

MAGAZINE

Regio

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THE JOURNEY CONTINUES!

4 MA ROP, a team
as large as an
institution

14 Sinaia chooses
green transport

24 € 266 million for systematic
registration of rural
properties

Editorial

ABSORPTION, MONEY AND COMPETENCE

BOGDAN ȚIGĂU

The real success of a development approach is confirmed when its medium and long-term impact goes beyond its financial scope. What we want, when planning such an approach, whether it is a one-off investment or an €8.4 billion programme, is to achieve, in the long term, a useful effect worth more than €1 for every Euro spent.

Therefore, when a programme effectively absorbs the resources it was assigned and achieves its objectives, we can say that, in fact, that programme exceeds its objectives, because, as we have seen over more than 20 years of institutional practice, it is not only money that is absorbed.

Experience is also assimilated, and over time it becomes an individual and collective competence. These competences are then consolidated in what we call institutional memory and continue to accumulate and build on themselves indefinitely. Competence is a resource that gives money significance.

Consequently, talking about absorption does not limit to money. REGIO beneficiaries, from local public authorities to entrepreneurs, have built up an important capital of expertise that allows them to look optimistically to future opportunities. Alongside them, we have also gained experience in the institutions that are part of the programme implementation system, because this transfer has always been mutual.

The impact of REGIO as a programme will be measured and analysed after its completion in all its aspects. But what we do know for sure now is that REGIO generates experience and expertise for all those involved, and the usefulness of these factors is invaluable. With this belief, we have started the final year of REGIO's implementation, determined to see it through, together with all our partners.

We have also reached the last issue of this publication. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported us in our information efforts and assure them that we will see them again on different channels and new information materials.

The journey continues!



SUMMARY

4 ▶ MA ROP, a team as large as an institution

10 ▶ Energy efficient school in Miercurea Ciuc

12 ▶ New building for study at the University of Bucharest

14 ▶ Sinaia chooses green transport

16 ▶ “Transylvanian Gateway” at European standards

18 ▶ Upgraded roads for better access to the Danube Delta

20 ▶ Infrastructure development increases investments in spa tourism in Techirghiol
22 Computer simulation, the key to developing innovative solutions

24 ▶ € 266 million for systematic registration of rural properties

26 ▶ Corvins’ Castle, the tourist symbol of Hunedoara: rebirth in the 21st century

MA ROP, A TEAM AS LARGE AS AN INSTITUTION

BOGDAN ȚIGĂU

ROP (Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme) began more than 20 years ago, when Romania had not yet become a Member State of the EU, but was granting pre-accession non-reimbursable financial assistance through the European Instruments Phare, ISPA and SAPARD. The governmental institutions of the 1990s had to undergo a rapid learning and adaptation process to acquire the necessary skills required by Romania's status as a candidate country and the responsibilities of managing the funds entrusted to us. Political and legislative coherence, procedural rigour and institutional responsibility were required, which entailed training a body of specialists ready to hold important tasks and responsibilities, at an unprecedented level in Romania. Therefore, an agency has been created for the implementation of Economic and Social Cohesion Phare

programme. And that agency was the institution that carried out about 3,500 projects, worth more than 740 million Euro, which contributed considerably to Romanian's accession to the EU, and highly contributed to the development of crucial expertise. After January 1 2007, many of them joined the Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Programme. At that time, as a few years before, we were in a pioneering situation.

Where do you start such a complex, rigorous and important endeavour for your country? With so much at stake, so much money and so much responsibility?

We started with ourselves. Firstly, by building on institutional memory and lessons learned in the pre-accession period. We organised ourselves, we built our legislative, programmatic and procedural framework.

We have capitalised on all our individual and collective experiences and translated them into rules and principles, both for ourselves and for our partners and beneficiaries. Transparency, legality, equal opportunities and, above all, competence and performance were the main principles that guided our approach. We worked at the highest standards, which subsequently turned into normality, because we realised that everything we have been doing is less about us and much more about the benefit our programme was bringing to the country. We knew, even when we were working with Phare funds, that projects should not just be one-off interventions with no economic and social impact, and that resources must not be wasted just to achieve scriptural targets and justify our jobs. We were aware that the projects should be designed so that they bring add-





ed value to the areas, communities and fields they address. The first ROP (2007-2013) benefited of €4.3 billion, of which we managed to justify and bring 92% into the country. This was the best performing programme with ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) funding in our country and among the best in Europe. The spending level was comparable to that of the old Member States experienced in using structural and cohesion funds.

Although there was no time to celebrate, because the new programme was already taking shape, the results we have achieved with REGIO 2007-2013 have given us the certainty that what we do matters, that our projects have an impact and that they mean a lot for the most important areas of a country - economic development, transport and urban mobility, health, education, culture and social services.

This conviction, which the success of the first ROP gave us, was a decisive factor for what we set out to do with REGIO 2014-2020. With new lessons learnt, building on recent experience, we committed ourselves to take the new programme to a level that seemed unrealistic for some people.

Does Romania have the absorption capacity for such a large financial allocation? Is there the institutional capacity to implement such a programme? Can beneficiaries generate so many sound and qualitative projects? Can the ROP implementation system cope with such a challenge?

The results at the beginning of the last year of the programme's implementation show that the answer to all these questions is YES. Perhaps the most remarkable difference between Regio 2014-2020 and the previous programme, apart from the double financial size of the new one, was that the new programme expanded its vision to new areas of interest and opened up to new categories of potential beneficiaries. The new programme introduced new concepts of great complexity, relatively unexplored in our country, such as innovation and technology transfer, smart specialisation, support and valorisation of technological and scientific research. The measures to support the entrepreneurial environment in the old programme have evolved in the same spirit, now focusing on innovation, efficiency and sustainable growth, with a view to economic di-

versification, the establishment and expansion of advanced production and service providing capacities, not just sporadic and unsubstantial support for Romanian businesses in their struggle for survival on the market. We asked our colleagues within the contracting department of the MA ROP, how many of the 8,000 financing contracts they have processed on ROP 2014-2020 are concluded with private beneficiaries from the entrepreneurial environment, the answer is very relevant, considering what Regio represents for the Romanian business environment: 4,600 funding contracts, worth €2.62 billion! This information is also illustrative of the work of our colleagues, who, in order to achieve such results, launched and ran 145 calls for projects, and processed more than 16,000 funding applications, which resulted in over-contracting by up to 150% of the programme allocated amount.

From our colleagues in planning department, you can learn that the whole Regio 2014-2020 programme has been designed in an integrated, multi-sectoral approach, interlinking visions from all areas important for Romania. For example, the idea of

PROJECTS



energy efficiency, promoted by the programme, is not only found in the dedicated priority axis, but in all the funded areas, whether we are talking about the countless green public transport means that Regio has sent to the country's cities, the photovoltaic panels that help companies

to reduce their energy costs, or the thermal rehabilitation of a huge number of public and residential buildings. Regio's integrated vision is also evident in its infrastructure interventions, where any financed road, hospital or school must be part of a medium and long-term strategic plan that highlights synergies be-

tween specific initiatives. Seen as a whole, Regio 2014-2020 is more than just a financing programme with European funds, it is a strategic platform for sustainable development, which, by the way it was conceived, predetermined the emergence of specific platforms of strategic vision at local level, far more advanced



PROJECTS



than any type of planning that has existed in Romania to date. We know that a lack of vision leads to wasted resources and that coherent planning facilitates all subsequent stages of the programme management cycle. In fact, the above parameter on the percentage of over-contracting is also indicative of the work of our colleagues in the planning depart-

ment, who have managed to build an attractive programme for the beneficiaries, so that their interest considerably exceeded the available financial allocation.

