IMPLEMENTATION OF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES
IN ROMANIA THE PERIOD 2007 - 2013

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ABSTRACT: The access to Social and Cohesion Funds offers Romania a possibility
to develop the regions which are lagging behind, to modernize transport and environment
infrastructure, to support rural development, to create new employment opportunities, to
sustain social policies which will lead to the growth of the standard of life. This research work
displays a short presentation of structural instruments national level as well as on the
institutions responsible for their implementation, on the principles and stages specific for
projects with European financing. The existence of a strong institutional structure, capable to
ensure the formulation and application of public policies, to keep the coordination processes
inside ministries going, the implementation of national programs, increasing the application
capacity of partnerships between local administrations, is absolutely necessary.

KEY WORDS: structural funds, irredeemable financing, management authorities,
National Development Plan, convergence

1. INTRODUCTION

After 1989, Romania encountered unprecedented economic and social changes
with major effects on the country and population. The ever growing integration to the
world’s economic flows represents a dynamic process and Romania must be prepared
to render profitable all possible advantages especially in the current economic context
when most countries face negative economic situations. Romania has the opportunity,
because having registered before 2007 a GDP of approximate 35% of the European
average, to continue through the Structural instruments, the economic reform in order
to catch up with differences between the Romanian regions and the regions of the other
seven European countries.

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2. STRUCTURAL INSTRUMENTS USED IN ROMANIA FOR THE PERIOD 2007-2013

Programming Documents based on which the Structural funds are implemented are the following:

1. National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 (N.D.P.), represents the document for strategic planning and multiannual financial programming with the purpose of stimulating the economic and social development of the country in order to achieve the objective of economic and social cohesion. It is based on a careful analysis of the social and economic situation of the country and includes the priority fields of investments for medium term as well as the financial sources for supporting the said investments.

2. National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 - 2013 (N.S.R.F.), it is the strategic document based on which the intervention priorities of Structural and Cohesion Funds are established according to the strategic priorities set in NPD. It represents a link between the national development priorities and European priorities. The financial support of European Union is allotted according to the strategy set up in this document.

3. Operational Programmes (O.P.), represent programmes through which important elements of N.D.P. are implemented and which ensure the achievement of the general objective of the Regional National Strategy, namely the reduction of the disparities between Romania’s Regions. Operational programmes present major fields of intervention which are co-financed by Structural and Cohesion Funds.

According to The National Strategic Reference Framework Romania prepared seven operational programmes under the Objective „Convergence” and cooperates with neighbouring states and EU member states for another 11 operational programmes for Objective „European territorial Co-operation”.

A. Romanian Operation programmes for Objective „Convergence”:

- **Regional Operational Programme (ROP)** - is the programme which implements important elements of the National Strategy for Regional Development of NDP contributing together with the other Sectoral Operational Programmes to the achievement of the general objective of the Regional National Strategy namely the reduction of the disparities between Romania’s regions and member states of European Union. The strategic objective of the regional programme shall be achieved by a fund allocation differentiated in each region according to the development of the regions and by a close coordination with the actions executed by the other operational programmes. Thus from the total number of financial allocations related to Regional Operational Programme for the period 2007-2013, in amount of 4.383,4 million euro (out of which 3.726,0 million euro from European Funds), the regions will receive between the minimum of 8,86% for the Region Bucureşti Ilfov, considered the most developed region in Romania and 16,32% for the North-East Region, considered the poorest region of European Union (Figure 1);

- **Sectoral Operational Programme of Environment (SOP Environment)** - it is based on the objectives and priorities of environmental policies and European union
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infrastructure development policies with the purpose of protecting and improving the quality of the life environment in Romania which should materialize in efficient public services taking in account sustainable development and „the polluter pays”. For the period 2007-2013 the total funds allocated for this programme are in amount of 5.610,7 million euro (out of which 4.512,3 million euro from European Funds) for investments in the following fields: the improvement of sectoral systems for environmental management; the improvement of the living standards by ensuring public utilities according to the quality and quantity standards required within the water and waste sectors; improvement of systems; implementation of a proper infrastructure for the prevention of natural risks.

