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Third Environmental Performance Review of Romania: recommendations

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The document presents the recommendations of the third Environmental Performance Review of Romania agreed upon by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews at its meeting, conducted by virtual means on 20–23 October 2020.

The Committee is invited to adopt the recommendations.

Chapter 1: Legal, policy and institutional framework

Recommendation 1.1:

The Government should ensure that every legal act on environmental matters is adopted in accordance with Aarhus Convention provisions, allowing public participation in decision-making, and not through government emergency ordinances.

Recommendation 1.2:

The Government should ensure that the scheme of Regulatory Impact Assessment is broadly applied to environment-related regulations to enable and facilitate their implementation, and that relevant systematic capacity-building activities for line ministries are put in practice.

Recommendation 1.3

The Government should consider revisiting and codifying environmental legislation in order to consolidate existing environmental laws and regulations and harmonize their terminology, principles and provisions.

Recommendation 1.4

The Government should:

- (a) Ensure the continuity and coherence of environmental policy planning;
- (b) Establish efficient and effective mechanisms for inter-ministerial cooperation across all relevant ministries and offices;
- (c) Consider mechanisms for accelerating the adoption of draft strategic documents, while complying with strategic environmental assessment and public participation procedures;
- (d) Ensure capacity building of experts engaged in SEA procedures and accreditation of SEA consultants;
- (e) Coordinate cycles of strategic and budgetary planning, ensuring funding for adopted or approved environment-related strategic documents;

- (f) Demand, through legal acts on the approval of policy documents, regular and systematic reporting on the implementation of adopted or approved strategic documents through measurable indicators and precise target values set in these policy documents;
- (g) Support the Department for Sustainable Development to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development through systematic analysis of the existing policies and provision of clear guidance on the integration of Sustainable Development Goals into sectoral policies, considering cross-sectoral linkages, ensuring that policies in different sectors are mutually supportive and avoiding uneven levels of harmonization of different sectors with respect to the 2030 Agenda.

Chapter 2: Regulatory and compliance assurance mechanisms

Recommendation 2.1:

The Government should:

- (a) Review and amend, if necessary, all legislation on measures deemed necessary for the implementation of projects of national importance, ensure its compliance with EU and international law and verify that adequate safeguards for public participation are in place;
- (b) Develop, in consultation with relevant ministries, industry representatives and NGOs, legislation and procedures to control construction and demolition waste;
- (c) Issue instructions to local authorities to respect minimum distances between different land uses and seek the advice of the environmental authorities before rezoning, if such is likely to lead to conflict between users because of incompatibilities.

Recommendation 2.2:

The ministry or ministries in charge of the environment, water and forests should review staffing levels to understand whether the number of staff is adequate to undertake the identified regulatory and compliance assurance tasks and, in the absence of additional budget, to adjust the tasks accordingly.

Recommendation 2.3:

The ministry or ministries in charge of the environment, water and forests should:

- (a) Review and strengthen its IT systems to support regulatory and compliance assurance mechanisms;
- (b) Ensure that full documentation on permitting, environmental impact assessment, public participation arrangements, forest management plans and other matters is made available on its or its subsidiary bodies' websites;
- (c) Ensure that annual activity reports include performance statistics showing whether information is made available and in a timely manner, and that the reports be informative, concise and accompanied by statistical information;
- (d) Ensure that the Forest Inspector is fully operational and available to the public, including its functionality for the display of satellite imagery;
- (e) Review how public complaints are handled with a view to routing minor complaints to other local authorities and the police, which should in turn be provided with sufficient information to determine whether an infringement is taking place or has done so;
- (f) Commission the Romanian Forest Research and Management Institute, or other independent competent body, to assess illegal logging, to be carried out in full transparency, and follow up accordingly to respond to the public's concerns;
- (g) Publish in full how hunting quotas are determined, the methodology applied and the underlying data used.

Recommendation 2.4:

The Government should:

- (a) Amend, in consultation with relevant authorities and the public, the legal regime on contraventions to limit the use of injunctions to suspend sanctions, when such injunctions are likely to lead to continuing and possibly irreversible harm to the environment and/or human health;
- (b) Continue to collaborate with EU and international institutions in raising awareness of and providing training on inspection and control activities in the field of environmental crime, involving both environmental and judicial authorities;
- (c) Review and, as necessary, adjust fines so that they are effective, proportionate and dissuasive, in particular for legal entities.

Recommendation 2.5:

The ministry or ministries in charge of the environment, water and forests and the Department of Sustainable Development should collaborate with commerce and industry in promoting voluntary instruments that foster sustainable practices in companies and in requiring that all large companies produce sustainability reports as part of compulsory non-financial reports.

Chapter 3: Greening the economy and financing environmental protection

Recommendation 3.1:

The Government should:

- (a) Revise the existing economic incentives mechanisms and adjust them to stimulate pollution abatement and resource conservation, by increasing taxes on air and water pollution, as well as waste generation, and consider using the additional revenues to increase environmental protection expenditures;
- (b) Regularly implement impact assessment analyses of the existing economic incentive mechanisms, including programmes subsidized via the Environment Fund in order to adjust them accordingly.

Recommendation 3.2:

The Government should ensure that national guidelines for Green Public Procurement and the National Plan for Green Public Procurement are developed and disseminated across all public authorities, and their implementation be monitored.

Recommendation 3.3:

The Government should take steps to favour the participation of the private sector in greening efforts and should:

- (a) Ensure fiscal and legislative stability in order to provide enterprises with a long-term vision of public policy and thus favour investments;
- (b) Increase the support and promotion of resource efficiency measures in enterprises, in particular by investing further in education and training and facilitating access to credit;
- (c) Further promote public-private partnerships, including for the developments of platforms that support a circular economy through a value chain approach;
- (d) Expand and diversify the means through which the Environment Fund supports environment programmes to include other financial instruments in addition to grants.

Recommendation 3.4:

The Government should provide more incentives for Research and Development in green sectors and implement policies favouring employment in the Research and Development on environmental protection in order to achieve global SDG targets 8.4 and 12.2 and to decrease material consumption while increasing resource productivity by:

- (a) Increasing public expenditures in Research and Development for environmental protection (e.g., from the Environment Fund);
- (b) Fostering the collaboration between research organizations and industry (e.g., funding innovation clusters from the Environment Fund).

Recommendation 3.5:

The Government should enhance institutional coordination and administrative capacity to increase absorption rates for the EU funds and to better negotiate and monitor PPP contracts.

Chapter 4: Environmental monitoring and information

Recommendation 4.1:

The Government should:

- (a) Provide adequate and modern monitoring equipment, replacing outdated instruments and ensuring appropriate resources for regular maintenance and servicing of the National Air Quality Monitoring Network;
- (b) Ensure that operators and relevant governmental officials dealing with environmental monitoring and information are trained regularly based on international best practices to strengthen their expertise;
- (c) Work further with relevant civil society initiatives on monitoring PM10 and PM2.5 in cities towards improving national coordination of the air quality information made publicly available, and complementing the official air quality monitoring results with informative data from these networks for the purpose of public information and awareness only.

Recommendation 4.2:

The Government should:

- (a) Ensure stable and adequate funding of forest monitoring activities and support the development of a third national forest inventory;
- (b) Set up and implement a monitoring system for biodiversity and the conservation status of natural habitats and wild species, and ensure stable and adequate funding for relevant activities.

Recommendation 4.3:

The Government should ensure that local administrative authorities and relevant national enterprises:

- (a) Develop a noise monitoring system;
- (b) Ensure adequate capacity to measure noise systematically;
- (c) Use adequate and modern noise measurement equipment and ensure appropriate resources and training for regular noise measurement.

Recommendation 4.4:

The Government should ensure financial and human resources and capacity for the National Reference Laboratory for Air Quality and the National Reference Radioactivity Laboratory to adequately service, update and calibrate monitoring and laboratory equipment.

Recommendation 4.5:

The Government should:

- (a) Encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and integrate sustainability data into their reporting cycles;
- (b) Establish data collection and processing mechanisms on the status of Corporate Social Responsibility in the country.

Recommendation 4.6:

The Government should strengthen the compliance of enterprises with their environmental self-monitoring and reporting obligations, and link self-monitoring data submitted to by enterprises with data collected by national monitoring programmes.

Recommendation 4.7:

The Government should establish a relevant national indicator for reporting on global SDG indicator 12.6.1 to measure progress towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Recommendation 4.8:

The Government should ensure that environmental data are regularly updated and freely and easily accessible online to all.

Chapter 5: Environmental democracy and education for sustainable development

Recommendation 5.1:

The Government should:

- (a) Take the necessary administrative and practical measures to ensure that public officials:
 - i. Respond to the public's requests for information on environmental matters within the established deadlines and, in case of a refusal, to state the reasons for the refusal, and to monitor that these reasons are in line with the legislation in force;
 - ii. Interpret the grounds for refusing access to information on environmental matters in a restrictive way, considering the public interest served by disclosure, and in stating the reasons for a refusal to specify how the public interest served by disclosure was considered, including applying into practice the related provisions of the 2018 Law on Assessing the Impact of Certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment;
- (b) Provide adequate financial resources to ensure training and capacity-development activities for enhancing the knowledge and practical application of access to information on environmental matters;
- (c) Promote and support the establishment of integrated systems of information on environmental matters in all areas of activity, linking them into a portal of information and making that portal accessible for the public on-line and free of charge;
- (d) Establish a penalty for the repeated non-provision of information on environmental matters on the same issues, especially when there are court decisions in favour of the public challenging the non-provision of information.