Do you want to know what happens to the more than 8,000 projects funded by Regio 2014-2020?

We can tell you that many of them have been completed, successfully reaching their objectives, their success being based on two factors.

The first factor is that our beneficiaries are highly competent and skilled.. It is true that we have known each other for a long time, at



PROJECTS



an institutional level, since the pre-accession period, as we explained earlier.

The second factor is that as competent as our beneficiaries are, so are our colleagues in the implementing departments of the MA ROP. For Regio 2014-2020, colleagues in the expenditures' authorisation department, who are responsible for verifying expenditure made by beneficiaries, processed almost 47,000 pre-financing, reimbursement and payment claims, totalling around €9 billion. In our public procurement verification department, more than

33,000 procurement procedures were checked, and the monitoring directorate processed and signed almost 6,500 contractual modifications and completed around 3,500 projects out of the 8,000 contracted.

To process, to achieve, to verify, these verbs we use to describe what we do can only partially express the essence of our activities. Our natural proclivity is to be proactive, to find solutions, to support beneficiaries in their approach, not to intervene only to correct any deviations from the rules of the game. Of course, there are errors, delays, deviations,

irregularities, sometimes there is even fraud, which colleagues who are in charge of, treat with the utmost responsibility, but at MA ROP, positive action is part of our organisational culture. We are guided by the rule that it is not our job to sanction our beneficiaries, but to help them achieve their objectives, with the conviction that our attitude has an echo in the behaviour of the beneficiaries and, above all, in the improvement of their implementation capacity. Every interaction we have with beneficiaries is important to us, from a simple clarification correspondence to a visit to a project





implementation site. And our monitoring colleagues, who have carried out over 400 project visits, can confirm that this interaction is as valuable to beneficiaries as it is to us. Because projects are made by people, for people. The pandemic we went through, the whole resilience and adaptation process that the ROP implementation system had to go through, reminded us all of this: the most important resource in a project is the people involved in it. And money comes after.

But how does the money ultimately reach the beneficiaries? Colleagues in our payments department tell us that it arrives via payment orders. Lots of payment orders. Around 80,000 since the start of the 2014-2020 Regio programme, for a total of more than €6.1 billion. In fact, there is a very remarkable December day in the existence of this institution, when the MA ROP issued no less than 714 payment orders, worth almost €90 million.

We realise that these figures seem overwhelming. We know that statistics are meaningless if outside an understandable context. If you ask our colleagues in the evaluation department how the effectiveness,

efficiency and impact of an operational programme are assessed, they will show you multi-annual plans, reports and counterfactual analyses and tell you about the context.

This context is what we have been striving to offer you over the years, through all the materials we have disseminated, in this publication, through media campaigns and other channels. One of the concerns of our colleagues in the Communication and Technical Assistance department of the MA ROP is to synthesise this context and provide it to the public, together with everything relevant about the life, achievements and impact of the programme. The figures cannot be taken out of the context, nor should they be, because they tell the truth about what the responsibility of a Managing Authority entails and what working in such an institution means. And behind every figure, there is a story of belief, difficulties overcome, lessons learned and a lot of determination. Both at the beneficiary end and here at the Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme.

But even considering the context, these figures represent only half of the story. The other half is about committed and responsible

people and about nights, weekends and holidays at the office, and that's why this part of the story often remains untold.

Our institution has started the last year of implementation of the 2014-2020 ROP, having just completed its 13th consecutive year without decommitment, with a performance of €1.198 billion, exceeding, as always, the absorption target. It is appropriate to thank our beneficiaries and all those who have trusted us and to reaffirm our commitment to them, confident that we will continue to work together as well as ever. Basically, the existence of our institution relies on performance, and the satisfaction of honouring the responsibilities entrusted to us is immense. This satisfaction is the source of this article, which we felt the need to produce about MA ROP, not only as an institution, but especially as a team. A team that, over time, has proved that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

None of this would have been possible without the contributions of the people who are or have been part of the MA ROP team. That is why, in its last issue, Regio magazine salutes them all with the outmost respect.

School opens minds and builds character. It provides access to new ideas and helps young people guide their adult professional lives. That's why providing the best possible education is a top priority for families with children and for authorities. In Miercurea Ciuc, the rehabilitation of the Nagy Imre Secondary School with European funds was a perfect fit for this priority.

ENERGY EFFICIENT SCHOOL IN MIERCUREA CIUC



ALICE-CLAUDIA GHERMAN

The 2022/2023 school year has started at Nagy Imre Secondary School in Miercurea Ciuc in a new school, “an intelligent school, which combines education, culture, sports, health and in direct harmony with nature, open to technology and the

future, offering conditions to prepare children for life”, according to Dávid Zoltán, the headmaster. This is the result of a renovation programme with EU funding that has made it not only more attractive in appearance, but also more modern and energy efficient. This is the second year that students and teachers

begin classes at European-level education. The Nagy Imre Secondary School, is part of the network of public schools in Harghita County and serves 900 pupils.

“The need to renovate the Nagy Imre Secondary School in Miercurea Ciuc arose from the need to ensure high quality standards that would make the institution attractive from a teaching perspective and contribute to the promotion of the locality. Such modernization of schools has not taken place in Miercurea Ciuc for more than 30 years”, Eszter Dosa, project manager of the City of Miercurea Ciuc, said.

Project: “Rehabilitation of Nagy Imre Secondary School in Miercurea Ciuc”

Total budget: 9.68 million Lei

ERDF: 5.49 million Lei

PROJECTS

The classes are held in a two-storey building, the first of which was built in 1991 and the second in 1996. In 2005, minimal repair works were carried out on the building (replacement of the exterior carpentry and maintenance work). All this was no longer sufficient for the second decade of the 21st century. Through the renovation project, the authorities hoped and succeeded in providing the community with a building that observes European standards, equipped with modern energy efficiency systems. The building was thermally renovated, the heating, lighting and hot water systems were refurbished, photovoltaic panels were installed on the renovated roof, mechanical ventilation systems were installed etc. In the end, the building was given a category A (high energy efficiency) rating and the students of Miercurea Ciuc are now learning in a modern school.

“We knew it would be the hardest project of the administration in Miercurea Ciuc, but we stubbornly

made it a reality, we - as beneficiaries, the representatives of the City of Miercurea Ciuc - as financial supporters for the European funds we

obtained, the construction and design team - as professionals. Thank you all!”, Dávid Zoltán, headmaster of Nagy Imre Secondary School, says.



Increasing the quality of the educational process has always been a priority for the University of Bucharest, even if the infrastructure has not always lived up to its performance. The higher education institution has managed to solve, for the time being, the educational space crisis at the Faculty of Biology, which now benefits from a new building for students from three specialisations.

NEW BUILDING FOR STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

DAN L. BRUMAR

The shortage of educational space has made the representatives of the University of Bucharest consider converting the administrative buildings. The plan worked perfectly at the Faculty of Biology, one of the specialisations with the fewest places to study. Thus, an administrative building of the faculty, located inside the Botanical Garden in Bucharest, was converted into an educational building, with all the necessary facilities for the university courses. The partner of the University of Bucharest was Regio, which provided most of the funding for this educational infrastructure expansion project.

