

SOP CONTRIBUTION TO AIR AND WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

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ABSTRACT.- Sop contribution to air and water environment protection.

The paper presents aspects of the overall objectives of the Sectoral Operational Program for Environment and the specific objectives of Priority Axis 1 - „Extension and modernization of water and wastewater systems ", Priority Axis 3 - „Reduction of pollution and mitigation of climate change by restructuring and renovating urban heating systems towards energy efficiency targets in the identified local environmental hotspots " and Priority Axis 5 - " Implementation of adequate infrastructure of natural risk prevention in most vulnerable areas" of the Sectoral Operational Program Environment. Also presents issues regarding eligibility of projects and beneficiaries, the institutional framework, fundings from North West Region, on axis 1, 3 and 5 of the SOP Environment and the stages of projects which are in preparation phase and projects that have already received from Brussels the funding decisions.

Key words: Sectorial Operational Program for Environment, priority axis, water and waste water, reducing pollution , natural risk, funding, projects, Northwestern Region.

1. EU policies and funds for Romania during 2007-2013

The budget of the European Union is projected by the European Commission for a period of 7 years, also called the "financial perspective". During the current period 2007-2013, the allocated budget is for financing of EU policies, the largest amounts going to the common agricultural policy and cohesion policy (European regional policy) [1]. Table 1 are presented the basic policies of the European Commission and the amount of funds allocated for these policies [1, 2].

The European funds that are allocated to Romania in the period of 2007-2013 is over 30 billion Euros. In order to access funds in the period of 2007-2013 were developed and approved [3, 4, 5] the following strategic and operational documents that set priorities regarding the development of Romania in 2007-2013:

- **The National Development Plan (NDP)** includes the national development strategy of Romania. It was completed at the end of 2005 and had not been subject of approval by the European Commission (EC)

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- **National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF)** is based on the NDP and identifies the link between national and regional priorities, as approved by the EC in June 2007. NSRF is implemented through the Operational Programs, developed by the "Convergence" and "European Territorial Cooperation" objectives.

- Each Operational Program is divided into several **Priority Axes**, each axle having one or more major domains of intervention.

- NSRF is implemented by operational programs, developed by the **Convergence** and **European territorial cooperation**.

- **European territorial cooperation** objective includes: cross-border-, transnational- and interregional cooperation and has 7 Operational Programs.

Table 1. EU policies and related funds

Nr. crt.	Objectives of European Commissions	Funds allocated for EU policies		Funds value (billion €)
1	Cohesion Policy (CP)	Structural Funds	EFRD-European Fund for Regional Development	9,15
			For "Convergence"	0,45
			For "European Territorial Cooperation"	
		ESE - European Social Fund	3	
		CF-Cohesion Fund		6,5
2	Social policy and employment (PS)	ESF - European Social Fund		0,5
3	Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)	EFRD-European Fund for Regional Development		7,5
		EAGF - European Agricultural Guarantee Fund		5
4	Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)	EFF - European Fisheries Fund		0,2

Convergence objective has 7 Operational Programs: Sectoral Operational Program - Increase Economic Competitiveness (SOP-IEC), Sectoral Operational Program - Transport (SOP T), **Sectoral Operational Program for Environment (SOP Environment)**, Regional Operational Program (ROP), Sectoral Operational Program Human Resource Development (SOP HRD), Sectoral Operational Program Administrative Capacity Development (SOP ACD), Operational Program Technical Assistance (OP TA).

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2. Sectoral Operational Program Environment 2007-2013 (SOP Environment)

SOP Environment is one of the 7 operational programs and is a strategic document approved by the European Commission on 11 July 2007 to finance investments in environmental protection domain.

2.1. Objectives

SOP Environment's global objective is the improvement of living standards and environment, focusing in particular on meeting the environmental acquis [6].

