naturale-e-culturale>

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.welcomeurope.com/european-funds/erdf-urban-innovative-actions-047+947.html#tab=onglet\\_details](https://www.welcomeurope.com/european-funds/erdf-urban-innovative-actions-047+947.html#tab=onglet_details)

- The heritage is a non-regenerative asset the **preservation, protection, restoration and capitalisation of which is a responsibility of society as a whole**, including the spheres of politics, law and administration;
- There are **four priorities for European cooperation in the field of cultural policies**: 1. affordable and inclusive culture; 2. cultural heritage; 3. cultural and creative sectors, creative economy and innovation; 4. promoting cultural diversity, culture in EU relations and mobility.
- **Heritage protection requires an inclusive approach** and involves not only local, national and European public authorities, but also all heritage stakeholders, including professionals, non-governmental (international) organizations, volunteers and civil society;
- The European Cultural Heritage Strategy is based on three components:
  - a. The “**social**” component - capitalizes on heritage assets to promote diversity, patrimonial communities' capacity and participatory governance;
  - b. The “**territorial and economic development**” component seeks to strengthen the contribution of heritage to sustainable development, based on local resources, tourism and employment;
  - c. The “**knowledge and education**” component focuses on education, research and lifelong learning issues through the establishment of heritage centres and training in crafts and professions through appropriate learning, training and research programs.
- **Integrated urban planning** is a process involving the combination of sector-specific planning efforts and allowing strategic decision-making;
- Integrated urban policies are planning tools that articulate public actions in areas such as urban mobility, economic development, environmental protection, access to services, social inclusion, housing quality, culture and education in a **coherent developmental vision**.

## b). Data collection

The data collection was done using the methods mentioned in the MEP and consisted in obtaining the information needed to answer the evaluation questions, namely:

EQ 1 - To what extent has the ROP contributed so far and will contribute in the future to the diversification of local economies through the sustainable development of natural and cultural patrimony by:

- increasing the average number of employees in patrimony objectives?
- increasing the average number of visitors in patrimony objectives?

EQ 2 - To what extent has it contributed so far and will the ROP contribute in the future to improving the quality of life by improving the urban environment?

- What is the number of fit out land plots/areas? What is the total area?
- What is the community's reaction to these changes?

EQ 3 - To what extent are the prerequisites for determining the types of operations eligible for funding checked in practice (in implementation)? How can the way of solving the problems identified within this PA or for similar future interventions be improved?

- What types of interventions / implementation mechanisms have proven to be effective and why?

EQ 4 - What is the level of sustainability of ROP actions?



EQ5 - To what extent have the funded interventions contributed to increasing tourist attractiveness or real estate attractiveness through specific actions?

*“The Monitoring and Evaluation Guide for the new programming period 2016-2020”*<sup>7</sup> states that the assessment should place **greater emphasis on policy objectives**; this factor is essential if **results-based policies are to be implemented**, to the detriment of focusing on the absorption capacity of the funds. The role of evaluation, well differentiated from monitoring, and the methodology should capture useful information to identify the effects of interventions. Therefore, considering the early stage of implementation of the interventions at the time of the evaluation, it was intended to collect information that outlines the internal and external context of the projects in order to understand to what extent the estimated effects can occur within the available time horizon.

These data were of a **quantitative nature** (data from the MySMIS computerized system, data from the RDA monitoring process, data from case studies, on-line survey) and of a **qualitative nature** (from focus groups, case studies, group or individual interviews with the beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders / relevant actors of the target group).

**Primary data** (collected by the Valuer from the actors related to the program) and **secondary data** (from the literature or collected by third parties - ROP management documents, statistical sources, evaluations and previous research) were used.

Data collection has started with desk research and the collection of information considered relevant for later analysis of secondary data. This information was of a qualitative and quantitative nature.

The process continued with the taking over of the existing MDSRM MySMIS data (see **Annex 5**). These data provided the main sources of information and analysis at national and regional level: the financial allocations per call, the number and value of the projects submitted, the number and value of the projects rejected in the two phases of the evaluation, the number and value of the contracted projects, the calendar dates of the processes of evaluation and contracting, target output and result indicators, number of changes to the contractual documentation, project status (whether under evaluation or implementation, progress of procurement contracts, services or works contracts and comparing to the plan of activities).

Other data were obtained from the processing of information from web-based **questionnaires for beneficiaries** (see **Annex 6** and **Annex 7**) or from the NGOs and from **group discussions** with relevant stakeholders or actors within focus groups organized at **regional level** (a focus

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<sup>7</sup> Programming period 2016-2020, Guidance document on monitoring and evaluation ECF & ERDF, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, March 2014, preface



group for the beneficiaries in each IP) and relevant actors (stakeholders) within the focus group at **national level** (a focus group on interinstitutional cooperation on IP 5.1 topics). (see Guides, reports and collected data of the 3 focus groups in **Annex 8**).

Following on-site visits to all the eight RDAs, the **monitoring reports** of these institutions (other than the data provided in MySMIS) were taken over and qualitative data were obtained following group or individual interviews with the staff directly involved in ROP implementation, heads of services and heads of departments, directors, IB managers, RDA managers. On-site visits at the location of the projects provided qualitative information on the project implementation stage, the opinions of the 13 beneficiaries and 2 works providers, as well as of the consultants who supported the beneficiaries in accessing the funds made available under the ROP (case study of SMIS 119179 project “Rehabilitation of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Mihail”, beneficiary being the Church United with Rome, the Greek Catholic Church of Gherla (Cluj) and a consultant participating in the focus group under the IP 5.2). The names, positions and contact details of interviewees are included in **Annex 9**. In addition to the visits to 10 out of the 11 locations of the projects subject to the case studies (except for the SMIS 116367 project “Restoration, rehabilitation, preservation and arrangement of an exhibition space within the monument <Commemorative Cross to the Romanian Heroes of the First World War>“, beneficiary - Ministry of National Defence, where a telephone interview was conducted), visits were also made to the following projects: SMIS 125020 “Braunstein Palace consolidation and functional reconversion”, beneficiary - Iasi Municipality; SMIS 118970 project “Restoration of the Lutheran Episcopal Church”, beneficiary - the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Romania - Parish of Cluj. The suppliers of works to whom discussions were conducted in the context of the plan of activities and the problems encountered were those from the case studies “International Centre of Contemporary Art: rehabilitation, consolidation and operational restoration of the former communal bath (Turkish bath) and “Rehabilitation of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Michael”.

During the entire data collection process, information was intended to allow drawing conclusions and assumptions based on existing data, even if the projects were not completed and, as a consequence, have not yet produced any effects. The information that would lead to signals / trends / practices that can provide answers to the evaluation questions was targeted. Representative samples (margin of +/- 10%) were selected and analysed. For example, an analysis of the sustainability of the interventions as an important part of the evaluation process was carried out by means of **70 grant applications** selected in a single step, 68 being the representative sample number compared to 236 contracts under PA 5. The **number of projects implemented by the beneficiary or under implementation** was collected from grant applications (contracts with a value lower than that of the current financing contract and contracts with a value at least equal to or higher than the current contract - those in progress and those implemented) and the presence in the projects of the following elements of sustainability: **methods to manage the infrastructure** (internal or external), the **transferability of results** and the **multiplier effects**. Also in support of the verification of

sustainability of the interventions, the existence of complementary national programs that could create the premises of result synergies verified.

The promotional events under PA 5 organized by the RDA (number and types of events, number of participants) were analysed to see if there was any connection between the interest expressed for the Axis funding and the number of applications submitted within each development region. Data were collected about: **type of communication/promotion/desk-support actions / events / others** and the number of participants in these events.

For a more in-depth analysis, based on both quantitative and qualitative criteria, **11 case studies** were selected to ensure the representativeness of the types of operations, the diversity of beneficiaries, geographical distribution (see **Annex 10**).

### c). Description of the methodology

This chapter synthetically describes the methodology used in this Evaluation Report. Any change to those described in the Initial Report will be explained, giving the reasons that led to this decision, where appropriate.

#### **Strategy of approach to the evaluation process**

Since all projects under PA 5 are undergoing investment and none is completed, the evaluation focused in particular on those elements that would lead to verifying the logic of the interventions (i.e. verification of how the proposed operations under APs respond to community needs, verifying the implementation of interventions, determining the prerequisites for achieving results), determining current progress (project implementation stage, changes to funding contracts) and drafting recommendations for the current and / or future programming period (e.g. types of interventions, indicators for the assessment and / or monitoring of operations).

During the evaluation, the following general principles and directions of action were considered:

**Impartiality and Independence** - all information and opinions from all stakeholders were meant to be analysed in a balanced way without significant influence from any group of factors, using a professional judgment that is not compromised by the prejudices, conflict of interest or influence of others.

**Objectivity** - a logical, sound and clear analysis based on ROP objectives and results has been achieved;

**Stakeholder involvement** - stakeholder consultation (ROP institutional implementation framework, beneficiaries and consultants, relevant associations and organizations) by different methods (individual or participatory);

**Adaptation of the methodology for each evaluation question** - the purpose was to identify and analyse the most logical, reliable and relevant data sources;

**Detailed analysis** - where possible, complete analyses were carried out to meet the overall purpose of the evaluation. Tables and graphs illustrating the current state of the program as easily and representatively as possible were included, case studies were carried out.

The **results of the evaluation** allowed:

**Making recommendations** - based on the observations and analyses carried out, and taking into account the relevant European and international experience, recommendations have been formulated which may be of particular use for future programming periods, but also for the current implementation of the program;

**Lessons learned** - findings from the evaluation process have enabled the lessons learned from the MA and the beneficiaries to be identified, lessons that may be useful for the current or future programming period.

Hereinafter, are the categories of methods and techniques used to collect primary and secondary data used and the collection tools.

Structured (with closed-ended) and semi-structured (and open-ended) questionnaires. Stakeholder consultation was sought through this tool because it was considered that it allowed an optimal number of information to be obtained within a reasonable time. The questionnaires have been computerized using cross directional “control” algorithms to ensure the consistency and validity of the extracted data and were applied to all contract signatories under Axes 5.1 and 5.2 and contained several verification keys. The data were obtained by computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI), via the web, without direct interaction with the interviewed subject who answered the questionnaire. Invitations to fill in online questionnaires were launched for all PA 5 beneficiaries, that is 188 beneficiaries under IP 5.1 and 48 beneficiaries under IP 5.2.

For the survey of the beneficiaries under P.I. 5.1 the questionnaire attached as Annex 6 of the present report was made and for the survey of the beneficiaries under P.I. 5.2 the questionnaire attached as Annex 7 was made. The annexes also include recorded responses and graphs of the data obtained.

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

- Stage of procurement;
- Current needs identified at the time of the project preparation;
- How to prepare the grant application;
- The main difficulties encountered in the procedures for preparing and submitting the grant application;
- The level of difficulty in contracting and conducting processes;
- The proposed indicators and their feasibility at the moment;
- Ensuring the sustainability of the intervention;
- Timing of the costs estimated in the budget;
- Timing of activities timetable;

- Projects complementary to the intervention;
- Effects of the intervention;
- Existence of other attractions near the project site;
- The extent to which the project covers the current needs of the community.

For IP 5.1, 46 respondents answered, of which 23 were ATUs, 19 worship places, 1 NGO and 3 ATUs in partnership. Those beneficiaries covered all development regions, most of them being in the NE (11), W (7) and the central region (6).

### Focus groups

The application of this tool was aimed at obtaining the opinions of the beneficiaries in relation to the processes carried out until the evaluation, identifying the current stage of implementation of the projects, internal and external factors (negative and positive) that conditioned the achievement of the estimated results, the actuality of the identified needs.

Each focus group also included a **brainstorming** session through which the participants expressed their concerns on the identified issues, grouped on the different stages of the process, and made proposals to solve them.

There were two regional focus groups, one for IP 5.1 (for the North-East and Central development area, the most significant regions in terms of the number of contracts and the potential of historical monuments) and one for IP 5.2 (for the West and Northwest) and a focus group at national level, with stakeholders. Nine participants gathered in the regional focus group organized for IP 5.1; 5 participants come from the ATU and 4 participants from the worship places. The present organizations have 14 projects under implementation, the proposed interventions cover the diversity of the heritage objectives for which funding could be sought, including a UNESCO objective - Probota Monastery, located in Iasi, Neamt and Suceava, counties with the highest number of heritage objectives funded. The focus group organized for IP 5.2 had a low participation, of only 3 participants (the total number of contracts in these two regions is 16); the data obtained by this tool (in practice, a group interview conducted according to a focus group methodology completed with a brainstorming session) will complemented and corroborated with those from the two case studies for IP 5.2 and the answers of the 13 survey respondents in the online survey.

These tools essentially aimed at collecting the same data in order to allow for the comparison of information, but also to complete the quantitative data obtained by applying one instrument to the qualitative data obtained by applying the other instrument.

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

Individual and group interviews were conducted with experts and/or IB ROP managers within the RDA, representatives of the target group, as well as representatives of the social partners or beneficiaries (within in-depth interviews for case studies analysis).

They were considered RDA privileged witnesses, in their capacity as Intermediate Body, local authorities, Ministry of Culture and National Identity, associative forms of beneficiaries or

target groups (Association of Cities of Romania, National Association of Tourism Agencies, National Association of Ecological Rural Tourism from Romania). See **Annex 11**.

### Case studies

For a more detailed analysis, it was considered necessary to carry out case studies that would in particular provide qualitative data not found in the sources investigated and presented above, but also to understand the context existing at project level and to determine the significant effects of the project. Consultation with RDA has enabled projects to be identified for case studies, projects selected by the Valuer based on the methodology and criteria detailed in Annex 10.

We chose the explanatory type of case study, i.e. the type where the purpose of case studies explains the relationships between the components of the program, the way in which the objectives proposed in the project will be achieved, but it also investigates the way the program is implemented, effects of the program at this stage of implementation and examination of identified causality.

The selection of case studies was based on certain criteria, namely:

- ✓ Use of concrete information from the project evaluation process;
- ✓ Location;
- ✓ Type of objective according to interest, including a UNESCO site;
- ✓ Type of religious confessions for projects under IP 5.1;
- ✓ Providing a mix of projects from both IPs in line with the IP share in the total eligible costs of the PA;
- ✓ ensuring regional representativeness.

The 11 selected case studies are presented below.

