

desk RESEARCH

Yes, that's our cover, because we
have to use all to use less.

greenACT

PREFACE

GreenACT is a 20 months' project designed to enhance ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION and AWARENESS of YOUNG PEOPLE through the organisation of SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMME to familiarize young people with the idea of environmental citizenship, based on the fact that the future depends on each and one of us by acting responsibly and positively towards our environment and developing sustainable solutions for addressing environmental challenges. In a period where Earth faces the consequences of climate change and global warming crisis and the need for mitigation of climate change is emerging, Green-ACT aims to support further these YOUTH INITIATIVES and raise more awareness in the 6 countries, by educating young people on environmental issues, inspire them in developing a firm ecological mind-set, and invite them to have a positive impact in their communities as active agents.

The partnership is composed of 6 partners from 6 countries: Romania, Lithuania, Cyprus, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Portugal
Furthermore, it aims:



- o To promote the idea of establishing SUMMER SCHOOLS for raising young people's environmental awareness;
- o To set up the GreenACT MOVEMENT (a network of young activists) for coordinating their actions and engaging citizens;
- o To build/increase the capacity of partner organizations to take action regarding the reduction of waste in the partner countries by encouraging local communities to recycle and reuse.
- o To equip youth workers with new sustainable environmental skills in order to empower more young people;
- o To facilitate brainstorming on challenges and possible solutions of topics such as alternative forms of socio-economy, biodiversity and food production, sustainable production and consumption, transport, etc.

The Desk Research template will be developed in each partner country with the purpose of recording gaps in policies related to environmental protection and awareness in partner countries and whether there are any good practices or not. As was well known from before, there is a lack of reports based on what young people's opinion on climate crisis, eco-lifestyle, basic environmental issues, environmental awareness and reports to show their level of environmental education and awareness. Furthermore, this desk research will show the policies or good practices applied in the 6 partner countries for tackling the climate crisis and environmental degradation at the local level. The Desk Research along with the survey that will be later on realised, there will be provided evidence-based data in the participating countries on young people's attitudes towards climate crisis and eco-lifestyle and the EU policies in the 6 countries related to the protection of the environment.

The Desk Research template follows the below given structure, proposed by the Intellectual Output leader partner, D.G.T. Association, in order to allow an easier comparability of reported information and outcomes across GreenACT partner countries and includes the following chapters (that each will have 2 subchapters) :

- o Chapter 1: Recording gaps in policies related to environmental protection and awareness Bulgaria
- o Chapter 2: Best practices in policies related to environmental protection and awareness Bulgaria

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although Romania has already taken some important steps in terms of implementing policies at a national level, as developed below in this desktop research, there still exist some gaps. Some of the biggest challenges that the Government and the Ministry of Environment have stumbled upon are the lack of consistent financial support, faulty implementation of certain policies, laws or legislations, not following the guidelines all the way through and not having a proper administrative capability in order to properly sustain the implementation process of each policy. Despite the fact that significant EU funding has been made available to improve the situation in a variety of environmental sectors, it appears that there is still much space for improvement in terms of administrative capability and project planning, implementation, and prioritization. As a result, despite the enormous demands in the environmental area, there is a risk of money being lost due to either decommitment or reallocation of funding to other priorities. Low efficiency characterizes public investment, notably in the preparation and prioritization of projects.

Regarding the best practices in Romania, in correlation to policies, action programs and initiatives, according to the Environmental Implementation Review Report, Romania has managed to make some progress in 2019. In the West sector through the adoption of the National West Management Plan in December 2017 and the setting up of a National Waste Committee to strengthen and better coordinate actions in the sector. Further actions are needed to meet the EU targets and develop sound projects. When it comes to the Water Legislation sector, even though there have already made some noticeable changes, there is still room for improvement in terms of the implementation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the quantity and quality of drinking water.

Several green infrastructure projects have come to fruition. Connect Carpathians — Enhancing landscape connectivity for brown bear and wolf through a regional network of NATURA 2000 sites in Romania is a notable example. The project, which spans from September 2013 to February 2019, aims to improve landscape connection in a western Romanian natural corridor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN ROMANIA

Deși România a făcut deja câțiva pași importanți în ceea ce privește implementarea politicilor la nivel național, așa cum s-a dezvoltat mai jos în această cercetare, există încă unele lacune. Unele dintre cele mai mari provocări de care s-au împiedicat Guvernul și Ministerul Mediului sunt lipsa unui sprijin financiar consistent, implementarea defectuoasă a anumitor politici, legi sau legislații, nerespectarea indicațiilor și lipsa unei capacități administrative adecvate pentru a susține în mod corespunzător procesul de implementare a fiecărei politici. În ciuda faptului că s-au pus la dispoziție fonduri UE semnificative pentru a îmbunătăți situația într-o varietate de sectoare de mediu, se pare că există încă mult spațiu de îmbunătățire în ceea ce privește capacitatea administrativă și planificarea, implementarea și stabilirea priorităților de proiect. Drept urmare, în ciuda cererilor enorme din zona de mediu, există riscul pierderii banilor, fie din dezinteres, fie din realocarea finanțării către alte priorități. Eficiența redusă caracterizează investițiile publice, în special în pregătirea și prioritizarea proiectelor.