“The implementation of the project involved the improvement of study conditions for students, ensuring a high quality of study, which is likely to increase access and participation of disadvantaged people in the higher education system (e.g. people from rural areas, people belonging to other ethnic groups,



disabled people), conditions that support measures to align higher education to the needs of the labour market,” Georgiana Rădulescu, responsible for projects with European

funds at the University of Bucharest, stated for Regio magazine.

The project involved the consolidation, restoration and arranging new compartments of the existing spaces in order to provide the basic functionality of an educational space. The final beneficiaries are the students of the Faculty of Biology from all three specialisations: Biology, Biochemistry, Ecology. They now benefit of better additional rooms for courses and laboratories thanks to the modern equipment procured.

“The work has been completed since May 2022, but the procurement of some equipment was yet to be concluded. Currently, all these procurements have been finalized or are committed, i.g. educational software,” Georgiana Rădulescu says.

The project should have been completed a year earlier, but the

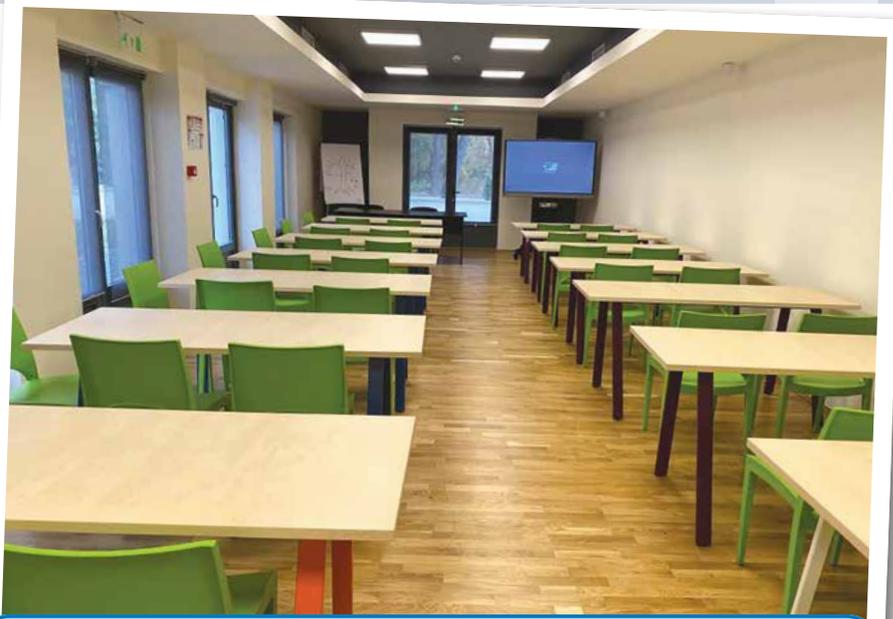


complex consolidation work and waterproofing of the foundation required an extension.

WHO WILL USE THE NEW EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The project is not aimed only at Biology students, but is designed for the use of many more professionals who come into contact with the University. PhD and MSc students will be able to access both the study and seminar rooms and laboratories in the refurbished building, together with other facilities offered by the University in the Botanical Garden, for in-depth studies and the preparation of PhD theses.

Research teams have an added chance to achieve their research goals thanks to the facilities provided by the rehabilitated and modernised infrastructure. Faculty professors will now have adequate teaching and coordination conditions that can increase the quality of students' qualifications and market orientation. Last but not least, the University of Bucharest, which will solve part of the problems related to the provision of the necessary infrastructure for the development and increase of the quality of education, will benefit from this project.



Project: Consolidation, restoration, interior arrangements, refurbishment of installations and exterior fittings of the administration building underground +ground floor + 1st floor, building B

Project total value: 7.9 million Lei

ERDF: 7.7 million Lei

FORMER RESTAURANT TRANSFORMED INTO OFFICES BUILDING

The building that recently changed its use was listed in the University's records as "Administrative Building B". Built in 1936, according to the plans of architect Octav Doicescu, the building originally functioned as a restaurant. After the April 1944 bombing of Bucharest, at

the request of Professor Mihail Guşuleac, the building was transformed into an educational space, and part of the laboratories of the Faculty of Biology were moved here. "To accommodate the new use, a number of spaces have been modified. For example, the terraces on the eastern and northern sides have been covered and a sanitary block has been added to the inner courtyard. Subsequently, the building underwent further modifications. Thus, the pottery roof was replaced by a tin roof, the walls were plastered with a grey coat, the carpentry was replaced", Georgiana Rădulescu added.

Since 1961, when a new building was built for the Faculty of Biology, the Administrative Building B has been used only for administrative purposes. Until 2019, the building housed the offices for staff, the library, the inferior plants section of the General Herbarium and the laboratories for processing and storing seeds for international exchange. Until 1978, a botanical museum also operated on the ground floor of the building.



Sinaia is one of the most popular mountain resorts in Romania, which enjoys hundreds of thousands of visits annually, both in summer and winter. The town on the Prahova Valley has taken a number of bold and necessary steps to improve the quality of life of its residents. Here's how Sinaia has become a "green" town, with the support of EU funds.

SINAIA CHOOSES GREEN TRANSPORT



DAN L. BRUMAR

One indisputable truth about Sinaia is that it badly needed an efficient public transport in line with new European urban mobility policies, which encourage measures to reduce carbon emissions. Well, Sinaia has become a "green" town with the implementation of a Regio-funded project aimed at developing environmentally friendly public transport. ECO-BUS was implemented between 2016-2021 and has substantially changed the image of a leading city-resort in Romania.

"The residents of Sinaia have welcomed this investment, as the benefits targeted by this project include a direct positive impact on carbon dioxide reductions in our town through the use of environmentally friendly, non-polluting buses and promoting the use of the public passenger transport system within the town instead of transport by personal cars," said Vlad Oprea, the town's mayor, who closely mon-

itored the implementation of this vital project for the town.

WHAT RESULTS HAS THE ECO-BUS PROJECT ACHIEVED

Thanks to non-reimbursable funding made available through Regio, Sinaia has modernised its public transport system by procuring 11 new hybrid buses. The public service had been running since 2007, but the fleet in use was outdated and generated significant maintenance costs. In addition, the project aimed to create an integrated traffic management and e-ticketing system to help improve the quality of service. The green buses are equipped with Wi-Fi internet, GPS system, acoustic and visual passenger information system, video surveillance cameras, passenger counting system and cards and tickets validator devices.

The bus stations on the five domestic routes now have electronic information boards for passengers.



Each board shows the name of the station where it is located, the route of the bus due to arrive at that station, the number of minutes remaining until the bus arrives, the time and date of the day. Special information for passengers, such as diversionary or delayed traffic, may



Project: ECO-BUS
TOTAL BUDGET: 18.3 million Lei
ERDF: 13.5 million Lei

also appear on each board. A special software for fleet management and travels validations, as well as a passenger information app available on smart phones is also part of the integrated traffic management and e-ticketing system.

“The integrated traffic management system is extremely useful as it increases the accessibility and efficiency of public transport, the quality of services offered and, implicitly, the number of passengers, reducing the expenses of the public transport service and optimizing the profit of the public transport service”, Mayor Vlad Oprea says.