No.	IP	SMIS CODE	RDA	COUNTY	LOCALITY	BENEFICIARY	PROJECT NAME
1.	5.1	117123	NE	IS	Iași	Iași Municipality	International Center of Contemporary Art: rehabilitating, consolidating and rendering operational the building of the former communal bath (Turkish bath)
2.	5.1	119179	NW	CC	Cluj	Romanic-Catholic Parish of St. Michael	Rehabilitation of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Michael
3.	5.1	121522	C	MS	Saschiz	Evangelical Parish of Saschiz	Repair, conservation and introduction into the tourist circuit of the Saschiz Evangelical Fortified Church
4.	5.1	122564	C	MS	Saschiz	TAU Saschiz	Restoration of the refugee fortress of the 16th century of Saschiz, Mureș County
5.	5.1	116044	SV	VL	city of Horezu Village of Romanii de Jos	Hurezi Monastery	Interventions for the restoration, consolidation and sustainable development of the Hurezi monastic ensemble: Bolnița Ensemble, restoration of the "Assumption of the Virgin" Church of Bolnița and the gazebo (including the ossuary). Restoration, consolidation and definitive climatic protection of Bolnița ruins
6.	5.1	116377	SM	PH	Bușteni	Ministry of National Defence	Restoration, rehabilitation, preservation and fit out of exhibition premises within the monument "Commemorative cross of the WWI Romanian heroes" ("Caraiman Cross" Heroes Monument / Heroes Monument on the Caraiman Peak)
7.	5.1	116726	SE	BR	Municipality of Brăila	The "Annunciation" Romanian-Hellenic	Consolidation, restoration, preservation and valorisation of the "Annunciation" Church in Braila

No.	IP	SMIS CODE	RDA	COUNTY	LOCALITY	BENEFICIARY	PROJECT NAME
						Mixed Parish	
8.	5.1	116252		CS	Anina City	TAU Anina City	Restoration, preservation and valorisation of the Class A Monument - Anina Pit I Assembly
9.	5.1	11874	BI		Bucharest	Scaune Parish	Consolidation, restoration and valorisation of the property located in Str. Scaune, nr 2, "Dormition of the Mother of God" Church - Scaune
10	5.2	118838	W	CC	Turda	TAU - City of Turda	Regeneration of the Mihai Viteazu Obelisc area by creating a new public park in Turda
11	5.2	119063	NE	BC	BUHUȘI	TAU - City of BUHUȘI	Improving the urban environment in Buhuși for agri-food market, Pionierului Street, NATO apartment building, Marginea areas

The analysis of the studies was carried out in various phases:

- Selection of the case study;
- Collecting available data for each selected case;
- Data analysis and case representation in the Case Study Report.

Taking into account the state of implementation of the program, the selection of case studies by defining an appropriate set of criteria was essential to deepen certain aspects and to provide an answer to the evaluation questions.

Case studies outline good practice for selected projects. At this point in time, we can talk about the relation between the characteristics of the communities, the relation of the projects with the local development strategy and the planned indicators. Projects and programs outside the ROP will also be analysed as good practice models (**Annex 12**).

### Benchmarking

This analysis, specific to the *ex-ante* evaluation, has been provided with a view to possibly considering policies and measures aimed at improving the quality of life under the specific objective 5.2 for the next programming period. For urban development, there are statistics on the percentage of green areas in the total area and the territory and green areas (sqm) per capita.

For the heritage elements - the monuments, in our case - there is no map of the reference values; each site has its own natural and cultural attributes. Depending on what each objective is intended to achieve, records of information on the achievement of the objective will always be checked in a timely manner to follow the evolution of those specific attributes.

### Univariate and bivariate analysis

The data in MySMIS were analysed both individually and in correlation with other variables, thus obtaining information at beneficiary type, county, region level, the ratio of the financial allocation available at PA level and IP level in relation to the demand (the value of the submitted or contracted projects), the contribution of each region to the achievement of the



target indicators. Different distributions and the weighting of different variables in total PA and IP (payment requests, payments made) were calculated.

The main data used in the MySMIS database, the **Project Chapter**, were: SMIS code, region, location, type of beneficiary, grant application submission date, total budget, whether the contract was signed, number of project versions until signing the contract; **Project Indicators Chapter**: SMIS code, definition of proposed indicators, proposed value, measuring unit; **Result Indicators Chapter**: SMIS code, definition of proposed indicators, proposed value, measuring unit. **The database of payments made for the projects 5.1 and 5.2**, and all data used, had as reference the date of 31/12/2018.

#### **Matrix-based analysis. Matrix of external coherence**

To verify the logic of intervention, multiple matrices were used for the analysis of correspondences, or the degree of determination / causality between the various variables analysed. For example, the relationship between regional distribution of calls received under calls for proposals in relation to communication actions, regional distribution of contracts in relation to financial allocations, the relationship between regional allocations and regional potential (number of historical monuments).

The degree of synergy / complementarity of the ROP for different types of intervention within PA 5 with other available programs (Ro-Cultura and URBAN Innovative Actions) was checked with the help of the external coherence matrix. See **Annex 13**.

#### **Theory-based impact analysis**

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

In relation to the Delphi technique, considered in the beginning of the study, we make the following specification:

#### **Applying the Delphi method**

The Delphi methods was considered a good method for selecting case studies. Alternatively, experts within the RDA (NE RDA, SE RDA, SW RDA and NW RDA) were consulted and their opinions were used for the process, based on the analysis of the criteria proposed in the case study selection methodology and the short list of following the application of those criteria.

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

#### **Limitation 1**

Lack, inconsistency or difficult aggregation of relevant data (e.g.: number of applications submitted, indicators, project progress data). Project indicators used under IP 5.1 did not allow in-depth analyses of the effect of interventions on community development. Indicators

estimated to be collected on-site or from talks with beneficiaries proved to have a degree of limited accessibility and trust.

#### Solutions to solve Limitation 1

Applying alternative methods to validate collected information or complete it (e.g. analysing monitoring reports, analysing 70 applications).

#### Limitation 2

Low response rate to the online survey, especially for IP 5.2.

#### Solutions to solve Limitation 2

Contacting the beneficiaries by phone to request filling in the questionnaire by accessing the e-mailed link, extending the response time, increasing the number of case studies compared to the one assumed in the initial report (11 case studies conducted in relation to 4 studies assumed case).



## 4. Analysis and interpretation

### a). Collected data

The table below shows the correlations between the PA 5 evaluation questions and the data sources used to formulate responses. Specifically, the data collection technique used by the team of valuers (**desk research, survey by questionnaire, individual or group interviews, focus group, case studies, on-site visits**) is mentioned.

**Table 5 - Evaluation matrix**

EQ	Content of evaluation question	Analysis criteria	Indicators	Data sources	Collection, research and analysis methods
1	To what extent has the ROP contributed so far and will contribute in the future to the diversification of local economies through the sustainable development of natural and cultural patrimony				
	○ increasing the average number of employees in patrimony objectives?	Interventions will help strengthen local economic activities	The average number of employees in the preserved objectives	Grant applications ROP beneficiaries (case studies and survey through on-line questionnaire)	Desk research Qualitative research
	○ increasing the average number of visitors in patrimony objectives?	The funded interventions will increase the tourist attractiveness of the objectives and will thus attract a larger number of visitors	The average number of visits to the preserved objectives % increase of cultural activities / infrastructures according to survey results (qualitative indicator)	SMIS and grant applications ROP beneficiaries (case studies and survey through on-line questionnaire)	Desk research Qualitative research (and fieldwork)
2	To what extent has it contributed so far and will the ROP contribute in the future to improving the quality of life by improving the urban environment?				
	○ What is the number of fit out land plots/areas? What is the total area?	The interventions help to improve the urban environment in a sustainable way according to ROP objectives	Total improved area Area of the green spaces fit out Area of degraded spaces rehabilitated etc. (according to achievement indicators)	SMIS and grant applications	Desk research
	○ What is the community's reaction to these changes?	Subsidized investments will help improve services available in urban areas	Improving the quality of life perceived by citizens (qualitative indicator from the on-line questionnaire)	ROP beneficiaries (case studies and survey through on-line questionnaire)	Qualitative research Qualitative research (and fieldwork)
3	To what extent are the prerequisites	The organizational and governance system allows efficient submission of grant applications	% of beneficiaries who encountered problems in the various stages of project implementation	ROP beneficiaries (case studies and on-line)	Qualitative research Interview with interested

EQ	Content of evaluation question	Analysis criteria	Indicators	Data sources	Collection, research and analysis methods
	for determining the types of operations eligible for funding checked in practice (in implementation)? How can the way of solving the problems identified within this PA or for similar future interventions be improved?	The ability of subjects to create partnerships to apply for grants  Marketing mechanisms create the premises for sustainability of interventions	Number of projects submitted in partnership  The number of organized information and marketing events	questionnaire) SMIS  ROP beneficiaries (survey through on-line questionnaire) RDA (interviews)	factors, research filed Qualitative research  Qualitative research
	○ What types of interventions / implementation mechanisms have proven to be effective and why?	Interventions have shown a different efficacy depending on the type of intervention	Average cost per type of intervention	SMIS and grant applications	Analysis of unit cost
4	What is the level of sustainability of ROP actions?	The interventions have increased the accessibility and use of cultural heritage	Number of supported UNESCO sites Number of supported heritage objectives Increase in the number of visitors expected Sustainability mechanisms established (qualitative indicator from case study analysis)	SMIS and grant applications ROP beneficiaries (case studies)	Documentary research Qualitative research and fieldwork
		Interventions are part of a broader local strategy	Number of projects integrated into local strategies  The degree of synergy / complementarity with other interventions (qualitative indicator from case study analysis and survey results)	Grant applications ROP beneficiaries  (case studies and on-line questionnaire)	Documentary research  Qualitative research Analysis of survey results
5	To what extent have the funded interventions contributed to increasing tourist attractiveness or real estate attractiveness through specific actions?	The funded interventions will increase the tourist attractiveness of the objectives and will thus attract a larger number of visitors	The average number of visits to preserved/restored objectives  % increase of cultural activities / infrastructures according to survey results (qualitative indicator)	SMIS and grant applications  ROP beneficiaries (case studies and survey through on-line questionnaire)	Documentary research  Qualitative research and fieldwork

The data collection process started with desk research. This stage implied, in the first instance, reading of the literature, followed by the taking over of the data; data collected / aggregated from MySMIS (Annex 5), after which actions were carried out in the territory for making the interviews with RDA and beneficiaries and organising regional focus groups with beneficiaries (one for each IP). A panel on the MySMIS Platform was organized within the North-East RDA. Finally, an in-depth analysis was carried out on the basis of case studies and a focus group of experts from the Ministry of Culture and National Identity - PMU, the National Heritage Institute, the Romanian Peasant Museum, the Union of Architects in Romania and the North-East RDA, Central RDA and Bucharest-Ilfov RDA.

## b). Data analysis

**Evaluation Question 1 - To what extent has the ROP contributed so far and will contribute in the future to the diversification of local economies through the sustainable development of natural and cultural patrimony**

- Increasing the average number of employees in patrimony objectives?

In order to answer this question, data obtained through the following tools were taken into account:

### Desk research (grant applications);

- Qualitative research (case studies and on-line questionnaire survey).

It is expected that, as a first effect, the interventions will lead to the development of the activity within the objective subject to intervention, and the degree of development will depend on the number of tourists that the investment will attract.

It is worth mentioning that at the project level, the indicator of the number of jobs is not collected, as the beneficiary is not conditional on the creation of new jobs as a requirement to access the financing. Therefore, this information is not found in MySMIS. Consequently, we analysed 70 grant applications to retrieve this data. Following this analysis, we found that there is the possibility to create 9 direct jobs at the beneficiaries level. Indirectly created jobs are not quantified, but they only refer to the possibility of this effect.

At the level of the 11 cases studied, the Scaune Parish in Bucharest refers to employing a guide for an indefinite period, the Evangelical Parish of Saschiz will employ 2 new persons and the ATU of Anina City refers to employing 6 persons and indirectly creating 40 jobs. These effects are also desirable.

Following the launch of the IP 5.2 questionnaire, 13 respondents answered the survey. Five respondents aim at rehabilitating industrial sites and contaminated areas, three interventions are represented by the construction of cycle tracks or pedestrian walkways, there is no intervention related to the development and promotion of tourism potential and natural areas, and 5 projects are aimed at other types of interventions.

Asked who they think will benefit most from the investment, the beneficiaries of IP 5.1 responded as follows: tourists (32 of the beneficiaries); cultural objectives (28 respondents), other tourism objectives (27 respondents). 18 respondents said that entrepreneurs would benefit to a large and very large extent, as the interventions will lead to the development of tourism-related businesses (accommodation, meals, transport), thus indirectly creating jobs. 12 respondents to the questionnaires consider that the inactive population will, to a large extent, benefit from investment through job creation.

The data gathered through the questionnaire concur with those obtained through the qualitative analysis and lead to some conclusions following the causal analysis:

- Interventions funded under PA 5 do not generate a high number of jobs, at least not in the short term;
- Since the number of jobs is not an indicator to be monitored, it will not be possible to measure this effect as soon as it occurs, and the less will it be possible to establish whether indirect jobs are an effect of intervention or other factors;
- The increase in the number of employees could be determined by other factors such as the entrepreneurial capacities of the patrimony administrators and the local population that could launch small businesses based on the increase in the number of tourists. **Measures to increase the entrepreneurial capacity of site administrators and the general population should be included in the new programming framework. Cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and National Identity in establishing the optimal mix of interventions for each central authority would positively influence the achievement of expected impacts in the field of protection and sustainable valorisation of cultural heritage.**

It is expected that the implementation of the marketing plans within the interventions will have the effects estimated by the beneficiaries, and in the medium and long term will lead to the diversification of the local economies, by achieving the specific objectives of both IPs. Furthermore, it should be specified that some interventions are located in areas where tourism is the only economic activity, therefore interventions that support the capitalization of natural and cultural heritage are an essential factor in the economy of the respective communities.

Considering also that at this moment the ROP is the only financing instrument for such large-scale interventions, the implementation of which requires niche expertise, **it is desirable that the allocations for the valorisation of the cultural heritage should not only continue, but be supplemented, considering the almost double demand in the current budget exercise in relation to the financial allocation foreseen for interventions of the type of those financed under PI 5.1 (196%).**

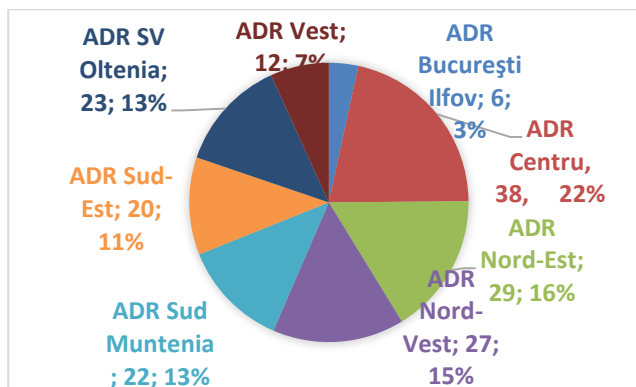
○ **increasing the average number of visitors in patrimony objectives?**

In order to answer this question, data obtained through the following tools were taken into account:

- Desk research (SMIS and grant applications);
- Qualitative research (case studies and on-line questionnaire survey).