Figure 1. Regional allocation of the funds under the Regional Operational program

- **Sectoral Operational Programme for Transport (SOP-T)** - with the objective of promoting in Romania a sustainable transportation system which will allow rapid, efficient and safe transportation of persons and goods and services of a high quality level according to European standards. The funds allocated for this programme are in amount of 5.697,6 million euro (out of which 4.565,8 million euro from European Funds) for the improvement of road, railway, air, river and sea transportation systems with priority to the projects on the network TEN-T (Trans-European Network-Transport), so that it will improve the level of connection of the national and regional infrastructure to the international infrastructure.

- **Sectoral Operational Programme Increase of Economic Competitiveness (SOP-IEC)** - having as a main objective the increase of Romanian companies’ productivity in order to reduce the disparities compared to the average productivity of European union hoping to generate, as a consequence of the measures which are to be taken, an average annual growth of productivity by approximately 5,5% and to allow Romania to reach approx. 55% of the European Union average productivity by 2015. In order to reach this objective there have been allocated funds for the period 2007-2013 in total amount of 3.011,1 million euro (out of...
which 2,554.2 million Euros from European Funds). The programme aims at the stimulation of research – development – innovation activities with applicability in the economic field and increase of the energetic efficiency and the sustainable development of energetic sector.

- **Operational Programme Development of Human Resources (SOP-DHR)** - the objective of this programme aims at developing human capital and increasing its competitiveness by connecting education and lifelong learning to labour market and providing more opportunities to be on a modern and flexible labour market comprising 1,650,000 persons. Funds in total amount of 4,089,3 million euro (out of which 3,476,2 million euro European Funds). The investments in the improvement of the educational system and professional training will be sustained by correlating the educational offer with the request for workforce and the employers will be encouraged to invest in the employed workforce.

- **Operational Programme Administrative Capacity Development (OP-ACD)** - aims at the creation of a more efficient and effective public administration for the socio-economic benefit of Romanian society. This implies the improvement of the public policies cycle on the one hand and the improvement of quality and efficiency of the delivery of public services on a decentralised basis, on the other hand. Investments will be made for strengthening the public management capacity of ministries and for the implementation of modern methods in the field of human resources in order to improve individual performances of public servants. Funds in amount of 246.0 million euro (out of which 208.0 million euro European Funds) were allocated for this programme.

- **Operational Programme for Technical Assistance (PO-AT)** - with the objective of ensuring that the implementation of the structural instruments in Romania meets the principles and rules on partnership, programming, evaluation, communication, management, including financial management, monitoring and control on the basis of responsibilities shared between the Member States and the European Commission. Since it addresses needs identified for the whole system of management and implementation of structural funds, sometimes common for a range of actors, the programme is by its nature horizontal. The objective of the OPTA at the national level is to ensure support for the coordination and the implementation of the structural instruments in Romania, to ensure reliable managing and monitoring system for these instruments and to ensure appropriate communication to the general public about the European Funds. The funds allocated for the implementation of this programme for the period 2007-2013 are in total amount of 212.8 million euro (out of which 170.3 million euro European Funds), (Figure 2).

**B. Operational Programmes in co-operation with neighbouring states under the Objective „European Territorial co-operation”** can be structured as it follows:

- **Trans-border cooperation** - includes the Operational Programmes: Romania-Bulgaria, Romania-Serbia, Romania-Ukraine-Moldavia, Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Serbia as well as and The Black Sea Basin Operational programme, for co-operation between riparian states.
The first programmes will include actions focusing on:
- the development of physical infrastructure;
- consolidation of economic relations between neighbouring regions for a sustainable development, the development of tourism and border trade, promoting the integration of local markets;
- the development of social and cultural links between communities and their inhabitants by a common use of the educational, cultural and health infrastructure;
- the common finding and application and use of solution and means of defence against natural risks such as floods, land sloping, etc.

- **Trans-national co-operation** - which includes the Operational Programme South-East European Space, has the following objectives:
  - the development of co-operation networks in the SME and innovation sectors;
  - ensuring co-operation for integrated water management (protection of the coastal areas and sea resources, protection and administration of the Danube basin);
  - carrying out trans-national activities for the prevention of natural and technological risks.