Its specific objectives are presented below for each priority axis:

- Priority Axis 1 - Improve the quality and access to water and wastewater infrastructure, by providing water supply and wastewater services in most urban areas by 2015 and by setting efficient regional water and wastewater management structures, which means extension and modernization of water and wastewater systems

- Priority Axis 2 - Development of sustainable waste management systems, by improving waste management and reducing the number of historically contaminated sites in minimum 30 counties by 2015. This contains in the development of integrated waste management systems and rehabilitation of historically contaminated sites

- Priority Axis 3 - Reduction of negative environmental impact and mitigation of climate change caused by urban heating plants in most polluted localities by 2015 thus reduction of pollution and mitigation of climate change by restructuring and renovating urban heating systems towards energy efficiency targets in the identified local environmental hotspots

- Priority Axis 4 - Protection and improvement of biodiversity and natural heritage by supporting the protected areas management, including NATURA 2000 implementation, thus implementation of adequate management systems for nature protection”;

- Priority Axis 5 - Reduction of the incidence of natural disasters affecting the population, by implementing preventive measures in most vulnerable areas by 2015 which means implementation of adequate infrastructure of natural risk prevention in most vulnerable areas

- Priority Axis 6 “Technical Assistance” - This priority axis provides the necessary technical assistance program run in optimal conditions.

The Institutional framework for implementation of the SOP Environment consists of: Managing Authority, 8 Intermediate Bodies (one in each of the 8 development regions) and eligible Beneficiaries.

The Managing Authority for SOP Environment is one of the Ministry of Environment's department responsible for managing the structural funds allocated to the environment.

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At regional level there are 8 Intermediate Bodies that meet the duties delegated by the MA of SOP Environment in relation with the beneficiaries. The Intermediate Bodies are organized at the 8 development regions established as a unit without legal personality, financed from the state budget subordinated to the Ministry of Environment.

Eligible beneficiaries are public authorities, regional and local authorities (Municipalities, Local Councils and County Associations or Municipalities). Beneficiaries main role in the management and implementation of projects approved by the SOP Environment Project through Implementation Unit (PIU).

Intercomunitară Development Association (IDA) is established by the agreement and involvement of territorial-administrative units involved in the project.

2.2. Grant funding

The amount allocated for SOP Environment is 5610 billion euros, of which 4512 billion Euro is Community contribution and 1098 billion Euro is National contribution. Allocation of grant funding by axis is [6]:

- Priority axis 1 benefits of 2776 billion Euro from the Cohesion Fund (CF), 85% cofinancing from the EU.
- Priority axis benefits of 934 million Euro from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with an 80% co-finance from EU's.
- Priority axis 3 is having allocated 229 million euro from CF and only 50%, co-finance from EU's.
- Priority axis 4 is having allocated 172 million Euro from the ERDF, co-finance from EU's is 80%..
- Priority axis 5 is receiving 270 million Euro from CF with an 82% co-finance from EU's.
- Priority axis 6 benefits of 130 million Euro off ERDF, with 75% co-finance from EU's.

2.3. Priority Axis 1 – Water sector

The Priority Axis 1 refers to investments for extension and modernization of water and wastewater systems and benefits of the largest financial allocation for SOP Environment. [7, 8]

2.3.1. Major projects under preparation regarding Priority Axis 1 in Romania

The portfolio of projects under preparation in Romania includes approximately 40 major projects and can be grouped as follows:

- A. Water projects that have signed the funding contract in 2008 (Giurgiu - 31.07.08 - 72 million Euro; Turda-Campia Turzii - 23.09.08-80 million Euro; Cluj-Salaj - 30.09.08 - 197 million Euro; Gorj - october 2008- 90 mil Euro).

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B. Water projects that have received the financing decision in 2008 (Calarasi - 08.04.08 -100 million Euro; Tulcea - 28.05.08-114 million Euro; Sibiu - 09.07.08-90 million Euro; Teleorman - 29.08.08-122 million Euro).

C. Water projects that have been approved in 2009 (Olt – 13.01.09 - 73 million Euro).

D. Water projects for 2009: 31 applications for funding under preparation.

2.3.2. Major projects in North-West Region

Situation of projects regarding Priority Axis 1 - water-sector in the North-West Region is shown in Table 2.[9].

2.4. Priority Axis 3- Heating system. Pollution reduction

The funds allocated on this axis should support investment to reduce pollution from municipal heating plants.

Eligible activities include:

- Rehabilitation of boilers and turbines;
- The introduction of best available techniques to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide and carbon dioxide and dust - Introduction of an improved metering;
- Rehabilitation of slag deposits and non-ash - Rehabilitation of the distribution of hot water and heat.