În ceea ce privește cele mai bune practici din România, în corelație cu politicile, programele de acțiune și inițiativele, conform Raportului de revizuire a implementării mediului, România a reușit să facă unele progrese în 2019. În sectorul vestit prin adoptarea Planului național de gestionare vest în decembrie 2017 și înființarea unui comitet național de deșeuri pentru a consolida și coordona mai bine acțiunile din sector. Sunt necesare acțiuni suplimentare pentru a îndeplini obiectivele UE și a dezvolta proiecte solide. Când vine vorba de sectorul legislației în domeniul apei, chiar dacă au făcut deja unele modificări notabile, există încă loc de îmbunătățire în ceea ce privește punerea în aplicare a Directivei privind tratarea apelor uzate urbane și cantitatea și calitatea apei potabile.

Mai multe proiecte de infrastructură ecologică s-au realizat. Connect Carpathians - Îmbunătățirea conectivității peisajului pentru ursul brun și lupul printr-o rețea regională de situri NATURA 2000 din România este un exemplu notabil. Proiectul, care se întinde din septembrie 2013 până în februarie 2019, își propune să îmbunătățească conexiunea peisagistică într-un coridor natural din vestul României.

INTRODUCTION

Although Romania entered in 2007 in the European Union and there has been significant and notable evolution, the country still lacks proper forms of implementation at the full capacity. After 2007, Romania has joined multiple regulations, policies and laws at EU level, in order to raise the environmental protection and conservation standards, such as EUTR (EU Timber Regulation) and ABS Regulation (Access and Benefit Sharing), as explained below in the document.

Despite the already existing improvements in the environment sector, Romania still has room for more development. There are a series of regulations, legislations, laws and policies, however, not all of them have been properly implemented through their period of time, this resulting in the creation of some gaps at a national level or with the other EU states. When it comes to the EUTR, only a certain percentage of the total number of checks has been made when it comes to timber import and export.

When it comes to an explanation thus why these gaps exist, the main sources, as shown below, are the low administrative capability at national level, as proven by the “Early Warning Report” in 2018 and the non-reliable funding, as it is not maintained as it should be, according to the fact that the country continues to rely on EU funding.

1. Recording gaps in policies related to environmental protection and awareness Romania

Key findings of Chapter 1:

- Already existing laws, policies and ordinances
- Faulty implementation of some policies and legislations
- Causes of the existing gaps

Following Romania's entry into the European Union in 2007, the country's environmental legislation became more solid. Laws, as well as government ordinances and judgments, typically establish the major norms and regulations. Romania is also a signatory to and has ratified a number of bilateral, regional, and international environmental conventions and treaties, such as the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the 1973 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships and its 1978 Protocol, and so on. Secondary legislation was passed after that, typically in the form of ministerial orders. the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (or its predecessors).

The requirement for one or more environmental licenses is decided by the sort of activity being carried out, the expected environmental effect, and the environmental elements that may be impacted.

The legislation in Romania distinguishes between activities that have a major environmental impact and those that do not. By reference to their aim of activity, MESD Order No. 1798/2007 on the approval of the Procedure for the granting of the environmental permission defines the activities regarded to have a substantial influence on the environment. For the development and commissioning of operations that have an environmental impact, several environmental licenses are necessary. Other permissions may be necessary based on the location of an activity in relation to water courses or the requirement to utilize or discharge waters as part of the regular course of the activity.

The Environmental Protection Law and Law No. 107/1996 – the Waters Law – establish the basic regulations for water protection. Secondary legislation in the sector contains additional rules and regulations, such as laws on water source protection, acquiring water-related licenses or complying with notification duties, researching groundwater contamination and remediation, and so on. Companies are required by the Waterways Law to get specific water-related licenses if their operations are connected to or have a direct influence on waters. A water management permission is a document that must be acquired prior to the commissioning and operation of new projects that are built on water or in

connection with ground or subterranean water, shore line, or other water-related areas. This agreement protects the rights of the titleholder to use surface waters for drinking and industrial purposes, navigation, energy generation, and so on, as well as to discharge utilized waters. The Environmental Protection Law and the Waters Law both make it illegal to introduce polluting substances into bodies of water unless otherwise allowed by law. Administrative penalties of up to RON 100,000 may be imposed for violations of the Environmental Protection Law and/or the Waters Law.