Under the ROP, financing contracts were signed for the restoration of 177 cultural heritage objectives, distributed as follows:

**Figure 1: Regional distribution of restored cultural heritage objectives (number and percentage of total)**



Source: Data taken from MySMIS by the Valuer

The target value of the number of restored cultural heritage objectives assumed to be achieved through the program by 2023 is 45. There are all the prerequisites for this target to be achieved as the number represents less than 40% of the targets of the concluded contracts.

Through contracts funded under IP 5.1, at the end of project implementation, the number of visitors per year will increase and will reach a total of **2,187,953 visitors** to these funded objectives (also see the footnote 4 on page 11 in relation to possible vices of the indicator). This value leads to an **average increase in the number of visitors per year / per objective of 12,870 units**.

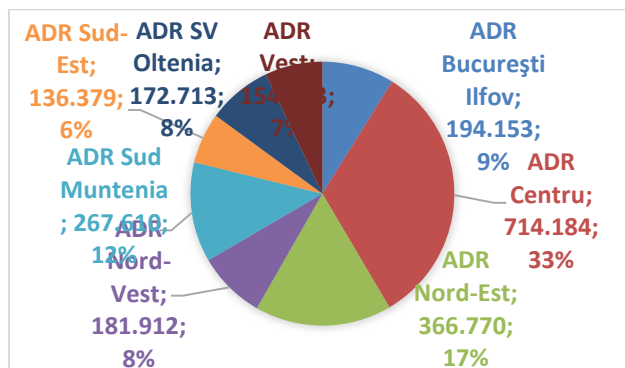
**Efficiency calculation of the indicator**, considering the cost of rehabilitation (total eligible costs of contracted projects - Lei 2,131,190,181 = EUR 457,229,019.12: 2,187,953 visitors = **209 Eur / visitor**).

If we compare it to the same indicator from ROP 2007-2013 DMI 5.1, the cost per visitor was calculated at 170 Eur / visitor<sup>8</sup>. This means a **higher unitary cost on the “Visitor Number” indicator in ROP 2014-2020 interventions compared to the ROP 2007-2013 by 42.94%**. It should be noted that in the interventions under the MIA 5.1, the maximum funding was 25 million euro. A possible interpretation of a better efficiency in terms of the attracted “visitor” indicator, because a larger investment is more “profitable”, allowing more investments to be made and attracting a larger number of tourists.

According to the MySMIS data as of 31/12/2018, the target value for 2023 of the CO09 indicator, Sustainable Tourism - Increase in the expected number of visits to sites part of the cultural and natural heritage and attractions benefiting from support and distribution by regions has the following distribution by regions:

<sup>8</sup> Source: Interim Evaluation Report ROP 2001-2013, KPMG, April 2014

Figure 2: Regional distribution of visitors per year (number and percentage of total)



Source: Data taken from MySMIS by the Valuer

Table 6 - Distribution of categories of monuments by development regions

Region	Total number of historical monuments	Percentage of total	of which: Category monuments A	Percentage of total A	of which: Category monuments B	Percentage of total B
1. North - East	4,003	13.28	642	9.34	3,361	14.44
2. South - East	2,999	9.95	653	9.50	2,346	10.08
3. South Muntenia	4,776	15.84	1293	18.82	3,483	14.96
4. South - West Oltenia	3,322	11.02	402	5.85	2,920	12.55
5. West	2,107	6.99	572	8.32	1,535	6.59
6. North - West	4,480	14.86	998	14.52	3,482	14.96
7. Central area	5,079	16.85	1950	28.38	3,129	13.44
8. Bucharest - Ilfov	3,381	11.22	361	5.25	3,020	12.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,147</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,871</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23,276</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Database of the Ministry of Culture - culturadatainteractiv.ro.

The analysis of the distribution of the C009 indicator shows that the most important contribution to the indicator belongs to the centre region, followed by the North-East region and the South-Muntenia region. The rest of the regions contribute relatively equally to the achievement of the target indicator. Corroborated with the distribution of historical monuments by regions, the analysis reveals the following:

- Regions with the highest shares of historical monuments of the total are also the main regions contributing to the increase in the number of tourists (Center region and North-East region);
- The Northwest and Southwest Oltenia regions have an important share of historical monuments, but the share of the indicator is not as important and does not reflect the potential. This may be due to the fact that this potential has not been properly capitalized, or that the targets have been estimated with reserved optimism to be sure of their achievement.



According to the answers provided in the on-line questionnaire survey, the data collected show an increase in the number of visitors, the number of activities and the increase of the attractiveness of the heritage objects, especially at regional, national and international level. These indicators will directly contribute to the diversification of local economies, especially if there are complementary projects to support small businesses, based on the increase in the number of tourists.

Respondents were asked to provide information on the increase in the estimated number of visitors (Question 16 in the questionnaire) and the number of visitors before and after the investment was completed (Question 18). The responses to Question 18 showed an increase in visitors from 244,281 to 321,892, which means an average increase from 6,786 visitors to 8,941 visitors, that is 2,155 visitors. We found a **discrepancy** between the information provided in the two questions, the increase in the number of visitors estimated at question 16 is 313,212, which means an average of 8,700 visitors.

By comparing these values with the average at the program level (an increase of 12,870 visitors / year / objective), then the discrepancy is also confirmed by this research. This demonstrates that the beneficiary is not familiar with how the indicator is calculated and provides different values from one question to another, although the result is the same. This is also a possible explanation of the **inaccuracies of MYSMIS records with the data provided in the grant applications. Support is needed for applicants to better understand the terms of call documentation and terminology.**

32 respondents consider to a high and very high extent the increase in the number of tourists and the increase of the regional visibility of the heritage objective as an effect of the intervention. 30 respondents believe that the effect of the intervention will increase the visibility at national level to a small extent, and 24 respondents believe that the intervention will cause to a small extent the increase of the heritage visibility at international level.

Focus group participants pointed out that the program is considered as the major opportunity for the beneficiaries to save their own cultural heritage. At the same time it is appreciated that, as the program is defined, it has the role of saving the historical monuments in Romania rather than that of being a developmental catalyst.

The opinion of the participants in the focus groups is that, in order to become a factor of development and social cohesion, the ROP should propose a **set of composite indicators** that quantify the link between the number of tourists / tourist attractiveness index as indicators, the number of objectives restored by the project, preservation stage (information through the evaluation conducted by the Ministry of Culture and National Identity through external services or accredited experts - as is done for UNESCO objectives), number of newly created jobs, value of heritage objective according to interest according to Law 422/2001, and finally differentiate funding.

The analysis of the case studies confirms the following result: in the case of the project implemented by Iasi Municipality, the annual growth of visitors is estimated at 11%,

respectively for the first year from 6,198 to 7,000, while in the case of the Roman Catholic Parish of St. Mihail the estimated growth is from 30,000 to 31,800, the Evangelical Parish of Saschiz estimates an increase from 4,200 to 5,300, UAT Saschiz Commune from 4,968 to 6,468, Hurezi Monastery from 100,300 to 106,318, the Ministry of National Defence from 33,000 to 35,100, the “Annunciation” Romanian-Hellenic Mixed Parish from 15,000 to 16,000, the TAU of Anina City from 450 to 9,000, the Parish Chairs from 14,976 to 15,740. It can be noticed that only in the case of the Hurezi Monastery, a UNESCO heritage, the increase has values comparable to the average recorded at IP level, for the rest of the projects the increase in the number of visitors is below the average at program level.

In terms of **types of economic activities generated by ROP interventions**, based on in-depth research through case studies, the following areas of activity can be listed: artistic, cultural and didactic events, creation of workshops for creative industries, exhibitions, crafts and activities of immaterial heritage.

It should be noted that at IP 5.1 level, **all interventions have associated a tourism marketing and promotion plan**, which is an eligibility condition for access to financing; besides the digitization of the heritage objective (mandatory condition to be fulfilled until the project is completed), the promotion measures considered include: the creation of a website, online photo contests on the project page, realization of a documentary film of the objective, creating advertising materials (stickers, banners, street ads, brochures, announcements in audio, video and written media), inclusion in tourist circuits, participation in national and international fairs and exhibitions, education campaigns in educational establishments.

It can be concluded that, as a result of the increase in the number of tourists and the diversification of activities to the restored heritage objectives, the ROP contributes to the development of local economies through the emergence of new economic activities and the creation of workplaces. The effects of interventions will be seen in the medium and long term from completion of the interventions. **Evaluation Question 2 - To what extent has it contributed so far and will the ROP contribute in the future to improving the quality of life by improving the urban environment?**

In order to answer this Evaluation Question, the information obtained through the following tools were taken into account:

- Desk research (MySMIS, literature);
  - Qualitative research (case studies and survey among beneficiaries via online questionnaire, NGO survey by questionnaire, face to face interview and interview via e-mail).
- **What is the number of fit out land plots/areas? What is the total area?**

The documentary analysis of the regeneration of urban and green spaces has revealed that the positive performance of a city depends on how it can attract people, investments and tourists.



And to become more attractive, a city must also offer a better quality of life. A World Bank report<sup>9</sup> that includes a survey conducted on a representative sample of the Romanian population shows unequivocally the importance of “quality of life” in their decision to move to a particular city.

As in other areas, Romania does not look good either in terms of the number and quality of urban public spaces. Most county residences in the country have a surprisingly small number of public spaces, and the quality of these spaces is often desirable. As a point of reference, it is worth mentioning that of 40 county residences, only 9 had at least 26 square meters of green space per capita in 2015 - a minimum threshold proposed by the European Commission. The area of green spaces in the form of parks, public gardens, playgrounds for children, land of sports bases and facilities was 26,639 hectares, at the level of the cities and municipalities in Romania **at the end of 2017**, which meant on average **21.3 sqm of green areas per capita**, according to the data centralized by the National Institute of Statistics (indicator GOS103B - Area of green spaces in municipalities and towns, by macroregions, development regions and counties). The data collected at the level of several localities, including the benchmarking technique for urban development, are included in Annex 4.

With a view to urban revitalization, the ROP 2014-2020 finances a number of activities, including:

- Rehabilitation of open spaces;
- Fit out of green spaces;
- Making pedestrian alleys, cycle tracks, creating sidewalks;
- Creating, modernizing, rehabilitating urban streets;

At IP 5.2 level, the following were defined:

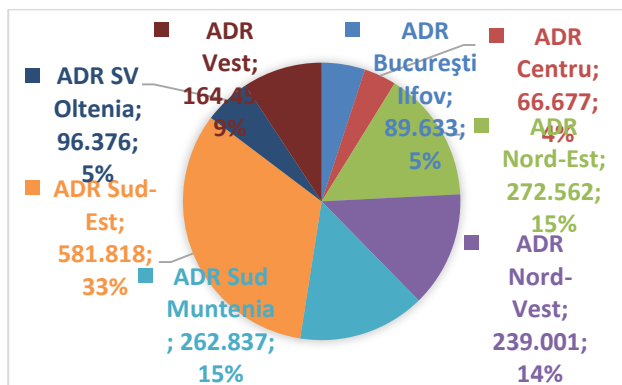
- ✓ **Implementation indicator** CO38 Urban development: open space created or rehabilitated in urban areas, with a target by 2023 of 79,879.00 sqm for less developed regions and 11,340.00 sqm for more developed regions; and
- ✓ **Output Indicator** IS24 Green spaces in small and medium-sized towns with target value up to 2023 of 16.65 sqm / inhabitant for less developed regions and 10.63 per inhabitant for more developed regions.

The analysis of the data recorded in SMIS shows that by 31/12/2018, 48 projects were contracted with a total eligible value of 347,406,486 lei. Beneficiaries are located in 26 counties (see Table 19 of Annex 5) and represent 46 ATUs at local level, 1 ATU at county level and 1 public institution under the subordination or under the coordination of the local council / mayor.

Through ROP 2014-2020, as a result of the projects contracted under IP 5.2, an area of **1,773,356 sqm will be created or rehabilitated by 2023**, distributed regionally as follows:

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, 2017, Magnet Cities: Migration and Commuting in Romania

Figure 3: Regional distribution of created space (sqm and percentage of the total)



Source: Data taken from MySMIS by the Valuer

According to the target specified in the ROP, the indicator value for 2023 is 109,219 square meters. If all contracts are successfully implemented, at the end of the implementation period the target will be exceeded more than 15 times.

○ What is the community's reaction to these changes?

The answer to this question was based on the premise that the urban environment is part of the living conditions, one of the criteria of the European Statistical System of Eurostat defining the quality of life. Living conditions refer, *inter alia*, to the quality of living and, more specifically, to the quality of the neighbourhood by measuring the subjective quality of the physical environment (air quality, intense traffic). There is an indisputable causal relationship between the implementation of the ROP interventions under IP 5.2 and their contribution to the improvement of the quality of life by: conversion of degraded land and its transformation into places for various recreation, socialization and leisure activities intended for the community. These effects, along with the positive influence on environmental parameters (e.g. increase in green areas will reduce pollution) and urban enhancement, contribute to increasing the quality of life of the inhabitants of those communities.

Like any measurement of perceptions, the responses to research do not necessarily have a logical causality, and the perception of these effects of interventions depends on subjective indicators that are strongly dependent on the objective situations in which people live, the circumstances of individual life, and the social context.

During the evaluation, the perceptions of the beneficiaries were investigated through the on-line questionnaire, considering that they, as local or county authorities, know very well the urban realities. The fact that the projects have all been included in local strategies is undoubtedly a reflection of the needs of communities, needs that interventions will address and, according to the prerequisites of implementation verified during the evaluation, they will also solve them. Also, through qualitative research, discussions were held with the beneficiaries at the time of the field visit part of case studies, or during the focus group with IP

5.2 beneficiaries to verify these premises and 3 NGOs involved in activities for the local community were interviewed.

The survey-based research among beneficiaries showed that they consider that, as a result of interventions, all categories of population would benefit to a greater or lesser extent, and the effects of investment were proportionally distributed across different aspects of urban quality of life. Beneficiaries believe that those who will benefit the most from the investment made are young people (6 to a large extent, 1 to a large extent and 1 to a small extent), school children (7 to a large extent, 1 to a large extent and 1 to a small extent), pre-school children (6 to a large extent, 1 to a large extent and 2 to a small extent), adults (6 to a large extent, 2 to a large extent and 1 to a small extent), people with disabilities 1 to a large extent and 2 to a small extent). In the opinion of the NGOs, most benefits are estimated to be for the elderly and preschool children, the results of the two types of research do not overlap, but also have convergence points: both researches consider that those who benefit to a high extent from the interventions under IP 5.2 are pre-school children.

Reducing the presence of degraded and / or abandoned areas that negatively affect the quality of life and the image of citizens is an appreciated factor among communities.