By SOP Environment is expected to finance 8 rehabilitation projects on central heating systems. Thus, in a first step, by PHARE ESC 2005/017-553.04.03/08.01 were prepared three projects, the rehabilitation of heating system in Bacau, Iasi and Timisoara, the value of each project is between 50 and 100 million:

Further, in December 2008 the Ministry of Environment has launched a new technical assistance preparing the portfolio of projects "2006/018-147.04.03/08.03 PHARE ESC" in which it will organize a pre-trial by the end of 15 February to identify and select 5 eligible projects to prepare applications for funding.

Table 2. Situation of projects regarding Priority Axis 1 in the North-West Region

Project data	Bihar County	Bistrița Năsăud County	CJ Turda Cămpia- Turzii County	Cluj-Sălaj County	Maramureș County	Satu Mare County
1. Application documentes						
Master plan	Approved in March 2008.	Finalized and approved in April 2008	Finalized	Finalized	Finalized and expects approval by MM	Finalized and expects approval by MM
Feasibility Study	In the course of ompletion	In the course of completion	Completed	Completed	In work	In work
Investment Plan	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	-	-
EIA procedure	-	It was started	Completed	Completed	-	-
Financing application	-	-	Submitted in November 2007	Submitted in September 2007	-	-
Funding decision	-	-	Received in april 2008	Received in april 2008	-	-
Financing contract	-	-	Sign in september 2008	Sign in octomber 2008	-	-
2. Institutional structures						
Intercommunal Develop-ment Associ-ation (IDA)	Established in febr. 2008, has 21 teritorial administartiv (TAU)	Established in jan. 2008, are 49 TAU	Established in sept. 2007, are 9 TAU	Established in 2006, are 8 TAU	Established in jan. 2008, are 39 TAU	Is not establishe
Regional Operator (RO)	Established in 2006	Established in 2008	Established in January 2008	Is the first established in Romania in Jan. 06	Established	Established in Mai 07
Contract of delegation services	To be sign	Sign in sept. 2008	Sign in sept. 2007	Sign	Sign in sept. 2008	To be sign after estab. IDA
Project Implementation Unit –PIU	In the course of formation	Has 9 employers	Has 9 employers	Has 26 employers	In the course of formation	In the course of formation
3. Other activities required after submission of funding application						
Procurement packages	-	-	16	21	-	-
Publish adds to part. in SEAP	-	-	5 adds in sept. and oct. 2008	6 adds in 2008	-	-
Signing serv. contr., works or equipment	-	-	-	3 service contracts and 1 technical assis.	-	-
Submitted application for financing	-	-	-	November 2008	-	-
Received prefinance	-	-	-	December 2008	-	-

*Abordări conceptuale și metodologice***2.5. Priority Axis 5 - Flood and areas affected by erosion**

This axis aims to protect investment against flooding and to reduce coastal erosion. The only institution which can submit projects to access these funds is the National Administration "Romanian Waters".

Axis 5 has not been yet officially launched.

There are two technical assistance projects aimed to prepare them:

- National Strategy for flood protection and 3 applications
- Master Plan for the Prut river basin Barlad and the preparation of 8 applications.
- The Procedure of Environmental Impact Assessment was initiated

3. Conclusions

SOP Environment will contribute, during the period of 2007 - 2013, to the protection of climate environment (Priority Axis 3) and fluid (Priority Axis 1 and 5) though large scale and high value investment projects as follows:

- for Priority Axis 1 are allocated 2.776 billion Euro from Cohesion Fund (CF);
- for Priority axis 3 are allocated 229 million Euro from Cohesion Fund (CF);
- Priority axis 5 benefits of 270 million Euro from Cohesion Fund (CF).

Although Romania has recently acceded to the European Union, has become the first Member State with 9 major projects (over 25 million Euro) in the environmental sector which have received Funding decisions from the European Commission for the period 2007-2013, closer to 1 billion Euro's.

The North-Vest Region is in the first place from the 268 regions of the European Union, which has received the largest amount allocated by the funding decisions of the Cohesion Fund of 277 million Euro for the period 2007-2013.

Given the importance of absorption of EU funds available under SOP Environment in the period of 2007-2013, the Ministry of Environment proposed to approve all eligible projects in 2009, following the achievement of work and payment to be gradually made by 2013.

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