Romania has implemented Directives 2003/87/EC on greenhouse gas emissions trading and Directive 2004/101/EC connecting the EU emission trading scheme to the Kyoto Protocol's procedures. The European Commission and the Romanian government have accepted the allocation plans for the years 2005–2007 and 2008–2012. Market participants, on the other hand, have only recently begun to demonstrate interest in the operation of the emissions trading program. The functioning of the carbon trading program is one of several initiatives Romania has taken to combat climate change. Romania committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 8% by 2012, relative to 1989 levels, under the Kyoto Protocol. Romania is actively involved in the implementation of several Kyoto Protocol measures, in addition to the carbon trading program. Romania, in particular, has completed a number of Joint Implementation Projects with great success.

The Government Emergency Ordinance No. 78/2000 on the Waste Regime establishes a broad framework in this area, which is supplemented by rules governing landfills, waste incineration, waste shipment, waste electrical and electronic equipment, end-of-life vehicles, packaging waste, and waste from batteries and accumulators, among other things. Transitional periods for implementing various EU waste rules have been agreed upon in areas such as waste transportation, landfills, waste electrical and electronic equipment, waste incineration, and packaging waste. To perform waste management activities, businesses must have an environmental permit or an IPPC permit. Transporting waste, for example, must be done using trucks that have the required operating licenses. Operators of landfills must show that they have the necessary financial means to run and close their facilities. Some sectors mandate businesses to ensure the recovery and recycling of a certain percentage of waste created by their products.

Local Agenda 21 is a participatory planning process in the field of sustainable development, aimed at integrating sustainable development values and principles into government policies and actions, involving citizens in decision-making at the local level, and promoting partnerships between social sectors. Since 1998, Romania has created local and regional environmental action plans (PRAM / PLAM). Their position has changed over time as a result of Romania's compliance with European criteria and management of structural and cohesion funds earmarked for environmental preservation.

1.1. Already existing gaps in Romania

As stated in the 2017 EIR report, there are still difficulties to be resolved in terms of administrative capability, and this can be seen in many environmental sectors.

The fact that Romania, despite only joining the EU in 2007, is one of the countries with the highest level of environmental violations, mainly in the areas of waste and wastewater management (e.g. operation of substandard landfills and lack of urban wastewater facilities), and air pollution (e.g. PM10 emission limit values being exceeded), indicates that implementation remains the main challenge.

The legislation's implementation on the ground remains a difficulty, owing to a lack of planning, coordination, and enough financing, among other factors. In numerous sectors, notably waste management and waste water treatment, the lack of effective law is an issue. Romania is urged to make better use of EU funding to address these issues, as well as to enhance the coordination of its administrative procedures and to guarantee that environmental initiatives are adequately prepared and prioritized. There have already been numerous public complaints.

Overall, legislation has been implemented at a slow pace. The implementation of projects, including environmental projects, has been severely hampered due to insufficient planning for land acquisition, utility relocation, delayed/contested tendering procedures, and general contract management difficulties caused by a lack of administrative and technical capacity.

On the request of the Romanian Ministry of Environment, the inaugural TAIEX-EIR159 peer-to-peer event took place in Bucharest on the 22nd and 24th of January 2018. The request was in response to a need for more knowledge in landfill closure and rehabilitation in order to deal with an ongoing infringement case. The Commission chose Irish specialists to assist their Romanian colleagues since Ireland had effectively overcome a comparable crisis in waste management approximately 10-15 years ago. The Irish specialists shared their knowledge with the Ministry of the Environment, as well as at a workshop with representatives from the National Environmental Protection Agency, the National Environmental Guard, and county councils. This field trip provided an opportunity to share information on how to overcome legal and financial barriers to effectively shutting landfills and ensuring adequate aftercare. Furthermore, the Irish specialists gave guidance on how to tackle the problem strategically and effectively manage the process.

Despite the EUTR existing (EU Timber Regulation) that prohibits the placing the illegally harvested timber on the EU market and the obligation of EU members to organize frequent checks on traders and operators in order to spot the non-compliance and offer penalties, Romania, during 2015-2017, has only

conducted 40% of the operators that work with domestic timber checks (total number of 3759, meaning there have been made only 1503 checks) and 63% of the operators that import timber checks (total of 126, meaning there have been made around 80 checks).

Romania has appointed responsible authorities for genetic resources and implemented fines for infringements of the EU ABS Regulation, which transposes the Nagoya Protocol's mandatory compliance procedures into the EU legal system. The administration is still working on establishing a risk-based check strategy. Romania, on the other hand, has yet to file a due diligence disclosure or impose any fines. Romania has yet to submit its first report to the Commission under the ABS Regulation. As a result, the country must meet its reporting obligations.

The present institutional framework, according to Romania's Department for Sustainable Development, is not suitable for the implementation and monitoring of SDGs (Department of Sustainable Development). It will create and implement a project to establish specific structures to execute the SDGs.

Another difficulty that also generated gaps is the incapacity to guarantee a proper funding and to also maintain it. Existing funding shortages in sectors like waste management, green infrastructure, and biodiversity are causing delays in the proper implementation of EU environmental laws and regulations. The country should consider and treat as a priority this aspect due to the already existing implementation gaps. Romania continues to rely substantially on EU funds and lending prospects, according to the 2019 EIR. Nonetheless, administrative capacity, project preparation/maturation, and prioritization are all lacking in the environmental sector. This limits the ability to use money that is readily available and desperately required.

Reinforcing administrative capability in some sectors would be critical to development, particularly in the areas of waste management and environmental conservation. According to the Commission's 2018 "Early Warning Report," the country is at risk of failing to meet the 50 percent municipal trash recycling objective by 2020. Recycling and resource efficiency are still poor in Romania, and a large number of substandard landfills must be closed and rehabilitated. The effective conservation and protection of Natura 2000 sites is required for the implementation of the Nature Directives. The Natura 2000 network in Romania needs an adequate administrative capacity structure as well as up-to-date information and data.

Romania is currently failing to meet the requirements of the Directive on Urban Waste Water Treatment. According to the most recent reporting, just 2.5% of Romania's waste-water load was collected in compliance with the Directive (eight agglomerations), with six agglomerations meeting the secondary treatment criteria and only one meeting the more rigorous treatment requirements. By the end of 2013,

189 agglomerations had failed to meet the collection criteria, and almost 200 had failed to meet the treatment standards set out in this Directive.

In terms of awareness and visibility, most of the policies, regulations or practices are not promoted to the large public. There are little to few campaigns, no visibility whatsoever, actions that have as consequence the fact that people are not aware of them, neither of the existence, nor the implementation process. In addition to that, there is very little data available on the Internet in order to sustain these implementations and the stages accomplished.

2. BEST PRACTICES IN POLICIES RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AWARENESS IN ROMANIA

Key findings of Chapter 2:

- Significant progress in environmental protection in Romania in 2019
- Good practices existing in Romania

2.1. Already existing best practices in ROMANIA

Romania has a diversified geography and diverse habitats (ranging from wetlands to forests), resulting in a wide range of species. While Romanian legislation fully mirrors EU environmental criteria, its implementation on the ground is hampered by a lack of planning, coordination, and enough money, among other factors.

According to the Environmental Implementation Review, Romania made significant progress in environmental protection in 2019:

- in the waste sector, with the adoption of the national waste-management plan in December 2017 and the setting up of a National Waste Committee to strengthen and better coordinate actions in the sector. Further actions are needed to meet the EU targets and develop sound projects.
- to meet the standards set by EU water legislation. There is scope, however, for further improvement with regard to implementation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the quantity and quality of drinking water.

Several green infrastructure initiatives have taken shape. According to The Environmental Implementation Review the most important are:

- Rural Development EAFRD funds total EUR 3.252 billion under the national rural development program, accounting for 40% of the entire budget for environmental measures. Only 11% of the budget is allocated to agri-environment-climate policies. The Rural Development Programme (RDP) has a sound intervention logic that connects to its contribution to environmental legislation implementation. Romania introduced new sub-measures under its agri-environmental commitments in 2018, aimed at protecting I agricultural lands that are important feeding grounds for the Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Aquila Pomarina*), ecological refuges on arable land for common bird

species, and agricultural lands that are important protection areas for the Great Bustard (*Aquila Pomarina*) (*Otis Tarda*).

- The EUR 224 million available for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for 2014-2020 contains more than EUR 168 million for allocation to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The Romanian fisheries operational program prioritizes environmental sustainability, resource efficiency, innovation, competitiveness, and knowledge-based fisheries (EUR 17.8 million), and environmentally sustainable, resource efficient, innovative, competitive, and knowledge-based aquaculture (EUR 17.8 million) (EUR 112.3 million).
- The Facility for Connecting Europe (CEF). The CEF is a crucial EU funding tool designed to focus investment into European transportation, energy, and digital infrastructure in order to address identified gaps and bottlenecks while also promoting sustainability. Romania had secured agreements for EUR 1.2 billion for CEF projects by the end of 2017.
- Since the program's inception in 2014, Romania has benefited from Horizon 2020 financing. As of January 2019, 343 participants had been awarded a total of EUR 55.5 million for projects related to environmental challenges under the Societal Challenges work programs. Climate and biodiversity expenditure is evident across Horizon 2020, in addition to the work programs described above. Projects accepted for funding in all Horizon 2020 working programmes in Romania included EUR 44 million for climate action (32.5 percent of the overall Horizon 2020 commitment to Romania) and EUR 6 million for biodiversity-related initiatives until December 2018. (4.7 percent of the Horizon 2020 contribution to the country).
- The LIFE project 'Connect Carpathians – Enhancing landscape connection for brown bear and wolf through a regional network of NATURA 2000 sites in Romania' aims to improve landscape connectivity for brown bear and wolf. The project, which spans from September 2013 to February 2019, aims to improve landscape connection in a western Romanian natural corridor. It is the sole way for flagship species like bears and wolves to traverse between the Apuseni Mountains and the southern Carpathians, and it is made up of a network of Natura 2000 sites. Building the capacity of responsible agencies and Natura 2000 site administrators in landscape scale conservation; involving local stakeholders in connectivity management; securing land to develop linkage corridors; and managing corridors to create a carnivore-permeable landscape are among the project's activities.
- The European Investment Bank (EIB) is a European EIB loan to Romania in total of almost EUR 10.4 billion¹²⁴ between 2013 and 2017. The EIB group (European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund) invested EUR 1.31 billion in Romania's economy just last year. The environment received EUR 110.2 million, or 8% of the total.
- European Strategic Investment Fund (EFSI) The EFSI is a project aimed at bridging the EU's current investment gap. In Romania, the EFSI mobilized more than EUR 652 million in January 2019. This is expected to result in an additional EUR 2.7 billion in investments¹²⁶. GreenFiber International SA, a

producer of recycled Polyethylene Terephthalate, will receive a EUR 7.5 million EFSI loan from the EIB. This circular economy project will result in the creation of 280 full-time employment and an increase of over 50 000 tonnes of waste collected and processed in Romania each year.

- Environmental funding at the national level In 2016, Romania spent EUR 1.064 billion for environmental protection, a 33.4 percent reduction from 2015¹²⁷. Waste management operations received 47.4 percent of these subsidies (the annual average percentage of environmental spending allocated to waste management spending in the EU is 49.7 percent). Wastewater management received EUR 233 million (21.9 percent of total) while pollution abatement received EUR 294 million (27.6 percent of total). Biodiversity and landscape protection received 0.6 percent of total environmental spending (EUR 5.9 million). Between 2012 and 2016, the general government spent EUR 6 120 billion on environmental protection.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While Romanian legislation fully mirrors EU environmental criteria, its implementation on the ground is hampered by a lack of planning, coordination, and enough money, among other factors.

Despite formal progress thanks to the implementation of the national waste management plan in December 2017, the 2019 EIR demonstrates that trash management remains a major concern for Romania. When compared to the trend indicated in the 2017 EIR, recycling and resource efficiency are still poor. Romania is in danger of not meeting the 2020 municipal trash recycling target of 50%, according to the Commission's "Early Warning Report " (2018). The circular economy is still underdeveloped, despite its promise, as evidenced by a conference on the subject held in the country in 2017. Additional steps must be established and fully executed, while public awareness of the situation must be raised.

In terms of water quality, Romania's water policy still has to be improved in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. It also continues to struggle with implementing the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and improving the quantity and quality of drinking water. The Commission decided to open an infringement proceeding due to the low compliance rates with the 2013 and 2015 intermediate deadlines set down in the Accession Treaty. According to the Accession Treaty, Romania's final deadline to comply with the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive is 31 December 2018, and the problem is certain to worsen.

Romania continues to rely substantially on EU funds and lending prospects, according to the 2019 EIR. Nonetheless, administrative capacity, project preparation/maturation, and prioritization are all lacking in the environmental sector. This limits the ability to use money that is readily available and desperately required.

Several green infrastructure projects have come to fruition. Connect Carpathians – Enhancing landscape connectivity for brown bear and wolf through a regional network of NATURA 2000 sites in Romania is a notable example. The project, which spans from September 2013 to February 2019, aims to improve landscape connection in a western Romanian natural corridor.

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