- **Inter-regional co-operation**, includes the following Inter-Regional operational Programmes: INTERREG IV, URBACT II, EPSON 2013 and INTERACT II, having the following main objectives:
- modernization of public services;
- perpetuation of the process of exchanging information and good practices regarding urban development;
- carrying out studies and correlating the information obtained for the promotion of common interest.

3. OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

All potential challenges regarding structural and cohesion funds depend on the capacity of administrative and institutional structures to manage these funds, on the improvement of the physical and human capital necessary for the use of the funds, on the possibilities of central and local authorities to participate to the co-financing of the project financed by European funds.

In Romania all Operational Programmes have a similar management structure:

- **European Commission** - is the executive authority of European Union responsible for the initiation and implementation of programmes and policies of EU budget and legislative authorities;

- **The Certifying and Paying Authority** - is the organizational structure within the Ministry of Finance responsible for certifying the statements of expenditure communicated to European Commission and for receiving the funds transferred to Romania from European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund and for ensuring the transfer of these funds to beneficiaries and of the related pre-financing and co-financing funds allocated from the state budget;

- **The Managing Authority** - according to European Union requirements, each operational programme is co-ordinated by a Managing Authority which is responsible for the implementation of the entire Operational Programme as it follows:
  - makes sure that the projects have been selected in compliance with the criteria established by the approved Programme;
  - monitors and controls the consistency of the co-financed expenses and national and communitarian rules;
  - reports on regular basis with regards to the activities executed within the programme and ensures compliance with information and publicity requirements of structural instruments;

- **The Intermediary Body** - The Managing Authority is entitled to assign certain responsibilities to one or several intermediary Bodies. Their responsibility is mainly to monitor and assess individual projects;

- **The Beneficiaries** - are those institutions implementing individual projects or grant schemes co-financed from Structural and Cohesion Funds within an Operational Programme. The beneficiaries can be institutions of the local or central public administration, non-governmental organizations (NGO-s) or partners from the private sector depending on the specific of the operations financed by the said programme.
4. PRINCIPLES OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NON-REFUNDABLE FUNDS

The planning and implementation of structural funds is based on five fundamental principles:

- the principle of focusing on priority objective for the purpose of development, according to which the focus should be on those territories or populations facing the biggest difficulties so that a limited number of intervention fields can be established;
- the principle of programming or internal coherence, is the most laborious one, requiring a long period of time as it results in the elaboration of multiannual development programmes based on a joint decision;
- the principle of additionality or external coherence, according to which the support from structural funds should be additional and should not replace the resources used by the national, regional and local authorities for the development of their region and of the labour market;
- principle of partnership, according to which there is a close co-operation between European Commission and the national, regional or local managing authorities;
- principle of subsidiarity, according of this principle is that the managing authority appointed by the member state is entitled to select and monitor the projects which are to be financed.

5. SPECIFIC STAGES OF THE PROJECTS WITH EUROPEAN FINANCING

In 1992, the European Commission adopts a range of instruments necessary for the elaboration and management of a project named „Project Cycle Management“.

Based on these we identify the following stages:

- Identification, represents the process of elaboration and submission of project proposals by potential beneficiaries to intermediary bodies within each programme;
- Assessment, represents the examination of all project proposals submitted subject to the specific criteria of each programme, priority axes, field on intervention or operation awarding a score (Figure 3);
- Hierarchisation and Selection, implies the communication of the previous stage scores and the approval of the list of projects selected for financing;
- Negotiation and Signing, is a stage resulting in the signing of the financing contract by the beneficiary and the managing authority);
- Implementation and Monitoring, during this stage the activities proposed by the beneficiary are carried out and the managing authority is monitoring the compliance with the contract provisions, based on the reports;
- Final assessment, with the purpose of ensuring the beneficiary’s compliance with all details specified in the initial project as well as the contribution of the investment to the achievement of general and specific objectives of the operational programme.
Figure 3. Steps taken to obtain the financing and implementation

According to the specialists, a project is considered successful if the project continues to produce benefits to target groups for a long period of time after the closing of the main part of the grantor’s assistance.

REFERENCES:


