



# ESF project "State of the Nation: building an innovative tool for the development of evidence-based policy making"

#### **Key facts**

#### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

'The development and use of common systems and standards in public administration which optimise decision making processes oriented towards citizens and the business sector, according with the Public Administration Development Strategy 2014-2020.'

#### **TARGET GROUPS**



Central and local public administrations across Romania

#### **BENEFICIARY ORGANISATION**

General Secretariat of Government (GSG), Government of Romania

#### **PROJECT DURATION**

07/04/2016 - 07/04/2019

#### **COORDINATOR**

Lelia Oanță, Director, GSG



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#### **BUDGET**

EUR 2,930,039.00

**ESF** contribution

EUR 556,774.46

National budget

#### PROJECT/ORGANISATION WEBSITE



http://starea-natiunii.ro/index.php/en/ https://sgg.gov.ro/new/



https://www.facebook.com/stareanatiuniiro/

#### **PARTNERS**

National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA)

#### **Activities implemented**

#### **PROJECT IN NUMBERS**



Sustainable development areas



Number of indicators developed

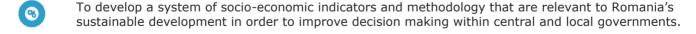


Number of surveys carried out



Number of conferences held

#### **MAIN PROJECT TASKS**



- To create a statistical data aggregator, called the 'State of the Nation', that synthetically captures trends within the country a multidisciplinary database that contains existing, aggregated socioeconomic and synthetic data.
- To collect data concerning public perceptions of relevant topics relating to the country's sustainable development.
- To develop future public policy initiatives that make use of the aggregator.

### Project journey: from conception to delivery

#### INITIAL STAGE

#### **CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT**

Lelia Oanță, Director of the Governmental Strategies Department at the General Secretariat of the Romanian Government (GSG) was aware of the need to develop policies and strategies based on evidence within central and local governments in Romania. In line with the **Public Administration Development Strategy 2014-2020**, she was committed to seeking to change the status quo, and to creating both evidence and a mechanism to use that evidence in policy and strategic work. GSG partnered with the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA) in Bucharest and developed the project with support from the ESF.



#### **PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT**

The project aimed to develop a **statistical aggregator for Romania**, **called the 'State of the Nation'**, and to integrate into a coherent framework existing data on 12 key sustainable development areas. Using 100 main indicators and perception-based primary data collected via barometer surveys, the project sought to provide policy makers with a dashboard indicating the 'health of the nation', signalling the current and future challenges and opportunities facing Romania. The project also identified ways in which the tool could be employed in policy initiatives and strategic documents to 'put it to good use' and demonstrate its usefulness.

## PROJECT

### MAIN CHALLENGES FACED, AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

The project leaders managed the project effectively. A number of difficulties were encountered, which the project team were able to overcome in order to complete the project as foreseen. One difficulty was related to the reticence of the Romanian National Statistical Institute to cooperate in providing the requested data. While the team succeeded in building broad approval for the project and using it to develop specific policy initiatives, greater and broader commitment at a high level could increase its impact still further.

#### KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND EVENTS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

After building the team, the project leaders worked on designing the methodology and the system of indicators to be used in the project. They then moved on to create a web-based application to host the data. At the same time, they developed and implemented 30 surveys nationwide to gather public perceptions of Romania's development. In addition, the team organised four conferences, together with multiple workshops and capacity building sessions, to gather ideas, consult stakeholders, build capacity and promote the project's results.

#### **KEY RESULTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS**

The key results of the project are the creation of the 'State of the Nation' aggregator and the development of a methodology to coherently integrate data. Extensive contacts, committed leadership and a strong belief in the need for the project are the main factors explaining the success of the project.

# RESULTS, IMPACTS

#### (EXPECTED) IMPACT ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The project team's ambition was to achieve an impact beyond the creation of the actual outputs themselves. The basis for this ambition was the team's awareness that specific initiatives 'come and go', and are likely to have only a limited impact unless they are anchored into future projects and accepted and endorsed at a high level. Thus, to avoid this situation, the project team used data from the State of Nation aggregator to support the development of Romania's National Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, as well as two other projects relating to the implementation of this strategy and to the assessment of the quality of public services across Romania.



# LESSONS LEARNT: THE ROLE OF ESF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The team learned that institutional collaboration is key to implementing a large-scale project. Similarly, it was essential to develop relationships based on trust with like-minded partners. They also recognised the importance of high-level endorsement, which can go a long way to creating impact. The project's leaders had considered a similar project previously, but a lack of financial resources prevented them from implementing it. With ESF support, they were able to pursue the idea and turn it into a coherent, three-year project that set the stage for the better use of evidence in policy making at national and local levels in Romania.



The ESF-funded project was founded on the concept of sustainable development. Source: General Secretariat of Government

**REFLECTIONS** 

### **Personal experiences**



'After working intensely on the project for three years, now that it has finished, I feel like a mother whose son is leaving home to go to university. I trust that the project will continue to make an impact far beyond its official end date.'

Loredana Radu, Project Coordinator, Associate Professor, SNSPA, Romania 'The "State of the Nation" project should not remain simply a national project. I think it is highly important for national and EU leaders to consider supporting similar initiatives at a regional and European level. It's an invitation for others to join in.'

Lelia Oanță, Project Manager, Director, Governmental Strategies Department, GSG, Romania

The study "Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration" (PAPA) aims to present specific cases of ESF-funded public administration reform and capacity building initiatives. The contractor prepared 30 case studies and factsheets on ESF supported projects funded in 17 beneficiary countries of Thematic Objective 11 during the programming period 2014-2020.

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