CLEANER AIR FOR RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS

An important objective of the project implementation has been the annual reduction of greenhouse gases. Sinaia has chosen “green” transport and this has resulted in a decrease of CO₂ concentration in the breathing air by 197.4 tonnes CO₂ equivalent in the first year of operation (2021). Specialists have estimated that in 2025, due to the green buses purchased through Regio the town on the Prahova Valley will save 333 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent,

a goal that could not have been achieved without this investment.

Sinaia is opening up even more to clean solutions, and the town hall is preparing a series of projects to improve the quality of life of its residents, with the effect of reducing pollution. One of the projects aims to develop, modernise and complete integrated municipal waste management systems. The aim is to set up and equip so-called digitised environmental islands (container islands) for waste separately collected: paper and cardboard waste, plastic and metal waste, glass waste, biodegradable waste, residual waste.

Another project aims to reduce

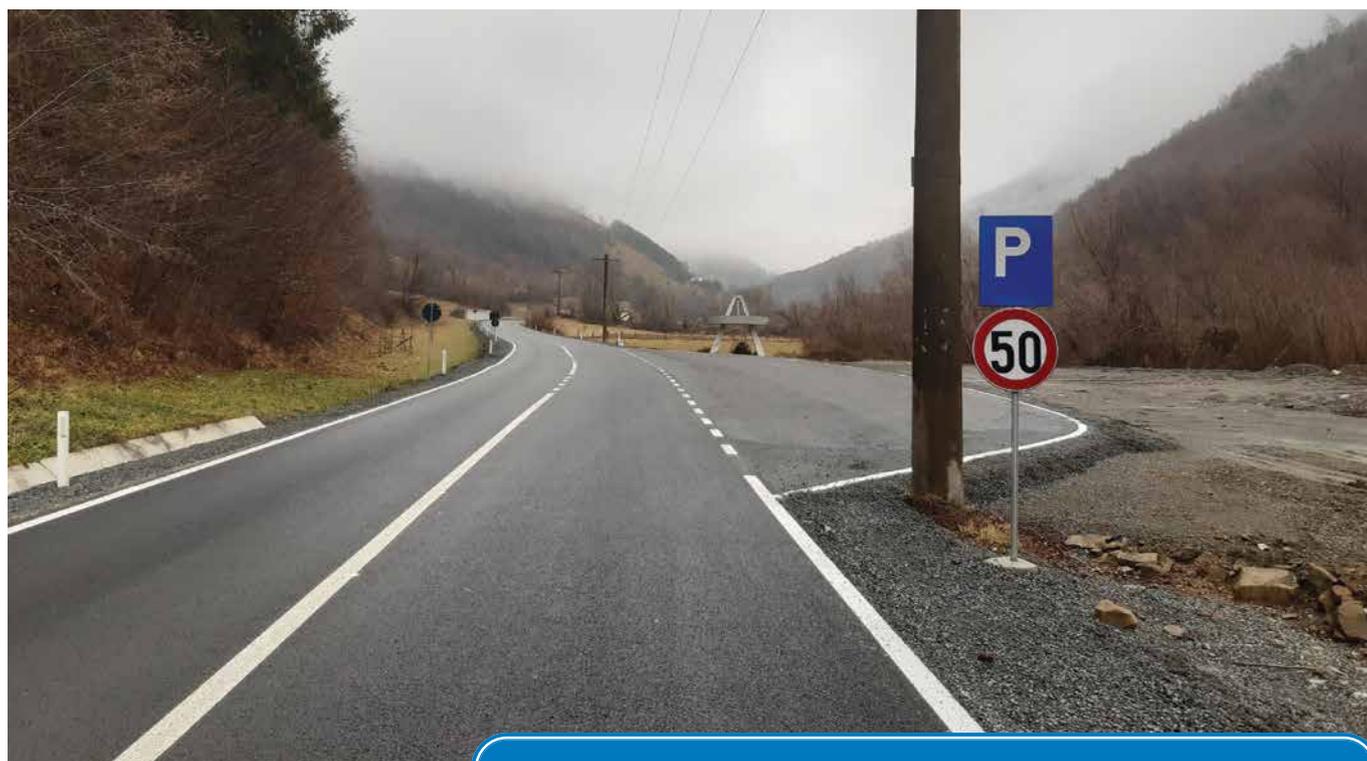
greenhouse gas emissions through the use of energy-efficient LED lighting. The town hall plans to upgrade street lighting systems on 44 town streets.

Sinaia is not just a mountain resort, where you go skiing or climbing to get away from the stress of everyday life. Sinaia has a special past, a very important historical heritage, including heritage buildings and countless traces of many famous personalities. The authorities of the town have found a partner in Regio, with whom they are carrying out projects designed both to protect the town’s past and secure its future.



The advantages of upgrading any road network include easier access to resources, greater mobility of the population, but also an increase in the number of tourists in the area, through the development of small agro-tourism businesses. Such road modernisation project was implemented in Bistrița-Năsăud county. Its completion is highly appreciated by the inhabitants of the area targeted by the project, which received European funding through the Regional Operational Programme and has become a flagship for the North-West RDA region.

“TRANSYLVANIAN GATEWAY” AT EUROPEAN STANDARDS



ALICE-CLAUDIA GHERMAN

The road from Bistrita to Vatra Dornei – national road DN17/E58, through Bistrita Valley, between Bârgău and Călimani Mountains, passes through Bistrița Bârgăului commune and several villages known as Bârgaie: Rusu Bârgăului, Joseonii Bârgăului, Prundul Bârgăului etc. All these villages are surrounded by dreamy mountain landscapes, and the pearl of the area is Lake Colibița, about 7 km from Bistrița Bârgăului. In turn, DJ172 D county road, also known as the “Transylvanian Gateway”, which covers the Ilvelor area (Ilva Mică-Poiana Ilvei-Măgura Ilvei-Ilva Mare-Lunca Ilvei) is located in an impressive geographical area, where tourists are interested in both traditions and landscapes

Project: “Modernization of DJ172D: Mureșenii Bârgăului (DN17)-Lake Colibița-Bistrița Bârgăului (DN17)-(DN17) Joseonii Bârgăului-Strâmba-Ilva Mică (DN17D)-Poiana Ilvei-Măgura Ilvei-Ilva Mare-Lunca Ilvei-limit between Suceva and Bistrița-Năsăud counties, Lot 2, Lot 3, Lot 4”

Total budget: 191.20 million Lei

ERDF: 145.43 million Lei

and it is connected through the village of Strâmba to DN17/E58. In this beautiful area the authorities of Bistrița-Năsăud county have implemented the project “Modernization of DJ172D: Mureșenii Bârgăului (DN17)-Lake Colibița-Bistrița Bârgăului (DN17)-(DN17) Joseonii Bârgăului-Strâmba-Ilva Mică (DN17D)-Poiana Ilvei-Măgura Ilvei-Ilva Mare-Lunca Ilvei-limit between Suceva and Bistrița-Năsăud counties, Lot 2, Lot 3, Lot 4”.

Crossing a relatively densely populated rural area of about

23,000 inhabitants, DJ172D was modernised with EU funds in order to increase accessibility to the TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) network of the mentioned rural areas of the county. Specifically, the project aimed at upgrading a section of county road DJ 172 D (Lot 2, Lot 3, Lot 4), a total of 49.917 km of road. In addition to modernising and resurfacing roads and bridges, the works included the construction of duck out public transport stops on the modernised route of DJ 172D, investments for road safety for pe-

Did you Know...

If the average value of the maximum ozone concentration in Romania is 72.6 micrograms/m³, in the Colibița area studies have shown that the ozone concentration is 90 micrograms/m³. These levels are only found in the Alps. The Colibița Lake area is considered to have the cleanest air in Romania.



pedestrians and cyclists (pavements, construction of cycle paths, vertical light signals for pedestrian crossings with photovoltaic power supply). Additional elements to protect the modernised route of DJ 172D against erosion and extreme weather conditions, namely retaining walls, slope reinforcement and tree alignments were added as well.

“The modernization of DJ 172 D was one of my dearest projects since I took office as President of the Bistrița-Năsăud County Council in 2012. Although it was quite difficult, with challenges and a lot of bureaucracy, I can say that it was worth all the effort. First of all, I am glad that people can have access to a modernized infrastructure and can move

much more easily from one place to another. It’s a flagship project for the county. The good news is that in addition to this project, in recent years, 596 km of the total 698 km have been modernised or are in the process of modernisation. For the remaining approximately 100 km, there are projects at various stages meant to modernise the entire county road network in Bistrița-Năsăud. We don’t stop here and we continue our development in all areas, from infrastructure, health, to culture, education and sport,” Emil Radu Moldovan, President of Bistrița-Năsăud County Council stated.

Tourism is a sector with valuable development potential that can become an attraction factor for both

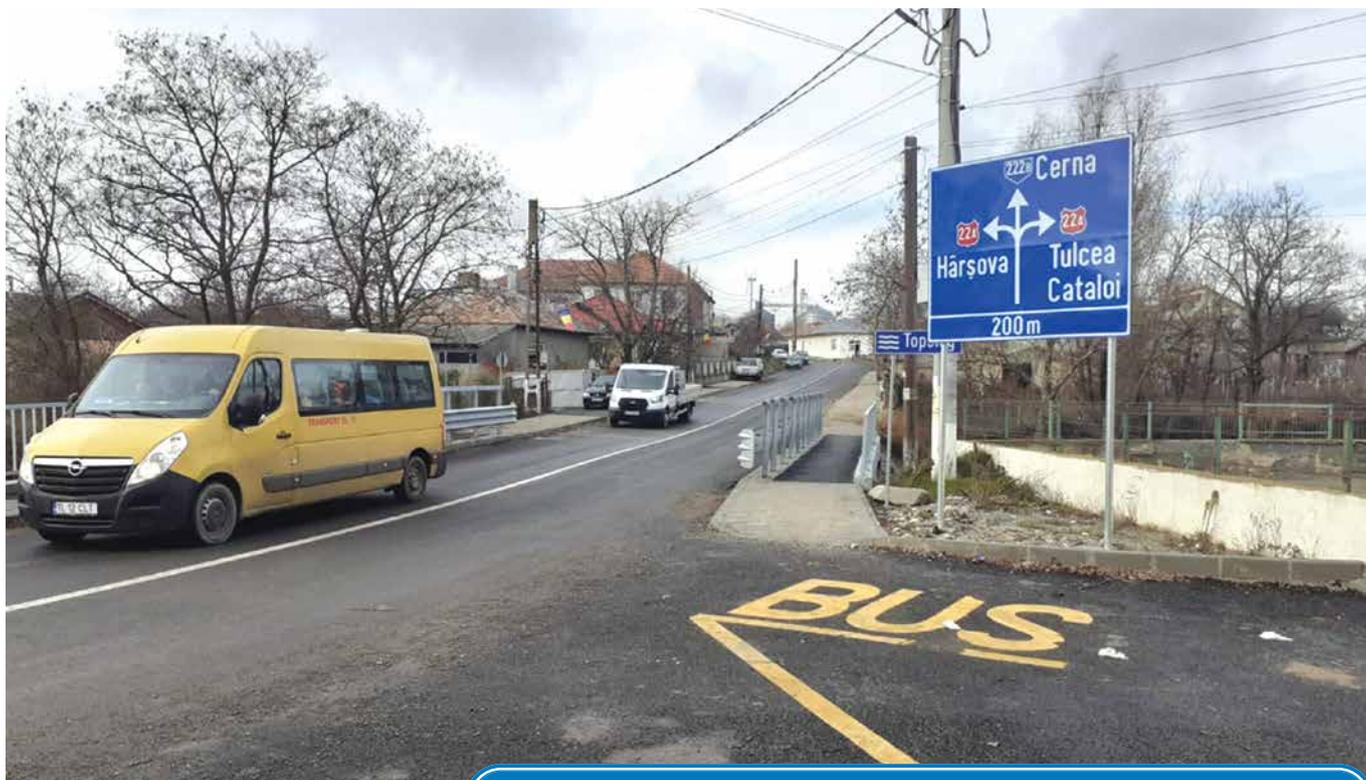
investors and foreign tourists. In this respect, the area covered by the modernisation project is on the right track, because the main points of attraction for tourist activity are centred around several types of tourism: mountain (Rodnei and Călimani National Parks, Bârgăului, Suhardului and Țibleșului Mountains), spa (Sângeorz-Băi and Figa resorts), climate (Colibița, Valea Vinului), sports (Piatra Fântânele, Valea Blaznei, Colibița, Rebrei Valley, Bistriței Valley), cultural-historical and religious, ethno-cultural, rural tourism, agro-tourism and ecotourism (Someșului Mare, Ilvei, Leșului, Cormaiei, Rebrei, Sălăuței, Idecuiului, Bârgăului, Șieului, Luțului, Ilișua Valleys).

The completion of the road modernization project in the Bârgăului and Ilvelor area has not only increased the mobility of the population in the area, but has also led to new economic and tourist opportunities. As an example, in 2017 in Colibița resort there was a capacity of about 100 accommodation places in classified tourist structures, and in 2022 there were already 669 places in 40 classified structures, a number that is constantly increasing. All this shows the importance of a good road infrastructure for increasing the living standards and booting the local economy. In conclusion, if you arrive at Bistrița-Năsăud you must pass through the “Transylvanian Gate”, a place that can mean “Home” for any Romanian!



The Danube Delta is a jewel of nature, but in order to admire its beauty and uniqueness high quality infrastructure is necessary. A project developed with European funds has improved access conditions in this area with great tourist potential. In addition, the local residents of the communes in Tulcea county were also happy to have asphalt roads.

UPGRADED ROADS FOR BETTER ACCESS TO THE DANUBE DELTA



RODICA VÎNJEANU

Stejaru, Topolog, Dorobanțu and Cerna are just a few localities in Tulcea County that now have European standard roads through the “Modernization of regional transport infrastructure between Stejaru and Cerna communes” project, worth about 98 million lei, financed by Regional Operational Program 2014-2020.

Because of its geographical position, Tulcea county is an area with a high degree of isolation, but rich in ancient history and civilization. The Getic, Roman, Greek and Byzantine fortresses, monuments and archaeological sites, as well as monastic places and constructions of special ethnographic value, spread throughout the region, are evidence of this

Project: Modernization of regional transport infrastructure between Stejaru and Cerna communes
Total budget: 98,134 million Lei
ERDF: 83,414 million Lei



richness. To capitalize on all these tourist attractions, a properly developed infrastructure is required.

Under these circumstances, sus-

tainable economic development by improving transport infrastructure, expanding and improving access to public utilities, preserving the environment and resilience to climate

PROJECTS

change, as well as developing tourism and related services, was a priority for local authorities. The areas considered by the project are areas with high touristic potential, but because of the poorly developed transport infrastructure, could only be exploited to a very small extent.

The modernization of the Stejaru-Cerna road also has a positive impact on the development of stone mining (quarries) in the Dorobanțu-Cerna area, as well as on the wind farms in the Topolog area. Until now, the existing asphalted roads were damaged, and others, only stone-paved or earth-road, did not provide comfort and safety traffic conditions.

The rehabilitation works proposed by the project for the road connecting Stejaru, Topolog, Dorobanțu and Cerna aimed at ensuring the technical parameters appropriate for the road category it belongs to, providing optimal safety conditions for auto and pedestrian traffic, as well as a shorter travel time, due to a streamlining of traffic. Also, the improvement of the road system has led to a decrease in the rate of road accidents, to a decrease in wear and tear on means of transport, and to an increase in cruise speed.

“Modernizing the county’s infrastructure is one of the priorities of Tulcea County Council. It is an old wish of ours because good roads



mean shorter journeys, more tourists and higher turnover. We are trying to create these routes, these cuts between national roads, precisely to shorten the length of the journey and to help the inhabitants, but also those who carry out economic activi-

ties in those areas. With this project, the network of modernised county roads is being extended. The problem of the road to Chilia remains to be solved, which is dragging on because of legal issues,” President of Tulcea County Council, Horia Teodorescu, stated.

Therefore, the following categories benefits directly from the infrastructure rehabilitated and upgraded by the project: 10,778 inhabitants of the local communities in the area; more than 5,000 tourists/year passing through the area (on the Constanta - North Moldova route, the upgraded route being the most economical); more than 6,000 inhabitants/year of Tulcea county passing through the area; about 234 companies currently operating in the project areas or in the immediate vicinity of the upgraded roads.



The town of Techirghiol has an ancient history, in the Neolithic era. The therapeutic effects of the mud from Lake Techirghiol have been known since Romans times, when people started to come and treat various diseases. In the 21st century, however, an infrastructure adapted to current requirements was necessary. We talked with the project manager Mioara Axân about the project financed by the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT INCREASES INVESTMENTS IN SPA TOURISM IN TECHIRGHIOL



ALICE-CLAUDIA GHERMAN

“Capitalisation of the spa and tourist potential of Lake Techirghiol through the development of the utilities infrastructure” project, financed by Regio, managed to generate a positive impact on the quality of life and on the social conditions in the town of Techirghiol. The construction of the designed utilities infrastructure and the access to the tourist areas of the city contributed to these changes.

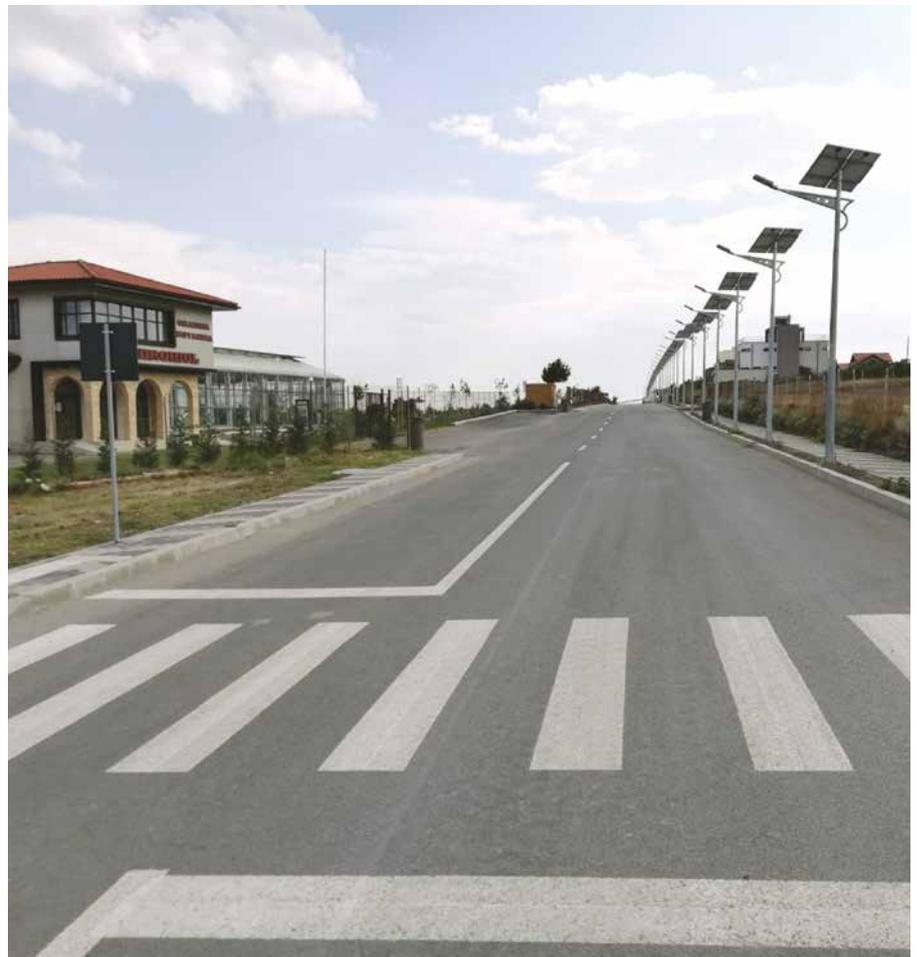
Also, the tourism industry benefits from the increasing number of tourists, which, in turn, has positive impact on the local community



by increasing the number of jobs. The investment was made on Strada Lacului, located in the inner city of Techirghiol in the South-East area of the town, adjacent to the Techirghiol Botanical Garden, on an area of 13,583 sqm and a length of 1,115 m.

Why was such a project needed? Here is the explanation coming from the project manager, Mioara Axân: *“For the last 3-5 years, the private investments in guesthouses, hotels and leisure facilities in the area have been postponed because of poor existing infrastructure for access and utilities, including public lighting. The access to the southwestern part of Lake Techirghiol, the wildest and most biodiverse part, was limited and periodically even impossible because a modern road and public lighting were missing. During the bad weather, the pedestrian traffic was difficult. Before the investment, during the summer, the dust generated by the traffic on this street polluted the atmosphere and created discomfort for the residents and for the visitors of the Botanical Garden. Also, the increasing number of tourists and, implicitly, the demand for tourist and leisure services registered in recent years, were arguments in favour of an integrated investment meant to achieve the supporting public infrastructure, considering the direct impact on the increase of competitiveness Techirghiol spa resort. This project contributes both to increasing the attractiveness of the resort for tourists and investors and to increasing economic efficiency, simultaneously with increasing the number of local employees”.*

By implementing this project, the local authority modernized the street (a new asphalt layer, utilities infrastructure: water networks, sewage and public lighting) and created the main access road to a future neighbourhood of houses, where tourists can find the best accommodation conditions. Moreover, the promenade area of Techirghiol Lake



has been expanded, capitalising the benefits of the lake for which thousands of tourists come here every year.

