

Nature Conservation in Europe: Approaches and Lessons

Annex RO.3. Use of EU Funds for Nature Conservation in Romania

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European Regional Development Fund

The EU European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funds allocated for the Natura 2000 network were used in the first funding period (2007–2013) mainly for management planning, species and habitat mapping and education and awareness raising in protected areas. In the second (2014–2020) programming period the ERDF funds were used mainly for active biodiversity conservation measures in line with the 2014–2020 Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 (MoE, 2013), the *EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020* and the *National Strategy and the Action Plan for Conservation Biodiversity 2014 – 2020* (Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, 2014). The main types of actions that received funding were:

- a) Development of management plans/sets of conservation measures/action plans for protected areas and bird species not covered by previous projects (budget €44 825 412). The entire allocation was used in 50 projects, the main outputs from which were 89 management plans.
- b) Implementation of management plans/sets of conservation measures/action plans for protected areas and for Habitats Directive (HD) Annex I species. Only four projects were approved and implemented, using 4.7% of the €175 268 705 budget allocated for these activities. Land ownership rights and limited expertise in implementing conservation measures were the main challenges affecting project implementation.
- c) Species and habitat evaluation and monitoring, threat and pressure assessments, including invasive species etc (budget €20 million). Three projects were funded, providing information to fulfil reporting obligations according to Birds Directive (BD) Article 12, and the monitoring system needed to report on the conservation status of species and habitats according to HD Article 17, and support for invasive species management in accordance with EU procedures.
- d) Maintenance and restoration of degraded ecosystems and providing services (through afforestation, ecological corridors etc.) outside protected areas (budget €75.2 million). No projects were implemented under this funding line.

LIFE Programme

Between 1999 and 2017, 60 EU LIFE programme projects of relevance to Natura 2000 were financed, 45 of which were implemented entirely by Romanian beneficiaries and 15 in partnership with external entities. For those projects implemented between 1999 and 2013, Rozyłowicz *et al.* (2017) reported that 85 national and international organisations were involved (median per project was three), of which 51% were national, regional or local public administrations, 25% were NGOs, 15% scientific research institutions, 6% administrations of protected areas and 3% national public companies or industrial entities.

Most projects targeted the Continental, Alpine and Pannonian bioregions. Moreover, the Continental bioregion, the most extensive region, had the most Natura 2000 funded sites and the highest funding level. Within the Romanian geographical regions, the Carpathian area (especially the eastern Carpathians) benefitted from the highest numbers of projects and funds. The regions with the fewest projects were the eastern Moldavian Plateau and the southern Getic Plateau.

The most frequent measures promoted through LIFE projects aimed at:

- a) developing management plans and other planning documents (45 projects);

- b) education promotion, information and public participation (all projects);
- c) promotion of measures for active conservation, including through ecological restoration (36 projects);
- d) assessment of the conservation status of species and/or habitats (44 projects); and
- e) investments in enterprise infrastructure (16 projects).

Since 2015 the government has not provided co-financing for NGOs, hence the number of submitted project proposals decreased significantly.

References

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