The analyses lead to the conclusion that the most appreciated effects of the interventions are **the increase in the opportunities for leisure and the satisfaction of the need for leisure and recreation of the urban population**. In more detail, respondents' perception on the extent to which the project provides prerequisites for achieving certain positive effects reveals that the most important effects are:

- Increasing opportunities for leisure and green areas to reduce pollution and improve the environment in urban areas (7 to a large extent and 2 to a large extent);
- Reducing the presence of degraded and/or abandoned areas that negatively affect the quality of life and the image of citizens; reducing the presence of degraded, abandoned or unused areas within the city and transforming or integrating them in areas accessible to the community; increasing city attractiveness for tourists; increasing green areas; increasing green areas to meet the need for leisure and recreation of the urban population; (6 to a large extent and 3 to a large extent);
- Improving the quality of life for the resident population and increasing the attractiveness of urban areas by increasing the number of urban furniture items, creating pedestrian tracks, streets and cycling tracks (5 to a large extent, 3 to a large extent and 1 to a small extent);
- Modernization of urban streets that facilitate access to green spaces (4 to a large extent, 1 to a large extent and 1 to a small extent).

Beneficiaries surveyed by means of the focus group expressed the opinion that IP 5.2. Was beneficial and welcomed, as it contributed directly to increasing the quality of life of the inhabitants of their communities and the development of economic activities in the vicinity of the objectives, a conclusion in line with that obtained from the on-line survey.

From the analysis of the case studies it was found that the **interventions** made in the documented projects were **aimed to a great extent at the rehabilitation of the green spaces**. For example, an area of 24,552.75 square meters of green spaces will be rehabilitated in Turda, based on the “Reconversion of a degraded area in a multifunctional public park” project. At this moment, Turda has 24.24 sqm/inhabitant of green spaces, according to NIS 2016, which is insufficient for the recreational and leisure needs of the city's inhabitants. In the city of Buhuși, there are about 52 ha of green spaces (according to NIS in 2015), with an average of 24.9 sqm/inhabitant. No green area covered by the green area register is organized / usable as a leisure area. Although the sqm/inhabitant average is comparable to the national average for the NE Region, the quality of green spaces is low. The three areas addressed by the project are heavily degraded areas, in zones of interest to the population. Through the project, the area of green spaces in Buhuși City will be expanded by about 4,500 square meters.

Interventions in improving the urban environment will lead to a change of mentality within communities, the valorisation of industrial heritage as a source of knowledge, learning and leisure in places where natural, cultural and recreational potential is articulated for the benefit of the community, city, area (project of the beneficiary City of Anina).

The project promoted by Turda Municipality reveals the connection between the sanitation of the premises and the safety of people in the neighbouring areas. Fitting the green areas in the project with urban furniture will create leisure and recreational facilities for the community. Increasing the attractiveness of the city as a friendly living space will determine the workforce, young families and the companies that use the workforce to move to the city, changing the mentality on spending time in places where the natural, cultural and recreational potential is articulated in the benefit of community, city, area, etc. In this case, at the time of the demolition, groups of Roma citizens in the situation of homeless people, who lived in the object subject to the intervention, reacted violently. In this respect, it may be stated that there was a negative reaction to the project implementation. This was considered by the beneficiary as an event from which they learned that in order to ensure a positive reaction of the community (including the disadvantaged categories) to the project interventions, it is advisable to work with a professional consultant able to identify all the risks associated with the project and to advise their client on these risks and the ways of solving them.

**Lesson learned:** The project beneficiary must have an open and honest collaboration relationship with all target groups that may be directly or indirectly affected by project interventions.

The research also included the opinion of three NGOs active in the field of environmental education, the promotion of civil society values and the development of local community projects for young people (a face-to-face interview and two questionnaire surveys via e-mail). Their answers can be found in Annex 14.

Conclusions from the analysis of data gathered from NGOs concur with the conclusions obtained by applying the other research tools within the beneficiaries, there being differences only

regarding the extent to which the different actions of the intervention influence the quality of life, namely:

- Interventions under the IP 5.2 affect quality of life, largely to a great extent, by:
  - Increasing green areas to meet the need for leisure and recreation of the urban population;
  - Improving the environment in urban areas;
  - Increasing the attractiveness of urban areas by increasing the number of urban furniture items;
  - Increasing city attractiveness for tourists;
  - Creating pedestrian tracks, streets and bicycle tracks.
- Beneficiaries of interventions under IP 5.2 are all the categories of population, but to a large extent pre-school children, elderly and young people.

Consulted on **other types of activities that were not covered by interventions under IP 5.2**, but could meet the specific objectives of this IP and, with suggestions for improving the eligibility conditions, NGOs have made a number of proposals in connection with the needs identified by the ROP (*inter alia*, urban regeneration) and in the scope of the specific objective (i.e. conversion and functional change of degraded lands and areas), ideas for effective revitalization of what results following interventions under the IP 5.2. These could be the subject of *soft* interventions, complementary to those targeted by the current ROP 2014-2020:

1. Revitalizing unused city locations and turning them into leisure areas, green spaces, should be integrated with actions/initiatives that provide community growth and development contexts, good practice directions in those places (e.g. deployment of regular non-formal education activities on various topics such as sustainability, health, environment, creativity, etc.);
2. Developing pilot projects / spaces with activities involving local community together with urbanists, sociologists, urban development experts, as well as other categories of experts based on the principle of circular economy: a). types of activities linked to each other by local products, by-products and local renewable resources, beneficial to the educational, practical and economic support of the community involved, or b) collective agricultural activities based on the principle of permaculture and vertical agriculture (renting of lots with infrastructure and adequate principles to actively and jointly share the land with groups of people interested in personal use, and a part for the needy), creating a community garden to promote the collaboration, respect and growth of their own vegetables and fruits.

These proposals are spin-off interventions that can be considered in the new programming framework for similar interventions under PA 5 and / or PA 9 - Supporting the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in urban areas.

**EQ 3 - To what extent are the prerequisites for determining the types of operations eligible for funding checked in practice (in implementation)? How can the way of solving the problems identified within this PA or for similar future interventions be improved?**

In order to answer this question, data obtained through the following tools were taken into account:

- Desk research (SMIS, monitoring reports, applicant's guidelines);
- qualitative research (case studies, focus groups and online survey, interviews with RDA).

At ROP level, the following **needs** were identified in relation with PA 5:

- Preservation, protection and sustainable valorisation of cultural heritage is a viable alternative to fostering development in rural and poorer areas the economy of which is based solely on agricultural activities or on the exploitation of natural resources, providing ambivalent benefits consisting of increases in the number of jobs and income, while promoting tradition and cultural and natural heritage, being a lever to mitigate intra- and inter-regional imbalances;
- The pronounced economic growth in the last decade, plus the “derogatory urbanism” measure, puts immense real estate pressure on cultural heritage objectives, threatening their identity and even their existence;
- The cities in Romania, from the smallest to the capital city of Bucharest, face problems related to the degradation of the built space, abandoned areas inside the built-up zone, environmental quality issues, which determines a quality of life below the expectations of the majority of citizens. Urban revitalization is an effective way in which cities or certain parts of them are reintroduced into the urban circuit.

To respond to these needs, 2 IPs were defined under AP5 with **specific objectives**:

- Investment Priority 5.1 - Conservation, protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage with Specific Objective 1: Preservation, protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage has as specific objective boosting local development by preserving, protecting and capitalising cultural heritage and cultural identity, and
- Investment Priority 5.2 “Conducting actions aimed at improving the urban environment, revitalizing cities, regenerating and decontaminating decommissioned industrial land (including reconversion areas), reducing air pollution and promoting noise reduction measures with the Specific Objective 2: Reconversion and functional change of degraded, vacant or unused land and areas in small, medium cities and the municipality of Bucharest.

To achieve the specific objectives, the **operations and actions eligible** for financial support were identified. The activities, the minimum and maximum amounts for non-reimbursable financial aid, the duration of the projects and the intensity of the support were defined.

Output and result indicators (for 2023) and intermediate targets (for 2018) were defined.

The intervention logic was analysed in terms of identified needs, eligible operations, estimated targets (outcomes) and response rate of target group of interventions, financial allocations, contracting rate and payment status.



The total non-reimbursable grant allocated to PA5 in the amount of EUR 435,112,890 was distributed in proportion of 75.15% to IP 5.1 and 24.85% to IP 5, which means EUR 326,971,215, and EUR 108,151,675, respectively (Table 1 Annex 5 ).

According to MySMIS data: of those found during the evaluation, the number of objectives subject to intervention is lower than the number of contracts because not all projects have the indicators entered into the system. Specifically, in MySMIS, 166 projects uploaded the 1S23 indicator -Restored cultural heritage objective with a total of 177 objectives, and 186 projects uploaded the CO09 indicator - Increase in the expected number of visits to sites part of the cultural and natural heritage and attractions benefiting from support:. The number of contracts under IP 5.1 is 188, so a number of 22 contracts show that the indicators have not been loaded. In addition, the interpretation method of the CO09 indicator is very likely to have been different for historical calls compared to MySMIS data. The interpretations given by the beneficiaries who had to enter this data into the system, or possibly by the RDA staff who did it in place of the beneficiary, were different: we are talking about the increase in visits (as a difference between the number of visits at the end of the project implementation minus the number of visits at the beginning of the project implementation) or the number of visits upon completion of the implementation or the increase in the number of visits / year. If we add to this situation the discrepancies between the number provided in the application and that in the system (e.g.: the SMIS project 120880 has 500 visits in the system- it should have been an increase per year - but the grant application mentions that at the beginning of the period there are 200 visits and at the end there will be 230 visits, therefore an increase by 30 visits, or the SMIS 121271 project, which has 7.5 visits in the system, but the grant application states that at the beginning of the period there are 200 visits and at the end will be 406 visits, therefore an increase by 206), we can conclude that the **MySMIS value for CO09 indicator should be considered for inventory purposes**, as well as efficiency calculations per indicator. These corroborations were made on the basis of the analysis of the 70 grant applications.

A first analysis focused on the ratio between supply (the funds made available through the 13 calls for proposals) and demand (the amount of the EU / EU + SB contribution for which applications were submitted).

For IP 5.1, **demand was clearly superior to supply**, and the ratio is 196% for public funding (ERDF + SB); and for IP 5.2 the demand was higher, 140%, in relation to public funding. At the axis level, the ratio between requested public funding and contracted public funding is 182.5% (Table 7 Annex 5).

The reduced number of rejected applications denotes **good quality of the submitted projects** both in terms of compliance with the administrative and eligibility criteria, and especially in terms of the technical aspects. In the phase of verification of administrative compliance and eligibility, 44 projects were rejected from the total of 373 submitted projects, standing for 11,80%, while the number of projects rejected in the technical-financial evaluation phase was



2 projects, which represents 0.61% of the remaining 329 for technical and financial evaluation. The assistance received by the beneficiaries and / or experience from the previous programming exercise is a possible explanation.

Of the 236 contracts totalling an eligible value of Lei 2,478,596,667, an **average project value of RON 10,502,528.25 can be calculated**. Considering the different types of the two categories of interventions within the axis, the value is not very significant, therefore, we calculated the average of the project contracted under IP 5.1 and this amounts to Lei 11,336,117.98 (2,131,190,181 lei / 188 contracts ) and the average of the project contracted under IP 5.2 and this amounts to Lei 7,237,645.13 (347,406,486 lei / 48 contracts).

With regard to the **average amount of the project at regional level**, the BI region shows the highest value (13,187,921 lei) while the Central region shows the lowest value (6,250,221 lei). At the top level of the average of the projects is also the SE region (11,944,196 lei), NE region (11,399,202 lei), SV Oltenia region (11,355,363 lei) and South-Muntenia region (11,239,894 lei). The Northwest Region records an average project value of Lei 10,959,950, while the West region has an average project value of Lei 9,861,441, with both regions below the national average. These values are useful to study the dynamics of similar investments in the future and to provide benchmarking values for financial allocations in future programming activities.

As regards the **territorial distribution by type of beneficiary** under IP 5.1, most of the beneficiaries are worship places (82 out of 188 that is 43.62%), ATUs at local level (55 out of 188, that is 29.26%) and ATUs at county level (41 out of 188, that is 21.81%); the rest of the beneficiaries are religious associations (4 beneficiaries), central public administration (4 beneficiaries) and NGOs (2 beneficiaries). We noted that some counties had several projects contracted, leading to a first consideration, namely that they have good administrative capacity for project preparation: we are referring to Hunedoara and Suceava counties (4 contracts) and Botosani and Maramures counties (3 contracts); most counties in the 26 counties with contracts had either two or one contracts each. Another possible explanation would be that beneficiaries benefited from IB support, given that 3 of these 4 counties belong to the same development region. It is noted from the distribution of county contracts that the interventions proposed by IP 5.1 responded to the needs of the whole country (40 counties - less Giurgiu).

“The main expected results are the increase in conservation degree for **45 heritage objectives**”<sup>10</sup>. In the document, according to “Table 3: Programme-specific result indicators, by specific objective (for the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund)”, i.e. the program indicator, the indicator for 2012 base year is 4,387 (actual number of monuments in very good and good condition), and the target value in 2023 is 4,482 objectives - the difference is of 95 objectives. **Irrespective of which of these target values would be the proposed target, it is believed that there are all the prerequisites for this target to be achieved as the number represents**

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<sup>10</sup> ROP version of July 2018, page 192

**less than 40% of the targets of the concluded contracts by 31/12/2018.** If all contracts are successfully implemented, at the end of the implementation period, the number of heritage assets in very good and good conservation state is estimated to be double the target number.

The contribution of each region to the achievement of the indicator 1523 - Restored cultural heritage objectives is, in descending order, the following: 1. Center 21.47%, 2. NE 16.38%, 3. NW 15.25%, 4. SW Oltenia 12.99%, 5. S Muntenia 12.43%, 6. SE 11.30%, 7. W 6.78% and BI 6.78%. Corroborating the regional distribution of monuments, we note that this ranking of the regions' participation in the achievement of the indicator is partly in line with the distribution of historical monuments (the NW and Central regions have the same position in both rankings), but also reveals the more intense or less intense “valorisation” of the potential of certain regions (the NE region is ranked 4th in terms of resources and 2nd in terms of the increase of the number of indicators, while the SW Oltenia Region is ranked 6th in terms of resources and 4th in terms of increase in the number of indicators, while South Muntenia is ranked 2nd in terms of resources and 5th in terms of the achievement of the indicator, just as the BI Region is ranked 5th in terms of resources and 8th in the achievement of the indicator). The SE and W regions went up or down one step in the two rankings. **The comparison between the two rankings can be a source of reflection for organizations in regions that are less able to exploit the potential of historical monuments in their region and to have additional promotional and support measures deployed.**

As for the CO09 Indicator - Sustainable Tourism - Increase in the expected number of visits to sites part of the cultural and natural heritage and attractions benefiting from support, My SMIS shows the target indicator of 2,187,953 visits / year. **The calculation of the cost per indicator unit** leads to the result of 1,133 lei invested to generate a visitor per year.

**The amount of payments (ERDF) reported at 31/12/2018 at the level of the axis is of Lei 186,398,696, representing 13.11% of the allocation amount.**

It is worth mentioning that at the regional level, the North-West region recorded an absorption percentage higher than that of the European average (27.13% compared to 27% at the same time) and the SW Oltenia Region is slightly below this average (21.91%). The NE region records 13.61% of the payments, SE Region 13.30%, South Muntenia Region 14.18%, West Region 11.36%, Central Region 3.52% and BI Region 2.73%. Among the factors that can influence this process we identified 3 interconnected factors:

- Date of contracting,
- Project maturity level (unfinished projects have an advanced degree of maturity); and
- Type of beneficiaries.

The regions with the highest degree of absorption also have the highest number of contracts in the category of unfinished projects: NW Region 4 contracts, NE and SE Regions 3 contracts; SW Oltenia Region 2 contracts, but signed in a shorter time frame, because the beneficiaries were mostly worship places - which have a simplified procedure of public procurement, being assimilated to the private economic operators. At the opposite end, the Central Region has no projects under the unfinished category, and Bucharest-Ilfov has 1 unfinished project, but it has

as beneficiary the central public administration unit. It is worth mentioning that the duration of public procurement procedures lasts in most cases over one year (including deadline extensions due to National Agency for Public Procurement's requests<sup>11</sup>).

In conclusion:

The analyses based on the number of applications submitted, the number of contracts financed and the expected results to be achieved after the implementation of the interventions demonstrate that the needs identified in the ROP and the proposed objectives will be covered by the type of interventions, therefore, the logic of the intervention was verified in the implementation.

The introduction of unfinished projects into the ROP was a decision that led to an increase in the absorption rate.

The length of procurement procedures greatly influences the degree of absorption.

- How to implement interventions and improvement proposals

We analysed the responses in the surveys among the beneficiaries and the focus groups organized with them, the opinions of stakeholders, and analysed the MySMIS data regarding the duration of the processing of the grant applications from submission to the contracting and the number of changes/versions of the financing documentation. The communication events organized at the IB level to promote calls for proposals and the support of potential applicants to identify whether there is a relationship between the number of applications submitted and the number of events were analysed. Studying the number of changes to the financing documentation was also necessary in view of analysing the feasibility of completing the projects within the contractual terms. From the IB monitoring reports, information on the stage of implementation of the contracts was taken.

## Analysis of communication and support events at IB level

The communication and support events organized by the IBs are aimed at informing potential applicants of the calls for proposals launched and providing clarifications and details on the eligibility conditions for calls. The extent to which events influence the number of applications submitted has been analysed, and subsequently, considering that support actions can contribute to better project quality, we have extended the analysis to the ranking of contracts (number and value). The current situation of historical monuments (see [Annex 15](#)), the ranking of the total heritage and type A objectives, which could determine the region's grant application in relation to the number of applications submitted, was also studied. Although a

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<sup>11</sup> Based on the GD no. 634/2015 on the organization and functioning of the National Agency for Public Procurement, as subsequently amended and supplemented, the National Agency for Public Procurement fulfils the *ex-ante* control function of the public procurement contracts/framework agreements, sectoral framework contracts/agreements and service concession and work concession contracts and amendments to those framework contracts / agreements, respectively. According to the data provided by the beneficiaries, the answer to a clarification from the National Agency for Public Procurement may take up to 3 months.

certain march can be found (as outlined in the table in **Annex 16**, which contains the details of the analyses) at national level, one cannot speak of a direct causal relationship. We have also corroborated it with the ranking of allocations and we can conclude the following:

The number and amount of contracts in a region are not directly determined by the extent of communication and support actions. There is a certain correspondence between the number of applications submitted and the potential of monuments, but it cannot be generalized at national level. Financial allocations are corroborated with the potential (number of monuments in the region) in the case of 4 regions.

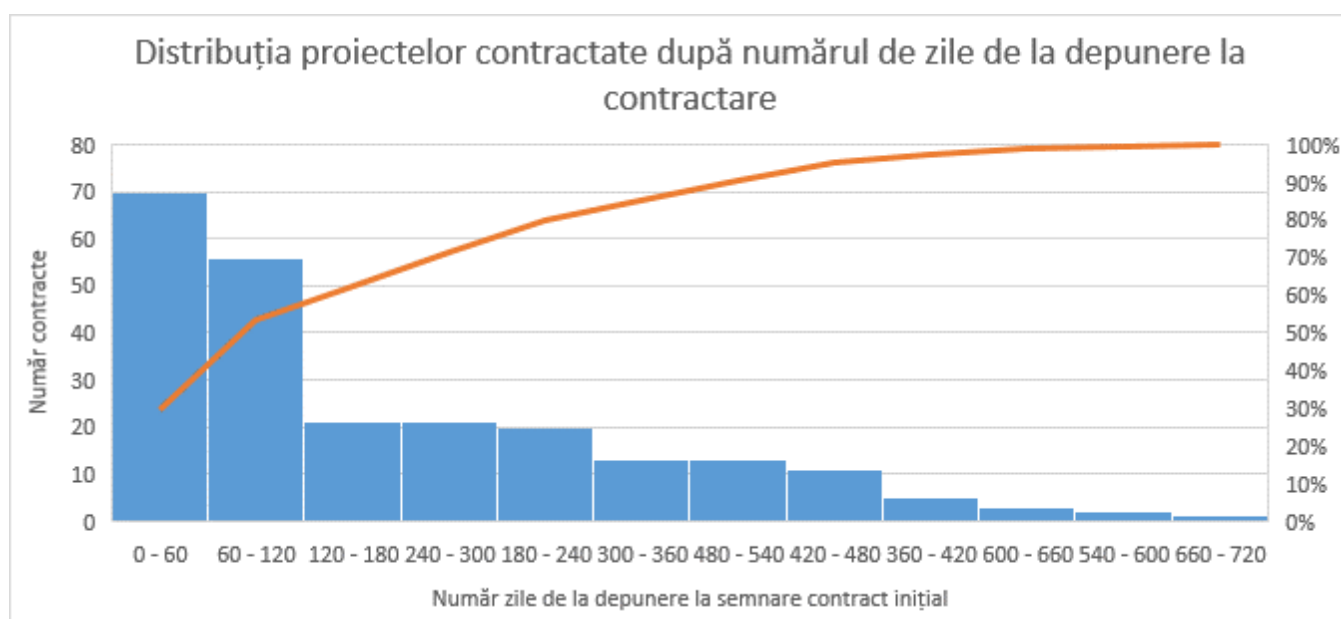
### Analysis of the duration of submission of the grant application until the contracting

We did an analysis of the number of days from the submission of a grant application to the moment of contracting in order to determine whether this process falls within the deadlines established by the MA & IB procedures, and if not, what are the possible reasons, in order to identify possible solutions for accelerating the process.

This analysis revealed the following information:

62.29% of the projects are contracted within 6 months of submission, 22.88% are contracted within 6 months - 1 year after submission, 12.29% are contracted within 1 year - 1.5 years of submission, and 2.54% are contracted after 1 year and a half of submission (maximum is 712 days).

The average number of days from submission to contracting is 176 days (about 6 months).



**Annex 17** contains the details of this analysis.

It can be seen that, in relation to the envisaged deadlines<sup>12</sup>, most projects / contracts pass through, from submission to contracting, a time frame that is considered to be optimal; the same appreciation can be done for the average period of the process. However, there is, as in most processes, the possibility of streamlining the process and we will present below the factors that can influence, in the evaluator's view, the whole ROP implementation process.

### **Analysis of the number of changes to the financing documentation**

After analysing the number of changes to the funding documentation submitted in the call for proposals, we found that under the IP 5.1 all documentation had at least 3 changes (the maximum number of changes was 22 and 120 projects, representing 63.83% of total contracts, had 6-13 changes); under IP 5.2, all documentation had at least 4 changes (the maximum number of changes was 20, 17 projects, representing 35.42% of total contracts, had 8, 9 and 13 changes). We believe that the development of these versions, due to changes in the grant application and annexes submitted during their evaluation, leads to the extension of the evaluation process and constitutes an area of the process that can be optimised. We also found that the most recent version of the documentation is difficult to identify in the system, and this aspect can be considered to make the MySMIS work module more efficient. A more detailed situation is presented in Table 21 and Table 22 of Annex 5.

### **Analysing delays in project implementation from the quarterly RDA monitoring reports**

According to the data recorded in the monitoring reports for the fourth quarter of 2018, there are 12 projects (5.08% of total PA contracts) with delays: 10 under IP 5.1 (5.32% of total IP 5.1 contracts) and 2 under IP 5.2 (4.17% of total IP 5.2 contracts). Only 5 of these were considered to be projects with a related degree risk in the moderate / high categories; for 2 projects the situation was resolved, therefore, only 3 contracts remain in this situation. The 3 projects represent 1.27% of the total number of contracts under PA5. Details are found in **Annex 18**. It can therefore be concluded that:

**There are no prerequisites for considering that projects funded under PA 5 will not observe the deadline set for implementation, as 98.73% of them are implemented according to the activity plan.**

- **What types of interventions / implementation mechanisms have proven to be effective and why?**

The ROP established the following types of interventions for the implementation of Priority Axis 5:

<sup>12</sup> According to the deadlines for the different evaluation stages, the administrative conformity and eligibility, technical-financial evaluation, the request for clarification of the IB to the beneficiary, the carrying out of an additional evaluation in specific cases, the submission of complaints, the suspension of the process falls within a minimum of about 3 months.

- Projects to preserve, protect, promote and develop the natural and cultural heritage for less developed regions from the ERDF budget (four calls were launched);
- Projects to preserve, protect, promote and develop natural and cultural heritage for more developed regions, namely Bucharest-Ilfov, from the ERDF budget (1 call was launched);
- Projects to implement actions aimed at improving the urban environment, revitalizing cities, regenerating and decontaminating decommissioned industrial land (including reconversion areas), reducing air pollution and promoting measures to reduce noise from the ERDF budget (1 call for less developed regions , 1 call for more developed regions and 1 call for 2 regions);
- Projects to preserve, protect, promote and develop the natural and cultural heritage to be implemented in the integrated territorial investment area of the Danube Delta (ITI) (1 call launched);
- Projects for achieving the actions intended for improvement of the urban environment, revitalizing cities, regenerating and decontaminating decommissioned industrial land (including reconversion areas), reducing air pollution and promoting noise reduction measures, which will be implemented in the integrated territorial investment area of the Danube Delta (ITI);
- Projects dedicated to supporting the objectives of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region regarding Priority Area 3 of SUERD “Promoting culture, tourism and direct contacts between people” (SUERD) (2 calls launched);
- The so-called “unfinished projects”<sup>13</sup> for preserving, protecting, promoting and developing the natural and cultural heritage for less developed regions and more developed regions (1 call for less developed regions and 1 call for more developed regions).

The **total allocation** of PA 5 (ERDF + SB) is EUR 435,122,890, of which EUR 326,971,215 for IP 5.1 and EUR 108,151,675 for IP 5.2 (Table 1 Annex 5).

Within PA 5, **13 calls** were launched: 3 historical calls (hardcopy applications) in 2015 (2 calls for IP 5.1 and 1 call for IP 5.2), 7 calls in 2017 (4 calls for IP 5.1 - of which 1 call for ITI projects and 1 call for SUERD projects, and 3 calls for IP 5.2 - of which 1 call for SUERD projects) and 3 calls in 2018 for IP 5.1 (including 2 calls for unfinished projects).

In these 13 calls, **373 projects were submitted**, 275 projects under IP 5.1 (representing 80.83% of the total submitted projects) and 98 projects under IP 5.2 (representing 19.17% of the total number of submitted projects).

It should be stressed that, in terms of eligibility conditions (outside the specific conditions of the location project that fall under ITI or SUERD), the remaining conditions are similar for all types of intervention. Within the SUERD projects, there is a different selection procedure

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<sup>13</sup> The Emergency Ordinance no. 30 of April 2018 regarding the establishment of measures in the field of European funds and for the supplement of some normative acts has established the mechanism for taking over for financing the projects initiated by other types of financing, the degree of maturity of which is at least at the stage of works contract.



compared to projects in the other interventions, namely that projects are not evaluated in the region where they were submitted, but in any other region, which also causes a certain delay in the contracting of these projects.

The analysis of the contracting rate for each type of intervention shows that:

- The highest contracting rate was recorded from the ERDF (for IP 5.1, a historical call) and the unfinished projects for the BI Region (100%) and the unfinished projects for the less developed regions (91.67%);
- ERDF-ITI interventions for 5.1 recorded a contracting rate of 66.67%;
- ERDF SUERD interventions for IP 5.1 recorded a contracting rate of 10% and 2.0% for IP 5.2;

This is due to the fact that there were no changes to the applicant's guide for NF projects, and since the projects were being launched, there were no delays in the contracting process (missing documents or unclear legal status related to the title of ownership).

As far as SUERD projects are concerned, they are under evaluation. Details are provided in **Table 32 of Annex 5**.

In relation to the number of restored objectives:

- 168 objectives are restored under ERDF interventions;
- 6 objectives are restored under ERDF ITI interventions;
- 3 objectives are restored under ERDF SUERD interventions;

From the perspective of the number of tourists indicator, according to the data taken from MySMIS, ERDF projects are the most efficient and SUERD projects are the least efficient ones. The increase in the number of tourists / year will be generated as follows:

- 2,162,159 tourists per year, by ERDF interventions (cost 941.26 lei / visitor);
- 25,409 tourists per year by ERDF ITI interventions (cost 3,311.99 lei / visitor) and
- 385 tourists / year by ERDF SUERD interventions (cost 43,918.04 lei / visitor).

Due to the significant difference between the values of the three types of interventions, as there were no differences between the types of investments financed by these types of interventions, it may be a misinterpretation of the data in the system or the erroneous supply of the indicator by the beneficiary and **it is therefore advisable to check the data in MySMIS**.

For the analyses performed, the data provided in MySMIS on 31/12/2018 were used. The detailed statements are set out as follows:

- **Distribution by development regions of the number of projects**, the situation is provided in Table 5 Annex 5;
- **Total value of the submitted projects, regional distribution**, the situation was included in Table 6 Annex 5;
- **Amount of the projects submitted by each IP in relation to allocations (ERDF + SB)**, (Table 7 Annex 5);
- **Number and amount of contracted projects per IP** (Table 13 volume ANNEXES);
- **Degree of contracting in relation to the allocations per development region**:



(Table 15 Annex 5);

- Amount of the projects contracted by each IP in relation to allocations (ERDF + SB), (Table 16 Annex 5)

## **Main lessons learned to improve the logic of intervention and ROP implementation within the PA 5**

As a result of the data gathered by the application of the tools and methods used in the evaluation, a number of issues influencing the ROP implementation process were identified, which can be subject to intervention to make them more efficient:

### **1. The process of preparing and submitting grant applications**

The length of this process depended on the following factors:

- a. Delayed launching of calls for proposals;
- b. The quality of call documentation (forms with a relatively complex degree of difficulty, some hardly accessible terms, lack of harmonization of the way expenditures are defined in the Guidelines for Applicants with the normative acts in the field of public investments and with SMIS, where they have other codes) and the changes to the Applicant's Guide;
- c. The process of obtaining the ownership documents of the objective subject to intervention (the land book extract) by the applicant;
- d. Need to fill in the technical documentation (for the first calls);
- e. Managing the process of clarifications from applicants (at the IB level, there have been difficulties in providing information to explain or to detail the eligibility conditions in the Guidelines for Applicants, often legal issues, the IB sometimes requests the opinion of the MA, different interpretations / responses between IB and MA);
- f. Obtaining opinions (the National Committee for Historical Monuments rejects projects to improve the project intervention solution and expects much to review the documentation proposing the new intervention measures, some opinions are not related to the intervention);
- g. MySMIS system operation (difficult project upload into the system, lack of correspondence between modules).