European funds were very important in the effort to carry out this project. *“The town of Techirghiol benefits from several projects financed by non-reimbursable external funds. Most of the time, the needs of a community are difficult to cover from local budgets, and accessing funds was, and still is, the development solution. Accessing EU funds, an important number of projects are being implemented or have already been completed in Techirghiol, and the dynamics of new investments allow the resort to be transformed into a tourist destination, with an empha-*

sis on wellness and health tourism”, Mioara Axân explained.

Tourists considered the implementation of the project in Strada Lacului as a nice surprise. *“If until two years ago their walks ended at the Botanical Garden, now, every evening, we find tourists enjoying the view and the beauty of Lake Techirghiol. Night walks thus become more spectacular both on Lacului street and in the new promenade area. As for the residents, they appreciated this project and we could say that immediately after the completion of the project they became tourists in their own town, enjoying the promenade area and the new view of the lake and the town,”* the project manager concluded.

Project: *„Capitalisation of the spa and tourist potential of Lake Techirghiol through the development of the utilities infrastructure”*
Total budget: 10.72 million Lei
ERDF: 8.93 million Lei

Engineering experts agree that man-made devices and machines need to work quickly and safely to make our lives easier. Innovative solutions are the result of close collaboration between experts in a variety of fields, using cutting-edge technologies to launch new products. Computer simulation and 3D modelling are imperative in this process.

COMPUTER SIMULATION, THE KEY TO DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS



DAN L. BRUMAR

Imagine being part of the design team for a new type of car tyre, a revolutionary product that promises high performance in any season. Before starting its mass production, designers need to provide accurate and complete data on how it will perform in water interaction, under hard braking, in rough terrain, in low temperatures or, conversely, in arid and hot environments. Computer simulation provides the most accurate data on its performance, but also on the wear it will experience in

different environments. This is why the work of mechanical engineering experts is essential in the process of innovation and the development of new products.

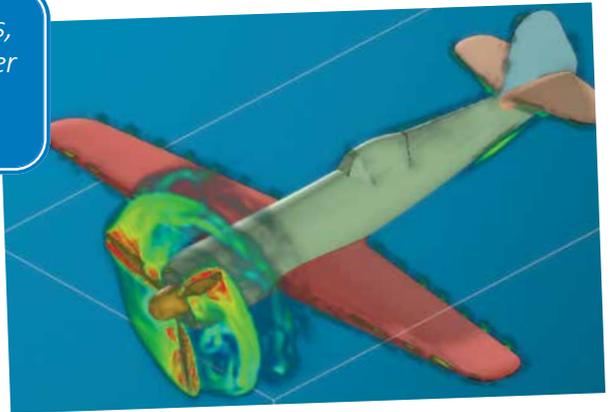
Stefan Castravete holds a PhD in mechanical engineering from Wayne State University Detroit, Michigan. In 2008, together with Joe Formicola, he founded Caelynx Europe in Craiova. Today the company offers technical consulting services on digital product development and engineering services in the automotive, aerospace, energy, defence, medical fields: 3D modelling, sca-

lable digital simulation and CAE (Computer Aided Engineering) analysis. CAE is a computer technology used to analyse the functions of a CAD product, i.e. a product made by computer-aided design (CAD).

In 2018, Caelynx Europe applied for Regio funding to increase the company's competitiveness by purchasing a system to enhance the technological process.

The project was a technology transfer between Caelynx Europe, the project beneficiary, and IPA SA Bucharest, the technology transfer centre. The investment amounted

Project: Innovation in computer simulation of parts, sub-assemblies and assemblies through technology transfer
PROJECT BUDGET: 968,470 Lei
ERDF: 620,602 Lei



to €200,000, 90% of which was provided by the Regional Operational Programme.

“We turned to the European funds because they provide non-reimbursable financing. We couldn’t have implemented such a project with our own funds,” reveals Ștefan Castravete, the company’s general manager, who has seen a considerable improvement in the company’s business.

THE ROLE OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE COMPUTING (HPC) IN A COMPANY

Caelyn Europe uses computer simulation to help its customers optimise the performance of their products, control production costs and reduce time to market. All this information, vital for any industry, requires repeated simulations and accurate calculations performed at very high speeds. That’s why the company attracted Regio funding to purchase a High-Performance Computing (HPC) system, which has the ability to solve advanced computing problems in a short time.

This technology is essential when looking, for example, at the strength of a vehicle’s structure in the event of a road accident, how air-flow behaves when cars or planes move, molecular interaction in the design of drugs etc.

The results of the project implementation are remarkable, the manager says. “Simulation capacity has increased more than tenfold. By reducing the calculation time, the number of projects carried out has increased significantly. We performed take-off, manoeuvring and cruise flight simulations on drone models developed by us. These types of analyses were not possible before the implementation of HPC,” Ștefan Castravete confirms.

Recently, the company has made a computer simulation of the IAR 80FA (photo), a replica of the Romanian IAR 80 fighter developed by the Fly Again Association. IAR Brașov produced this type of aircraft during the Second World War and brought it up to the same level of performance as the fighter aircraft

of Germany, Great Britain, the USA and Japan. In 1955, all IAR 80 aircraft were dismantled and destroyed. The association’s project was carried out exclusively on a voluntary basis, and the funds necessary for the execution to be provided by attracting aviation partners and sponsors.

Bet on sales growth

The Regio-funded project has increased the company’s activity by at least 7% and the number of employees by 3 new jobs. At the same time, the company has been able to test the development of new products and services and carry out a study on the innovation of the computer simulation process of parts, sub-assemblies and assemblies through technology transfer. In the medium and long term, Caelyn Europe aims to increase sales by 10% per year, develop its own products and produce physical prototypes.

Caelyn HPC cluster:

- ❑ 8 computing nodes (512 core total), each having:
 - 2x AMD Epyc 7002, 2.35GHz processor, 32core
 - 256GB DDR4 ECC REG, 2999MT/s, all equally populated memory channels
 - 1 SSD 1TB NVMe
 - 1 port InfiniBand EDR
- ❑ NVIDIA Tesla V100 GPU card:
 - 5120 cuda cores
 - 640 NVIDIA Tensor cores
 - 32 GB GPU Memory
- ❑ 7TB SSD
- ❑ 30TB of storage space



By 2030, all properties in Romania, both housing and land, must be included in the integrated cadastre and land registry system. To achieve its objectives, the National Agency for Cadastre and Land Registration (NACL) and its territorial offices are currently developing the most extensive process of systematic registration of rural properties, with funding provided by Regio.

€ 266 MILLION FOR SYSTEMATIC REGISTRATION OF RURAL PROPERTIES



A general cadastre, containing accurate data on all properties in Romania, will stimulate investment in national transport, energy, health and social infrastructure. Extending it to rural areas will enable rural communities to access EU funds and help reduce the development gap between urban and rural areas. For this reason, the National Agency for Cadastre and Land Registration is developing an extensive project to systematically register more than 5.75 million hectares of land in 660 rural localities. The properties to be registered are located both within and outside the rural areas of the beneficiary localities.

The project is worth € 312.8 million, of which almost € 266 million has been granted through Regio.

CURRENT STAGE OF THE PROJECT

By the end of November 2022, properties in 46 administrative-territorial units have been registered, covering an area of 345,019 hectares. The work for the enrolment of 4.27 million hectares (514 rural localities) is ongoing and for 417,805 hectares of land, the public procurement procedures will be resumed.

“To the cadastral area of 345,019.41 ha is added the area of 569,387.28 ha completed by cadastral sectors, contracted by the rural localities within the framework of financing these works from NACL’s own funds, therefore the total completed area related to the administrative-territorial units eligible

under the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) is of 914,406.69 ha”, Mircea Viorel Popa, NACL Deputy Director General, said.

As part of the systematic registration activity in selected rural areas, NACL carried out ten public procurement procedures. Of these, eight procedures under the ROP, within 628 localities, and two procedures under the National Cadastre and Land Registry Plan, within 32 eligible localities in the ROP.

BENEFITS RESULTING FROM REGISTERING PROPERTIES IN THE LAND REGISTER

Systematic registration of real estate is a government priority and an objective assumed by the Romanian

state, NACLRL representatives say. A complete cadastre and land register, will enable “development projects of national and local interest, vital for the economic and social development of the country”, Hajnalka Ildiko VIG (photo), president and director general of NACLRL mentions. Broadly speaking, even if the people targeted by this project do not yet fully understand, the project will have the following benefits:

- speeding up the free registration of land, particularly outside the rural localities, which will help to determine the location, boundaries and area of land and support the implementation of agricultural payment schemes;

- attracting investors in agriculture, as a result of clarifying the legal and technical status of all agricultural and forestry land;

- to keep an up-to-date record of the public and private properties of the administrative-territorial units and of the Romanian State;

- updating the legal situation of the properties that have been systematically registered and for which inheritances have not been debated, through the payment of inheritance certificates for these properties by NACLRL;

- the recording of the real situation in the registers of the local rural administration with regard to land, buildings and owners, following the cadastral measurements carried out for all land and buildings;

- the establishment of a real property tax base.

WHAT REGISTRATION OF RURAL PROPERTIES ENTAILS

Systematic registration of buildings is a complex process involving several steps. Systematic cadastral work includes a technical component, which involves identifying, measuring, describing and recording buildings in technical documents, and a legal component, which involves identifying owners, posses-



Project: Increasing the coverage and inclusiveness of the property registration system in rural Romania
Project value: 312.8 million Eur
ERDF: 265.9 million Eur

sors and other holders of buildings.

After informing the owners about the benefits and procedures of enrolment, the experts involved in this project identify, measure, describe and register the buildings in the technical documents. The experts collect the documents that prove the rights to the properties, and then identify the owners, possessors or other holders of the properties.

After collecting data from the field, it is then updated with information from the sporadic recording.

Then the technical cadastral documents are drawn up. This is not the end of the process, as the technical cadastral documents are then received by the experts of the cadastre territorial offices.

The effective participation of landowners in the systematic registration process is absolutely necessary. Lack of cooperation contributes to the delay of the process and incomplete or incorrect registration of property information, NACLRL representatives say.



Even today, the medieval fortress of Hunedoara is one of the most appreciated monuments of Gothic architecture in the world. Year after year, the Corvins' Castle is included in the top of the most visited destinations in Europe, and now it is undergoing extensive restoration works. The main tourist attraction of Hunedoara will become even brighter.

CORVINS' CASTLE, THE TOURIST SYMBOL OF HUNEDOARA: REBIRTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY



DAN L. BRUMAR

From any side of Hunedoara city, it is impossible to miss the imposing Corvin's Castle. Also known as the Castle of the Huniazilor, the Gothic monument in the fortress of Hunedoara remains the largest medieval building with a dual civil and military function in Romania. Built in the 15th century, Corvin's Castle continues to tell the turbulent story of these lands, thanks to the impressive cultural legacy left by those who marked its architecture.

The impressive medieval fortress, which is visited by more than 350,000 people every year, undergoes extensive restoration and consolidation works, following damage to important structural

components including the interior frescoes and exhibits. The project, worth more than 21.8 million Lei, has received significant support from Regio.

"Before the works started, the roofs of Corvin's Castle were in an advanced state of decay. Numerous problems were also identified in the castle walls, with direct repercussions on the microclimate inside the historical monument. These problems affected both the Corvin's Castle and the exhibits inside", Viorel Ticula, Executive Director of the European Funded Projects Department of Hunedoara City Hall, confirms.

The specialists' concern increased when they found that the frescoes were in a poor state of conservation. The most affected fresco

because of environmental factors is the fresco on Loggia Matia, the only 15th-century secular fresco preserved in Transylvania.

WHAT INTERVENTIONS ARE NEEDED IN CORVIN'S CASTLE

The works approved by the funding contract aim to restore the interior plasterwork in the White Bastion, the Njeboisia Tower and in the annexed Lady's Chamber, to restore the painting of the Loggia Matia and the stone elements in the Diet Hall, to restore the floor of the Knights' Hall, to reinforce the walls/vaults, to restore the stone elements and the plasterwork in the Njeboisia Tower, and to restore the stone elements of the Buzdugan Tower. At

PROJECTS

the same time, the Treasury Tower (Rom. Turnul Tezaur) requires restoration work on the stone elements, floors, wooden joinery, sheet metal cladding and interior plasterwork.

Restoration works are also planned on the New Gate Tower to restore the wooden joinery, wooden structure, staircase, stone elements and original plasterwork. The restoration could not bypass the Capistrano Tower, which has remained unchanged since the time of the famous Franciscan monk John of Capistrano. Another part of the project is the restoration of some of the external parts of the Zolyomy Workshops, the inner courtyard (between the Deserted Tower and the White Bastion) and the Drummers' Tower, as well as the replacement of some of the roof elements of the Deserted Tower.

"The restoration works of the Corvin's Castle are in full swing and we estimate that they will be completed by mid-2023", Dan Bobouțanu, Mayor of Hunedoara, says.

INCREASING NUMBER OF VISITORS

In the first eight months of 2022, despite the extensive restoration works underway, visitor numbers in-



Restoration and sustainable capitalisation of the Corvin's Castle cultural heritage – City of Hunedoara, Hunedoara county

Total budget: 21.88 million Lei

ERDF: 18.6 million Lei

creased by 26,000 as compared to the previous year. The explanation lies in effective measures to promote the monument, which have led to increased interest in this architectural symbol of Hunedoara. However, representatives of the city hall and Corvin's Castle are counting on an even greater increase in the number of visitors, both Romanian and foreign, considering the marketing strategy is already in place.

"We will participate in more tourism fairs, we will intensify the activity

on social media platforms, we will organize many cultural, educational and other events that will attract more visitors, while consolidating the relations with tourist agencies", Viorel Ticula says.

Corvin's Castle can host cultural, educational, artistic, sports and entertainment events, which contribute to increase its visibility in the country and worldwide. Over the years, Corvin's Castle has been chosen as a filming location for artistic movies, TV documentaries and commercials. Important shots for the films *Nostradamus* (1994), *Blood-Rayne* (2005), *Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance* (2011) and *The Nun* (2018) were filmed here.



For more information



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Project selected within the Regional Operational Program and and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Name of the Project:

“Support for the Managing Authority for the Regional Operational Program in order to implement management, evaluation, information and promotion of the Regional Operational Program 2014-2020, for the period 2015-2019”

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