

# Nature Conservation in Europe: Approaches and Lessons

## Annex RO.1. Protected Area Management in Romania

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Until legal changes in 2018, the Romanian protected area system used to be a delegated governance / management system with elements that are specific to collaborative governance / management, according to the IUCN governance categories (Borrini *et al.*, 2013). The national authority for the environment signed contracts with different organisations (e.g. public institutions, NGOs, universities, research institutes and museums) for the management of protected areas.

Administration teams had to be set up for National Parks and Nature Parks and for complex Natura 2000 sites (i.e. for protected areas in IUCN categories II or V). Organisations applying for the management of such protected areas had to prove that they had the capacity to attend to the management objectives of the protected area. Each team was advised by a Scientific Council (specialists in relevant domains, sometimes representatives of different scientific institutions) and an Advisory Council (representatives of different stakeholders). Custodianships were legally established for protected areas in IUCN categories I, III and IV, sometimes for category V. Protected areas without custodians or administrative teams were the responsibility of county level Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs), but these did not have any dedicated management resources.

Management of most of the National and Natural Parks was subcontracted to Romsilva. Until the changes in 2018, 68% of protected areas (including Natura 2000 sites) had custodians and administrative teams established by different organisations: county councils (16 protected areas), local authorities (9), local EPAs (15), universities, research institutes and museums (14) (Rozyłowicz *et al.*, 2017; Nita *et al.*, 2018). They managed protected areas on their own or in partnership with other organisations.

The former governance system allowed many organisations to have a very active role in protected areas and have important responsibilities, such as management planning, law enforcement, community outreach and education. They also raised important financial resources for management activities. Until 2018, about 130 organisations were managing 760 protected areas, with financial resources secured by each of them. Among these, there were 62 NGOs (custodians for 126 protected areas), 18 hunting and fishing associations, 17 companies and 16 private forest district managers, as well as Romsilva (Rozyłowicz *et al.*, 2017). Unfortunately, the efforts of these organisations were not supported by the Romanian government, as none of the protected area administrations were supported financially, or technically, by government agencies and institutions. Romania had no funding line in the national budget for protected area management prior to 2018, nor a coordinated approach based on a vision or a strategic plan. This showed a lack of political interest in these valuable Romanian protected areas.

The delegated management system was not fully functional, partly because the delegated entities lacked state financial support for their protected area responsibilities (Popescu *et al.*, 2014; Rozyłowicz *et al.*, 2017, 2019), and because there was no functional coordination entity in place, nor a functional system for evaluating management effectiveness. The relative inefficiency of the delegated management system led to 134 management contracts being cancelled between 2014 and 2017. This reflected both a weak selection system for the delegated entities and a lack of monitoring and assessment of their activities and performance.

Although the delegation of protected area management to various private entities had been a trend within other former communist European countries (Stanciu and Ioniță, 2014), Romania made significant changes in its legislation in 2018 and changed the approach to a predominantly centralised protected area management system (as further described in NCE Chapter 26, Stanciu *et al.*, 2023). The

newly established National Agency for Natural Protected Areas (ANANP)<sup>1</sup> became the main management entity for protected areas — a major change by the government without any consultation and transparency that has imposed a centralised protected areas governance system in which NGOs and other private entities have no influence over economic interests. Furthermore, ANANP has very limited resources and was not set up to manage individual protected areas.

The councils that were set up to advise on protected areas are not functional in those areas that were taken over by ANANP, but still exist, even if not fully functional, in the National Parks and Natural Parks managed by the National Forest Authority, Romsilva or other organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> Agenția Națională pentru Arii Naturale Protejate.