### **2. The evaluation and contracting process**

- a. Carrying out procurement procedures for establishing evaluation teams;
- b. The lack of selection criteria for evaluators that take into account the specific expertise in the field of cultural heritage;
- c. The limited number of resources available for each process;
- d. Restrictions on the number of clarifications / requests for admissible documents during the evaluation process;
- e. Managing the MA's instructions to the IBs and how to relate the process to the responsibilities of each organization;
- f. The long time-frame between the submission of the grant application and the contracting process leads to the change of the procurement plans, budgets, implementation teams;
- g. The quality of the documents submitted to the financing file (errors in the ownership documents, wrong cadastre, misuse or incomplete use obligation);
- h. Multiple contract changes and long response time from MA to IB.

### 3. Project implementation process

- a. Changes in public procurement legislation, unreasonable deadlines (procurement procedure, complaint procedure);
- b. The long time-frame between the development of the DALI study and the start of the interventions leads to the aggravation of the degradation status of the monument, and at the end of the implementation of the project there are differences between the information provided by the DALI and the reality in the field;
- c. The reduced number of construction works and specialized staff (site supervisors, verifiers, restorers);
- d. Compliance with the allocated budget (legislative changes related to the increase of the minimum national wage require the identification of solutions and their communication to the beneficiaries);
- e. Limited monitoring due to the lack of adequate progress indicators under IP 5.1;
- f. Limited capacity of beneficiaries to follow the implementation of works contracts and generally limited capacity in terms of project management;
- g. The need to attach to the reporting or to the payment claims/refund claims certain documents that exist in the contract file.

As a general conclusion on the entire implementation process of the ROP, the public procurement procedure was identified as a critical point of the process, which produces cascading effects on the duration, budget at the project level, but also on the program-level absorption rate. In addition, the number and expertise of the human resources involved at the project and program level are key process factors.

Evaluation question 4 - What is the sustainability level of the actions promoted under the ROP and how can it be improved in the field of:

- Interventions on cultural heritage and the extent of tourism?
- Improving the urban environment?

In order to answer this question, data obtained through the following tools were taken into account:

- Desk research (grant applications, matrix of complementarity / synergy with other interventions, status of beneficiaries under partnerships);
- Qualitative research (on-line survey, focus groups and case studies).

From the analysis of randomly selected grant applications, the following results and conclusions were obtained:

- 23 beneficiaries (32.86%) did not implement any other project prior to the submission of the application and 7 beneficiaries <sup>14</sup> of them (10%) have contracts with a total amount eligible in the vicinity of the maximum funding limit (between 19.938.140,91 lei and

<sup>14</sup> SMIS 116355, SMIS 116706, SMIS 116726, SMIS 117637, SMIS 119096, SMIS 119444 and SMIS 119748.

- 22,053,300.00 lei). All 7 beneficiaries provided project management services in the project budget;
- 4 beneficiaries have implemented or are in the process of implementing a project worth less than or greater than the project financed under PA 5 and 2 beneficiaries <sup>15</sup> of them (2.86%), with a previously implemented project of lower value than that under implementation, have projects of relatively high value (20,682,283.50 lei and 16.243.847,00 lei, respectively), but have provided project management services in the project budget;
  - 25 beneficiaries (35.71%) concluded various institutional arrangements in order to ensure the achievement of the estimated results and 18 of the beneficiaries also mentioned the decisions of the local councils through which the organization undertook to support the maintenance expenditures of the investments financed through the project through the related budget allocations;
  - All beneficiaries have demonstrated in their financial models that they would ensure the sustainability of the investment during the financial analysis and described how they would cover the expenses related to the exploitation of the investments after the end of the financing;
  - All the projects in the analysed grant applications (70) are part of a local strategy that expresses the community's development needs, therefore there is an interest of the authorities in solving the community problems identified, which provides a prerequisite for ensuring sustainability of interventions. For details, see [Annex 19](#).

**The analysis of 70 grant applications and the 11 case studies shows that the beneficiaries have the financial resources to cover the expenses related to the maintenance of the investment also after the cessation of the support granted and have other prerequisites for ensuring the sustainability of the project.**

### Questionnaires

All respondents consider that the sustainability of the investments made will be ensured and that the indicators proposed within the project will reach their targets, and the proposed results will be achieved. For the future, it is possible to analyse the budget of institutions managing cultural heritage (or other investments made) to identify the degree of ensuring financial sustainability. Beneficiaries under IP 5.1 consider it beneficial to encourage the conclusion of various forms of partnerships to ensure the financial sustainability of the investments made.

The sustainability of activities meant to improve the urban environment is demonstrated by the presence of complementary projects in each of the localities where respondents implement the projects. In addition, all projects are part of other broader local strategies, which concur to the idea that the results of ROP intervention will integrate and will create synergies with other initiatives that the community has planned. In all urban localities there are other programs complementary to the investment, programs that have funded several types of

<sup>15</sup> SMIS 116632 and SMIS 117819

projects such as: projects to improve the urban environment targeting green spaces, projects for the creation, modernization, rehabilitation of urban streets in other neighbouring localities, projects for the creation of entertainment places for the population, projects within the urban mobility plan(s) or projects under the integrated urban development plan.

#### Beneficiary focus group

Following the discussions on the sustainability of interventions, the beneficiaries of IP 5.1 expressed different opinions, depending mainly on the type of their organization. For example, worship places have ensured financial stability, but there are some of them, located in smaller communities, that have limited financial resources and have had to find alternative solutions to the allocations from the local budget. At Dragomirna Monastery, for example, a number of activities are being carried out to ensure not only financial resources but also to play an educational role within the community: traditional products, both crafts and culinary, are sold, there are agreements with some educational units in the area through which children receive training in history or culture and can learn traditional crafts.

For projects funded under IP 5.2, where the beneficiaries are almost totally ATUs, sustainability is ensured by the local budget and maintenance costs are foreseen over the long term, and consequently investments are sustainable.

Overall, it is estimated that interventions funded under PA 5 have a very good degree of sustainability if assumptions made under the project are put into practice. The research conducted has not identified any reasons that may lead to the opinion that these assumptions do not apply.

Staff capacity building at the level of local authorities has a positive role to play in delivering long-term investment outcomes, and therefore the **ROP should continue to support measures to improve governance.**

#### Case studies

Case studies have identified different mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of project interventions, as can be seen from the following situations. The analysis confirms the conclusions obtained by other instruments, namely that one of the preferred models of worship places is self-financing. All places of worship subject to review plan a successful exploitation of the restored, consolidated, preserved and capitalised investment following the implementation of the projects by including them in as many tourist programs and circuits as possible at both regional and national level. Projects involve various promotional and publicity activities. The worship places undertake to finance the expenses related to the maintenance and operation of the heritage objective and this is apparent from the financial forecast made for the project and from the values related to the cumulated cash flow. In terms of sustainable development, this will be ensured first and foremost by practising sustainable tourism, i.e. maintaining investment, but also conducting new activities within the objective (traditional crafts, artisan work, local cuisine) or outside it, as a consequence of new opportunities for local community development (accommodation and boarding in traditional hostels).

In some cases, sustainability will be ensured by allocating funds for maintenance to the municipal budget. For example, Iasi City, which will provide the necessary staff for the operation of the cultural heritage objective and, on the other hand, the beneficiary will also provide the necessary financial resources for the maintenance of the investment during the whole period of operation and post-operation. The project's sustainability in terms of increasing the number of people visiting the cultural heritage monument is ensured by the beneficiary's strategy to relaunch the cultural tourism activity of Iasi City as a component of the Integrated Urban Development Strategy, 2015-2030.

In the case of a historical monument of national importance, owned by the Romanian State and the administration of the Ministry of National Defence, the funds for its maintenance will be provided from the state budget through budget allocations. Considering the importance of the monument and the large number of visitors expected, the beneficiary decided not to charge a visit fee. In order to ensure sustainability, 5 institutional cooperation agreements with relevant actors interested in the administration and promotion of the monument, namely the City Hall of Bușteni, the Prahova County Council, the National Heritage Institute, the Administrația Parcului Național Bucegi RA (Autonomous Administration of Bucegi National Park), the City Hall of Ploiești and the National Tourism Authority.

The UAT Anina City Beneficiary has fulfilled the necessary formalities since 2016 with Societatea Națională de Transport Feroviar de Călători (National Railway Passenger Transport Company), the Timișoara Regional Branch, for the train running on the line inaugurated in 1863, the so-called Banat Semmering, to have a stopping interval of 1.35 min. to Anina because it is the end of the line on the Oravița-Anina route. Thanks to the beauty of the landscape and the historic wagons of the 1930s, the train is an attraction point for tourists in the warm season by the end of October. The number of tourists on average per month would be of approx. 4,200 tourists who are part of the target group of the project. Through the Marketing Plan several fees were set for visiting the future Museum, and the price was set taking into account both the costs and the targeted public. However, the financial model shows that operating income will be lower than operational expenditure, case in which the difference is covered annually from budget allocations - amounts that ensure the sustainability of the project.

The analysis reveals that the specificity of investments under IP 5.2 is given by the following characteristics: average green areas, endowment with equipment that ensure the functionality of the premises - the public lighting system and equipment for selective collection of waste.

In Buhuși, in order to ensure functional sustainability, logistical and human resources will be provided by reorganizing the services subordinated to the City Hall without supplementing the current number of posts. Individuals in the current organisational chart will be allocated for the maintenance of the three areas. There will be no contractual relations with third parties with a financial impact. Ensuring maintenance is possible through the services subordinated to

the City Hall, and the investment contains elements already existing in the list of services provided by the entities already holding an office in the town hall organization chart. The project complements previous complex initiatives, financed from ROP 2007-2013, Axis 1.1 PIDU.

The financial sustainability of the project implemented by Turda Municipality will be achieved by allocating funds from the local budget and from own revenues. The project proves its financial sustainability according to the analysis and financial forecasting model, according to the time horizon analysed for the implementation and operation of the investment, since the two premises created and the observation tower can contribute to the budget with own income sources generated by the investment following the organized events. The city has the human resources and the technical capacity to operate the infrastructure, and the sustainability of the investment is also ensured by the fact that the project is part of the Integrated Strategy for Sustainable Development 2017-2023-2030, and the Strategic Objective 1 - REINVENTING TURDA, Strategic area - Urban Regeneration falls under the strategic directions regarding the regeneration of green spaces and the management of vacant / degraded properties (land and buildings), the General Urban Plan of Turda Municipality, the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan.

## Partnership analysis

The partnership is considered a success factor for ensuring the sustainability of a project, so we have analysed the presence of this form of association within the beneficiaries of PA 5.

Of the total projects submitted under IP 5.1, 9.45% were in partnership, while for those submitted under IP 5.2, 1.02% had beneficiaries associated in partnerships. In the case of contracts, there are **7.98% beneficiaries in partnerships** (15 contracts) under IP 5.1 and no partner in partnership under IP 5.2. It is noted that there are no beneficiaries in partnership under IP 5.2, but given that the interventions funded have focused more on creating green spaces, the necessity and opportunity of a partnership were not considered necessary. Proposals from NGOs interviewed in this evaluation could provide new perspectives for ATUs; these proposals could pave the way for new approaches to designing, preparing and implementing initiatives closer to citizens, initiatives to also play a role of community building in the implementation of the concept of urban regeneration.

Our research did not identify in the previous ROP evaluation reports a partnership analysis under MIA 5.3, therefore, a comparison cannot be made to establish a trend, but these data can be used as a benchmark for future evaluations.

## Analysis of complementarity / synergy with other interventions

If projects are part of strategies or are complementary to / synergistic to other interventions, they create the premises for higher sustainability. Following these analyses, the following results were obtained:



1. From the analysis of the 70 applications and the case studies, it was found that all projects are part of a local strategy.
2. Analysing the type of operations financed under the ROP, the Ro-Cultura program, the NRDP and the URBAN Innovative actions, we found the following:
  - There are activities that share objectives with ROPs (Ro-Cultura Program and NRDP), but the size and intensity of funding are different, addressing different needs of potential beneficiaries, different categories of beneficiaries (SMEs in the case of Ro-Cultura) or limiting interventions only for rural areas (in the case of PNDR);
  - The Ro-Cultura program mainly focuses on *soft* interventions that ensure the development of entrepreneurial culture, the enhancement of the quality of cultural site management, the promotion of exhibitions or international cooperation;
  - Accessibility of the URBAN Innovative Action program is limited in time, requires preparation of the project in English and mainly targets projects with innovative solutions for the regeneration or reconversion of urban areas;

It can be concluded that:

**Initiatives funded under PA 5 do not overlap with other actions funded under other programs, but are complementary and synergistic to them; together, the existing funding instruments for potential beneficiaries can lead to joint effects when used in conjunction at the level of a geographically delimited area.**

The detailed analysis of complementarity is provided in Annex 13.

By corroborating the research and analyses achieved by the instruments mentioned above, it is believed that the investments under PA 5 have a high degree of sustainability.

**EQ5 - To what extent have the funded interventions contributed to increasing tourist attractiveness or real estate attractiveness through specific actions?**

In order to answer this question, data obtained through the following tools were taken into account:

- Desk research (grant applications, MySMIS);
- Qualitative research (survey through online questionnaire among beneficiaries, interview and questionnaire via e-mail among NGOs, focus groups and case studies).

An initial answer to this question is that, at the time of the evaluation, there is no contribution to increasing tourist attractiveness in intervention areas as projects are not completed.

Secondly, in order to allow an answer to this question after the completion of the interventions, it was considered useful to provide initial data that could form the basis for quantifying the effects of interventions at different stages of implementation or post-implementation; the increase in attractiveness indices (TAI) does not necessarily mean that this will be exclusively due to the intervention. **Annex 20** contains the TAI for locations of PA



funded projects for which INCTD disposed of these data at the time of the evaluation. It should also be added that at the project and program level, there must be a corroboration of the indicators in order to measure these effects, and access to this updated information is likely to ensure monitoring and evaluation.

In view of the above mentioned, the research carried out has aimed at verifying the premises contained in the analysed projects and the risks, if any, for these premises not to take place.

Much of the answers to this assessment question have already been detailed in the answer to the evaluation question 1; in short, it refers to the following:

- All respondents to the questionnaire survey believe that it will increase the tourism potential of the community; the majority believe that there are positive effects of investment on increasing the attractiveness of the city for tourists, the development of tourism-related businesses (accommodation, meals, transport), the implementation of complex cultural programs and the development of the infrastructure needed for cultural activities, and that regional visibility of heritage objective will increase. To a lesser extent, about half of respondents believe that interventions will lead to increased visibility at national or international level;
- The in-depth analysis at the level of case studies reveals that projects funded under the axis have a wide range of activities that will add new functions to the objective such as:
  - Creating a recreation area within a new city strategy;
  - New cultural events that will promote the objective;
  - Conclusion of cooperation protocols with the Tourist Information Centre
- Through contracts funded under IP 5.1, at the end of project implementation, the number of visitors per year will increase and it is estimated to reach a total of over 2,100,000 visitors to the funded objectives. This value leads to an average increase in the number of visitors per year / per objective of 12,870 units.

These actions will increase the attractiveness of the intervention area, as confirmed by the conclusions of the consultation of the 3 NGOs.

We will further exemplify with relevant aspects from the on-site research, case studies, field visits that have provided the opportunity for in-depth discussions with the beneficiaries, visualization of the objectives (some at an advanced stage of implementation), verification of the premises for achieving the specific objectives, activities and the results estimated in the grant application.

Developing marketing plans by the beneficiaries leads to a more entrepreneurial, customer-oriented thinking by identifying new ways of attracting new categories within the community. The Hurezi Monastery, for example, plans to encourage volunteering, participatory action among the whole population, but especially among young people through organized events, thus contributing to the education process of the Horezu community and promoting the investment objective. The Ministry of Defence will set up exhibition premises in the project “Commemorative Cross to the Romanian Heroes of the First World War” on Caraiman Peak.

Scaune Parish in Bucharest will hire a guide to welcome and manage tourists in a more professional way. The implementation of the project creates the premises for increasing the quality of services provided by the community church, but also the development of new services, such as the creation of seminars, for the analysis of the interior painting, which is of great significance for the students of theology faculties, and not only.

Successful exploitation of the restored, consolidated, preserved and valorised investment following the project implementation requires that the “Annunciation” Church of the Romanian-Hellenic Mixed Parish be included in as many tourist programs and circuits as possible. The church is currently included in the pedestrian tour through the old centre of Braila organized by the “Proilavia” Tourism Association in Braila. The Sano Touring Agency ([www.sanotouring.eu](http://www.sanotouring.eu)), based in Bucharest, a tour operator exclusively engaged in incoming activities, has already included the Greek Church in its programs in the region.

The city of Iasi is planning a great diversity of new activities. The former dressing rooms of the Turkish steam bath will become buffer spaces and will allow the first contact of the public with the inner events through media presentations of the history of visual arts and performative arts. From here, one will access exhibition spaces - photography, painting, sculpture, drawing, film or contemporary theatre, the area where host contemporary music or dance can also be hosted. There will be also ancillary facilities such as a foyer, wardrobe, cabins for actors, circulators (including an elevator for people with disabilities). In the basement there will be an area of socialization between artists and the public, artistic meetings, which will extend outside the building in the inner courtyard. Also, there are spaces for video projection, cinema, experimental theatre and an area of exhibition. The floor will include open workshops where the audience will be able to take part in the events that are organized, a dance / theatre workshop room, and a media area in which recorded contemporary artistic events can be viewed.

The city of Turda is planning facilities for performing outdoor activities such as: shows, concerts, exhibitions, film projections, etc. either unique events or repetitive events such as festivals, creation camps for sculpture, outdoor lessons, historical reconstruction shows, etc. Educational activities can valorise local and national history related to Prince Mihai Viteazu or they can be of an exploration nature and intended for the knowledge of the natural heritage of the park. Due to its height, the Tower will offer a beautiful panorama of both the city, the forest as well as the farthest area, such as the Turzii Gorges and the neighbouring areas. Immediate services to be developed are the transport ones that will link salt mine and, implicitly, the tourists who visit it, to the park, thus increasing the time spent by a tourist in the city as well as the chance for the park to have a larger number of visitors. The lack of related services like cafes, bistros, souvenir shops etc. decreases the tourist attractiveness, and therefore there is a concern of the municipality for the purchase / lease of a land to provide these commercial services absolutely necessary for visitors.

The city of Anina plans to develop a city museum within a cultural centre, a museum that illustrates the multicultural, multi-confessional and multi-ethnic nature of the city's inhabitants. This museum / museum point intends to be complex and to highlight the history, traditions, customs and harmonious coexistence on these lands. Another initiative envisages setting up a cycle track of approx. 10 km on the ancient embankment of the Minis river valley, between the Crivina locality and Minis Lake, capitalizing on the beauty of the Nera-Beusnita Gorges Reservation, thus gaining a connection with the Bigar Waterfall, a faster and more interesting connection to cyclotourism. At the same time, they intend to integrate it into the cycling tourism circuit of Caraş Severin County. In the future, in order to increase the tourist attractiveness, but also to provide new recreational facilities for the city's inhabitants, the Mărghiţaş lake will be arranged as a recreational lake (it used to be so many years ago) with boats, hydro-bicycles, and other necessary facilities. These include private initiatives to develop the HORECA structure in the city as a consequence of increasing tourist attractiveness and the confidence that the number of visitors to be attracted by the future tourist destination of Well 1 Ensemble will be increasing.

In conclusion, based on the analyses and researches carried out, we can formulate the answer to the evaluation question:

- The extent to which interventions contribute to increasing tourist attractiveness is determined both by the diversity of the types of organized actions and by the diversification of the categories of institutions involved in their organization;
- Developing of marketing plans by the beneficiaries leads to a more entrepreneurial, customer-oriented thinking, which is the prerequisite for better management of the site and attracting more visitors. The interventions made the beneficiaries to plan and carry out a diversification of their activities;
- Sustainability of interventions determines the extent to which the effects of cultural heritage rehabilitation or urban regeneration interventions will increase attractiveness;
- IAT monitoring before and after intervention (including post-implementation) can provide a basis for assessing the impact of interventions, but the effect is not necessarily an exclusive consequence of the intervention;

There are other factors besides the ROP interventions, which contribute to the tourist attractiveness: the technical-material basis (accommodation structures, public catering structures, recreational structures) and the general infrastructure (the access routes - road, rail, sea).

### c). Results, findings of the analysis

After analysing the different information obtained during the evaluation process through the different evaluation tools used, the following considerations were outlined in connection with the evaluation questions:

EQ	Content of evaluation question	Findings
1	<p>To what extent has the ROP contributed so far and will contribute in the future to the diversification of local economies through the sustainable development of natural and cultural patrimony by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ increasing the average number of employees in patrimony objectives?</li> <li>○ increasing the average number of visitors in patrimony objectives?</li> </ul>	<p>As a result of the interventions under PA 5, based on the results provided by the field research and case studies conducted, the following new areas of activity were found at beneficiary level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Artistic, cultural and didactic events;</li> <li>▪ Creation of workshops for creative industries;</li> <li>▪ Attendance and organisation of exhibitions;</li> <li>▪ Crafts;</li> <li>▪ Intangible heritage activities;</li> <li>▪ The conclusion of national and international agreements to promote objectives;</li> <li>▪ Arrangements for external infrastructure management.</li> </ul> <p>Although interventions funded under PA 5 do not generate a high number of jobs, at least not in the short term, it is estimated that the implementation of the marketing plans in the interventions will have the effects estimated by the beneficiaries, and in the medium and long term they will lead to the diversification of local economies.</p> <p>By way of example, from the analysis of the 70 applications for funding, 9 jobs were created, and of the 11 case studies analysed, 3 projects mention 9 new direct jobs created and another 40 indirectly created jobs. The number of jobs is not an indicator in the PA 5 interventions.</p> <p>Since some interventions are located in areas where tourism is the only economic activity, therefore interventions that support the capitalization of natural and cultural heritage are essential in the development of the respective communities. In this respect, and in conjunction with the increased interest in the types of interventions of PA 5, it is necessary not only to continue the financial support granted through the ROP, but also to supplement the allocations (at PA 5 level the value of the projects submitted in relation to the financial allocation under ERDF + SB was 182.5%).</p> <p>Under the ROP, financing contracts were signed for the restoration of 177 cultural heritage objectives. The target value of the number of restored cultural heritage objectives assumed to be achieved through the program by 2023 is 45, therefore, we believe that all the prerequisites are met for this target to be achieved.</p> <p>According to MySMIS data, at the end of implementation of the projects under IP 5.1, the estimated number of visitors per year will</p>

EQ	Content of evaluation question	Findings
		increase and will reach a total of 2,187,953 visitors, which represents an average increase in the number of visitors per year/per objective of 12,870 units. The efficiency calculation of the indicator is 209 Eur per visitor, which means a higher unitary cost for the "Visitor Number" indicator in ROP 2014-2020 interventions compared to the ROP 2007-2013 by 42.94%.
2	<p>To what extent has it contributed so far and will the ROP contribute in the future to improving the quality of life by improving the urban environment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is the number of fit out land plots/areas? What is the total area?</li> <li>○ What is the community's reaction to these changes?</li> </ul>	<p>The analysis of the data recorded in SMIS shows that by 31/12/2018, 48 projects were contracted with a total eligible value of 347,406,486 lei.</p> <p>Through ROP 2014-2020, as a result of the projects contracted under IP 5.2, an area of 1,773,356 sqm will be created or rehabilitated by 2023. According to the target specified in the ROP, the indicator value for 2023 is 109,219 sqm, which allows to draw the conclusion that if all the contracts are implemented successfully, at the end of the implementation period the target will be considerably exceeded.</p> <p>Considering the quality of inhabitant's life, more specifically, the quality of the neighbourhood as part of the defining elements for the living conditions, the perceptions of the beneficiaries were investigated through the on-line questionnaire, discussions were held with the beneficiaries at the time of the on-site visit and within the focus group / group interview. Three NGOs active in the field of environmental education, the promotion of civil society values and the development of local community projects for young people were consulted, which mostly confirmed the conclusions of the beneficiaries and added other perspectives for the interventions under IP 5.2.</p> <p>Findings resulting from research and analysis are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interventions contribute to improving the quality of life by: reconversion of degraded land and its transformation into places intended for various recreation, socializing and leisure activities of the community mainly, but also to positively influencing the environmental parameters (the increase in green areas will reduce the level of pollution) and the embellishment of urban areas in those communities. Reducing the presence of degraded and / or abandoned areas that negatively affect the quality of life and the image of citizens is an appreciated factor among communities;</li> <li>▪ Interventions conducted in the projects subject to case studies revealed that interventions are largely aimed at rehabilitating green areas, but can also lead to negative community reactions if implementation does not adequately</li> </ul>

EQ	Content of evaluation question	Findings
		<p>address these issues;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NGOs consider that interventions under the IP 5.2 affect the quality of life, largely to a great extent, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing green areas to meet the need for leisure and recreation of the urban population;</li> <li>Improving the environment in urban areas;</li> <li>Increasing the attractiveness of urban areas by increasing the number of urban furniture items;</li> <li>Increasing city attractiveness for tourists;</li> <li>Creating pedestrian tracks, streets and bicycle tracks.</li> <li>Beneficiaries of interventions are all the categories of population, but to a large extent pre-school children, elderly and young people.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>NGOs have put forward a series of proposals in the area of the specific objective (i.e. reconversion and functional change of degraded land and areas), ideas for effective revitalization of what results from IP 5.2 interventions, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revitalizing unused city locations and turning them into leisure areas, green spaces, should be integrated with actions/initiatives that provide growth community growths and development contexts and good practice directions in those places;</li> <li>Development of pilot projects / premises with activities involving the local community alongside urbanists, sociologists, urban development experts, as well as other categories of experts based on the principle of circular economy.</li> </ul>
3	<p>To what extent are the prerequisites for determining the types of operations eligible for funding checked in practice (in implementation)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can the way of solving the problems identified within this PA or for similar future interventions be improved?</li> <li>What types of interventions / implementation mechanisms have proven to be effective and why?</li> </ul>	<p>The intervention logic was analysed in terms of identified needs, eligible operations, estimated targets (outcomes) and response rate of target group of interventions, financial allocations, contracting rate and payment status, and it was concluded that the prerequisites for establishing the types of operations eligible for funding were verified in implementation. Substantiation data are presented below.</p> <p>The total non-reimbursable grant allocated to PA5 (ERDF +SB) in the amount of EUR 435,112,890 was distributed in proportion of 75.15% to IP 5.1 and 24.85% to IP 5, which means EUR 326,971,215, and EUR 108,151,675, respectively.</p> <p>Within PA 5, 13 calls were launched: 3 historical calls (hardcopy applications) in 2015 (2 calls for IP 5.1 and 1 call for IP 5.2), 7 calls in 2017 (4 calls for IP 5.1 - of which 1 call for ITI projects and 1 call for SUERD projects, and 3 calls for IP 5.2 - of which 1 call for SUERD projects) and 3 calls in 2018 for IP 5.1 (including 2 calls for unfinished projects). All calls were closed on 31/12/2018.</p>



EQ	Content of evaluation question	Findings
		<p>In these 13 calls, 373 projects were submitted, 275 projects under IP 5.1 (representing 80.83% of the total submitted projects) and 98 projects under IP 5.2 (representing 19.17% of the total number of submitted projects).</p> <p>The ratio between the ERDF and SB allocation of submitted projects and the ERDF + SB ROP allocation is 182.5% at the PA level and 196.6% at IP 5.1 level 140.0% at IP 5.2 level, respectively.</p> <p>Of the 236 contracts totalling an eligible value of Lei 2,478,596,667, an average project value of RON 10,502,528.25 can be calculated.</p> <p>The ratio between the ERDF and SB allocation of contracted projects and the ERDF + SB ROP allocation is 119.1% at the PA level and 136.2% at IP 5.1 level and 67.2% at IP 5.2 level.</p> <p>With regard to the average amount of the project at regional level, the BI region shows the highest value (13,187,921 lei) while the Central region shows the lowest value (6,250,221 lei). At the top level of the average of the projects is also the SE region (11,944,196 lei), NE region (11,399,202 lei), SW Oltenia region (11,355,363 lei) and South-Muntenia region (11,239,894 lei). The Northwest Region records an average project value of Lei 10,959,950, while the West region has an average project value of Lei 9,861,441, with both regions below the national average.</p> <p>The contribution of each region to the achievement of the indicator 1S23 - Restored cultural heritage objectives is, in descending order, the following: 1. Center 21.47%, 2. NE 16.38%, 3. NW 15.25%, 4. SW Oltenia 12.99%, 5. S Muntenia 12.43%, 6. SE 11.30%, 7. W 6.78% and BI 6.78%.</p> <p>The amount of payments (ERDF) reported at 31/12/2018 at the level of the axis is of Lei 186,398,696, representing 13.11% of the allocation amount.</p> <p>It is worth mentioning that at the regional level, the North-West region recorded an absorption percentage higher than that of the European average (27.13% compared to 27% at the same time) and the SW Oltenia Region is slightly below this average (21.91%). The NE region records 13.61% of the payments, SE Region 13.30%, South Muntenia Region 14.18%, West Region 11.36%, Central Region 3.52% and BI Region 2.73%. The regions with the highest degree of absorption also have the highest number of contracts in the category of unfinished projects: The introduction of unfinished projects into the ROP was a decision that led to an increase in the absorption rate.</p>



EQ	Content of evaluation question	Findings
		<p>The target of 54,117,647 Euro, assumed through the Performance Framework for 2018, regarding the total amount of eligible expenditures in the Certification Authority's system, is fulfilled in a proportion of 73.86%.</p> <p>The analysis of the contracting rate for each type of intervention shows that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The highest contracting rate was recorded from the ERDF (for IP 5.1, a historical call) and the unfinished projects for the BI Region (100%) and the unfinished projects for the less developed regions (91.67%);</li> <li>▪ ITI interventions for IP 5.1 recorded a contracting rate of 66.67%;</li> <li>▪ SUERD interventions for IP 5.1 recorded a contracting rate of 10% and of 2.0% for IP 5.2, as the projects on 31/12/2018 were under the contracting stage.</li> </ul> <p>In relation to the number of restored objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 168 objectives are restored under ERDF interventions;</li> <li>▪ 6 objectives are restored under ITI interventions; and</li> <li>▪ 3 objectives are restored under SUERD interventions;</li> </ul> <p>From the perspective of the number of tourists indicator, according to the data taken from MySMIS, ERDF projects are the most efficient and SUERD projects are the least efficient ones. The increase in the number of tourists / year will be generated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2,162,159 tourists per year, by ERDF interventions (cost of 941.26 lei / visitor);</li> <li>▪ 25,409 tourists per year by ITI interventions (cost of 3,311.99 lei / visitor) and</li> <li>▪ 385 tourists / year by SUERD interventions (cost of 43,918.04 lei / visitor).</li> </ul> <p>At the ROP implementation system a number of issues have been identified which can lead to the streamlining of different processes.</p>
4	What is the level of sustainability of ROP actions?	<p>It is estimated that investment under PA 5 demonstrate a high degree of sustainability. The analysis of 70 grant applications and the 11 case studies shows that the beneficiaries have the financial resources to cover the expenses related to the maintenance of the investment also after the cessation of the support granted and have other prerequisites for ensuring the sustainability of the project. All projects under the PA 5 are part of local strategies and there are 7.98% partnership projects at the level of the IP 5.1, contributing to sustainability.</p> <p>Initiatives funded under PA 5 do not overlap with other actions funded under other programs, but are complementary and may</p>

EQ	Content of evaluation question	Findings
		<p>become synergistic to them. Together, existing funding instruments for potential beneficiaries can lead to conjugate effects when used in conjunction with a geographically delimited area.</p> <p>No risks threatening the premises considered for the implementation of the projects were identified at the time of the evaluation.</p>
5	To what extent have the funded interventions contributed to increasing tourist attractiveness or real estate attractiveness through specific actions?	<p>The effects of interventions contribute to increasing tourist attractiveness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increasing the visibility of the funded objective at regional, national and international level;</li> <li>▪ Developing tourism-related businesses (accommodation, meals, transport);</li> <li>▪ Implementing complex cultural programs and developing the necessary infrastructure for cultural activities;</li> <li>▪ Implementing activities that will add new functions to the objective.</li> </ul> <p>Sustainability of interventions determines the extent to which the effects of cultural heritage rehabilitation or urban regeneration interventions will increase attractiveness.</p> <p>In order to increase tourist attractiveness, other factors, other than ROP interventions, should be considered, such as: the existence of a technical-material facility (accommodation structures, public catering structures, leisure facilities) and general infrastructure (access ways - by road, rail, air, water).</p>

## 5. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

### Conclusions

Considering the stage of implementation of all PA 5 projects, namely that no project is completed, the evaluation focused mainly on aspects of intervention logic and implementation mechanisms, but also on the analysis of the prerequisites for achieving the results proposed by the program.

As specific objectives are defined and project indicators are selected, assessing how interventions will contribute to the diversification of local economies is difficult to quantify without providing some indicators and their sources of collection. Interventions under IP 5.1 result in the restoration of the heritage, which is an immediate need, a result that in the medium and long term, with a set of concerted and sustained policies at both central and local

level, will lead to the development and diversification of local economies. It is important to point out that these interventions are, in the opinion of the beneficiaries and the stakeholders surveyed in the evaluation process, of particular importance given the potential of Romania. For smaller localities, the integration of ROP-funded objectives in tourist circuits and the acquisition of tourist resort status can be the engine of an economic revival with a real impact on the communities' living standards.

ROP interventions are complementary to other measures funded under the NDP and the Ro-Cultura program, as well as the European URBAN Innovative Actions program. The presence of partnerships in the implementation of projects, a good financial capacity provable by the financial flows for 10 years of operation of the investment and ensuring a professional project management are prerequisites for a good sustainability of the interventions.

With regard to the current state of implementation of the ROP, it can be stated that there are no reasons to assume that the financed operations will not be completed within the final implementation deadline. Although there have been delays in the effective start of program implementation, interventions funded under AP5 are almost entirely in line with the established activity plan. Based on the analysis conducted, only about 8% of the contracts recorded delays, but many of the beneficiaries have updated the plan of activities and the project observes the final implementation deadline. There are a number of contracts that were considered as having a moderate or high risk, but they represent only 1.27% of the total number of contracts.

In relation to the level of payments, the amount of payments (ERDF) reported at 31/12/2018 at the level of the axis is of Lei 186,398,696, representing 13.11% of the allocation amount. It is worth mentioning that at the regional level, the North-West region recorded an absorption percentage higher than that of the European average (27.13% compared to 27% at the same time) and the SW Oltenia Region is slightly below this average (21.91%), these being the regions with the highest number of contracts in the category of unfinished projects.

The intermediate financial target for the year 2018 of EUR 54,117,647, assumed through the Performance Framework, regarding the total amount of eligible expenditures in the Certification Authority's system, is fulfilled in a proportion of 73.86%, which is seen as something positive, given the delay in launching the calls for proposals.

In relation to the implementation system, a number of aspects that can be improved and which are within the competence of the MA were identified, as well as aspects beyond the responsibility of the MA, but which can be the subject of inter-institutional cooperation with other authorities with responsibilities in the field of culture or education.

## Suggestions

### *Recommendations for the current programming period*

To reduce the contracting period:

- Use technical assistance resources to supplement internal staff resources;
- Highlight the most recent version of MySMIS resulting from the various changes to the grant application and annexes thereto, to consolidate the package of documents required for contracting;

In order to increase the efficiency of the processing of payment claims / reimbursement claims:

- Waive the requirement to submit documents already in the contract file.

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

- More efficient use of MySMIS by:
  - a. Adapting the system to the needs of all user categories (consulting users about problems encountered);
  - b. Creating menus that take over the information between the same fields when a specific piece of information is provided in order to avoid multiple loading of information / documents;
  - c. Verification of existing system data, in particular indicators (not all projects have loaded the indicators), as inconsistencies were found with respect to the existing IB data and the information provided in the grant applications.  
(also valid for the next programming period).

### *Recommendations for the next programming period*

To increase the relevance of ROP interventions and reduce regional disparities:

- Have the allocations under the interventions respect regional specificity (e.g. allocations for cultural heritage interventions to be correlated with the potential of historical monuments within each development region);
- Consider the financing and other types of operations with a high degree of sustainability and efficiency, such as the example provided in the study (SPIRE project).

To ensure greater effectiveness of ROP intervention:

- Improve the system of indicators for a realistic and accurate quantification of the effects (e.g. differentiation of achievement indicators - rehabilitated square meters, and outcome indicators - number of objectives, number of tourists; use of composite indicators - index of attractiveness of the heritage/supported sites);

To increase the capacity to develop and implement regional policies:

- Support measures to increase administrative capacity at ATU level, especially in the area of public procurement and project management;
- Promote local partnership between beneficiaries, especially at the level of small local public authorities lacking sufficient resources to finance complex projects, but which can be provided by local partnerships;

To increase the efficiency of the implementation management process:

- Opening the financing lines immediately after ROP approval;

- Wider consultation to prepare the Guidelines for Applicants for a grant application which is more clear and easier to fill in;
- Training sessions with applicants to clarify the content of the Guidelines for Applicants, focusing on the eligibility criteria, eligible costs and classification of certain items, as they emerged from the current programming period;
- Sizing staff resources at AM and IB level according to the burden;
- More sustained use of technical assistance resources at peak times when internal resources at AM and / or IB level are insufficient;
- Periodic evaluation of ROP promotional campaigns to determine the efficiency of using the money allocated to different channels of promotion (e.g. through survey at target group level).

Other measures, including legislative ones, that may be of interest to the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration:

- Elaboration of territorial and local landscaping plans integrated with land-use planning and management plans for monuments and historical sites;
- Achieving integrated urban development plans, including incorporating cultural reconversion of areas into creative neighbourhoods, cultural centres, etc.;
- Including the cultural dimension and housing quality issues into the developed urban and rural regeneration programs;
- Strengthening interinstitutional cooperation to achieve a unified framework on the natural and built heritage and landscape protection system, the preparation and training of restorers, patrimonial site managers. An action plan to increase the number of accredited experts, which can intervene on the heritage, must be developed together with the competent authorities (Ministry of Culture and National Identity and decentralized units at county level);
- Initiating pilot projects / framework programs for local and regional development that:
  - ✓ Include the built heritage and other intangible cultural heritage elements;
  - ✓ Integrate the dimension of conservation and that of the transfer to the next generations of intangible cultural heritage - practices associated with traditional crafts and encouragement of entrepreneurship to generate an economic value that can sustain the vitality of cultural value over time;
  - ✓ Pursue studies on the integration of cultural and natural landscape policies aimed at the recovery and regeneration of degraded or endangered landscapes, respecting local traditions and sustainable development, that enable the testing of methodologies from the plans of the National Culture and Heritage Strategy 2016- 2022 in view of their assessment (e.g. Limanu Commune).

## Lessons learned, good practice models

### At MA and ROP level

- ✓ The good collaboration between MA and ROP IB has led to improvement of eligibility conditions for the launch of different calls (especially for “unfinished” projects) compared to the first launches in 2016 (e.g. introduction of a new category of applicants, acceptance of the building permit and works contract signed in place of documents proving the ownership upon submission of the project, acceptance of enlargement works, acceptance as legal representative of the priest, not only of the tenant, removal as a compulsory activity of digitization of the site);
- ✓ Shortening the evaluation and selection period by cumulative steps (on-site visit in the Technical-economic evaluation);
- ✓ Shortening the ROP implementation period by signing the contract at the feasibility study/technical project stage;
- ✓ A new payment claim mechanism, introduced in April 2013, with a substantial impact on increasing absorption.

#### At beneficiary level

- ✓ Better planning of activities ever since the phase of preparation of the grant application with a greater margin of safety;
- ✓ Consulting the opinion of an experienced contractor may make a difference between a realistic plan and a far too ambitious plan;
- ✓ The beneficiaries are aware of the necessity of a permanent cooperation relationship with professional suppliers, able to identify all the risks associated with the present project and ready to advise the client in this regard and the ways of solving them, as well as a good communication with the departments in the ROP implementation system ;
- ✓ In the case of projects involving the implementation of concepts encompassing a large amount of solutions that can only be finalized by the technical proposal stage execution details, the beneficiary should require the provider in the stage of the feasibility study/documentation for the approval of intervention works to include a specification for the achievement of the Technical Project;
- ✓ The direct involvement of the beneficiary in all phases of the project implementation is a basic condition for the success of the project (follow-up of the consultancy firm providing support for implementation);
- ✓ If the beneficiary chooses to detail the estimated solution in the feasibility study/documentation for the approval of intervention works through a solution contest, it is necessary to request: detailing of the concept, detailing component objects, materials, solutions, appropriate technologies, criteria for selecting suppliers;

Attached to the study are also presented two models studied outside ROP studies that can be used as a **good practice model** for similar future interventions:

- Schematic presentation of the measures funded under two regional operational programs in Italy - Campania and Marche - regions with the most heritage objectives in Italy, with eligible actions and an overview of regions to fit in context. It highlights an integrated approach of all areas in relation to the heritage objective: interventions in hard and soft investments; interventions for the protection of the regional natural heritage, with particular reference to the areas with the highest attractiveness, with particular reference to Natura 2000 sites, interventions for the protection, capitalization and networking of the material and immaterial cultural heritage in attraction areas of strategic importance, such

as strengthening and promoting development processes; support for the integrated use of cultural and natural resources and the promotion of tourist destinations. (Annex 3);

➤ The SPIRE project, a project of the Baia Mare Municipality submitted within the European Urban Innovative Actions program and applying an innovative method of long-term urban regeneration with low costs and in a context of economic recycling of the resulting materials. It involves the phytoremediation / phytogeneration, a long-term re-use of land and bioeconomic development strategy by re-integrating 650 hectares of brownfield land, former industrial platforms. (Annex 12)

Among the ROP case studies, we can state that the project “International Centre for Contemporary Art: rehabilitation and functional reconversion of the former communal bath (Turkish Bath) building” is a model of good practice both as an approach and as a vision in terms of the estimated results to be obtained.



## ANNEXES

Annex 1 Literature

Annex 2 Further indicators relevant to the Priority Axis

Annex 3 ROP Campania and ROP Marche, Italy

Annex 4 IP 5.2 Benchmarking

Annex 5 Tables and charts resulting from the acquisition and processing of MySMIS data

Annex 6 Questionnaire for IP 5.1 beneficiaries, answers and graphs

Annex 7 Questionnaire for IP 5.2 beneficiaries, answers and graphs

Annex 8 Guidelines and focus group reports

Annex 9 List of interviewees

Annex 10 Case studies

Annex 11 Conclusions of interviews with stakeholders

Annex 12 SPIRE Project of Baia Mare

Annex 13 ROP complementarity

Annex 14 NGO questionnaires

Annex 15 Current situation of historical monuments

Annex 16 RDA communication and support actions in conjunction with applications, contracts, monuments

Annex 17 Duration of the process from submission to contracting

Annex 18 Status of delays in monitoring reports

Annex 19 Sustainability analysis details according to grant applications

Annex 20 Tourist attractiveness index for locations under PA 5

Annex 21 Table for correlation of comments / solving modes