Recommendation 5.2:

Public authorities in charge of the environment should:

- (a) Continue to implement the "Strategy for the implementation of the provisions of Decision VI/8h regarding Romania's compliance with the requirements of the Aarhus Convention", and set up a mechanism to monitor its implementation and prepare annual reports on progress achieved, making them available on-line;
- (b) Develop a guide on interpreting the provisions of various national legal acts regarding confidentiality, intellectual property or commercial secrecy of information in line with the definition and scope of information on environmental matters set out by the Aarhus Convention;
- (c) Upgrade, further develop and maintain the Integrated Environmental Information System, including allocating adequate financial support for modernizing the System's infrastructure and exploring the possibility to involve universities in the development of an innovative system;

- (d) Develop and promote an on-line training module for access to information on environmental matters and make it mandatory for all civil servants and staff involved in public communication and relations;
- (e) Support other public authorities in possession of information on environmental matters to adapt the training module for their areas of activity;
- (f) Improve the on-line provision of up-to-date consolidated versions of legal, regulatory and normative acts to include all amendments made since their original adoption.

Recommendation 5.3:

The ministry in charge of the environment should:

- (a) Consider establishing effective mechanisms for the involvement of environmental stakeholders in decision-making on the use of funds of the Environment Fund;
- (b) Ensure the Environment Fund Administration considers schools as potential applicants for support, when drafting new environment awareness programmes.

Recommendation 5.4:

The Government should:

- (a) Ensure in practice that public officials provide reasonable time frames, commensurate with the nature and complexity of the document undergoing consultation, for the public to become acquainted with draft strategic documents on environmental matters and to submit their comments;
- (b) Enable the provision of adequate information and training on meaningful public participation in decision-making on environmental matters to civil servants of public authorities at central and local levels;
- (c) Develop a guide to interpret the legal provision for emergency ordinances in a restrictive manner, with a view to diminish their elaboration to an absolute minimum, in order to ensure the participation of the public and other stakeholders in the development of legal, regulatory and normative acts on environmental matters.

Recommendation 5.5:

The ministry or ministries in charge of the environment, water and forests should:

- (a) Revise and adapt the existing procedures for public participation in decision-making to ensure effective public participation in times of pandemics;
- (b) Ensure effective participation of the public and NGOs in decision-making on environmental agreements and international processes and commitments, and in the preparation of national reports and other substantive inputs on their implementation;
- (c) Consider including representatives of relevant environmental NGOs in national delegations participating in international environmental processes.

Recommendation 5.6:

The Government should:

- (a) Increase the capacity to address environmental cases within existing judicial authorities and by organizational adjustments, such as the creation of dedicated environmental courts or environmental divisions within existing courts;
- (b) Enable and conduct training courses for public authorities and judicial institutions to develop their capacity on access to justice in environmental matters in line with the Aarhus Convention;
- (c) Explore options to decrease the duration of legal cases in environmental matters;
- (d) Consider enabling the provision of legal aid for environmental NGOs;
- (e) Exempt from court fees NGOs challenging decisions, acts or omissions by public authorities and State enterprises regarding environmental matters;
- (f) Establish procedures to enforce rapidly the implementation of court decisions in environmental matters.

Recommendation 5.7:

In support of achieving by 2030 the global SDG targets 4.7 and 12.8, the Government and the ministry in charge of education should:

- (a) Develop in cooperation with stakeholders, including academia and environmental NGOs, a national action plan with short-, medium- and long-term actions to support the implementation of national and international strategies related to ESD (until the end of 2022), and implement, monitor and report annually the progress achieved in the country;
- (b) Establish units in charge of EE and/or ESD in relevant public authorities in charge of education at the central level and designate persons responsible for EE and ESD at local level;
- (c) Establish compulsory subjects on environmental protection in the lower secondary education and introduce a compulsory course on ecology for upper secondary students;
- (d) Make mandatory the integration of ESD and sustainable development themes across curricula;
- (e) Include courses with compulsory EE and ESD themes in the study programmes of future teachers and in in-service training of working teachers;
- (f) Establish a new speciality on EE and ESD with a view to educate national specialists in these areas, who would work in education departments;
- (g) Encourage pedagogical institutions and universities to establish departments on EE and ESD with a view to conduct research and develop EE and ESD in the country and attract students;
- (h) Make available adequate financial resources for enabling EE and ESD at all levels;
- (i) Promote and support eco-schools.

Chapter 6: Implementation of international agreements and commitments

Recommendation 6.1:

The Government should improve the content of national reports, by including relevant and updated information at national level, to meet reporting obligations and increase efforts to fulfil its reporting obligations under multilateral environmental agreements, especially under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Recommendation 6.2:

The Government should adopt the necessary measures to accelerate the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds, including in the 2014–2020 cycle.

Recommendation 6.3:

The Government should:

- (a) Revitalize the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Coordination of the Integration of Environmental Protection into Sectoral Policies and Strategies at the National Level and give it a clear mandate, combined with the necessary resources, to exercise inter-ministerial coordination functions and to monitor the implementation of international obligations on the environment, or related to the environment, assumed by Romania;
- (b) Support the ministry in charge of the environment to ensure that multilateral environmental agreements are implemented also in other sectors and ministries.

Recommendation 6.4:

The authorities in charge of the environment, health and transport should:

- (a) Identify responsible units or departments within environment, transport and health authorities to engage in the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme;

- (b) Set up a mechanism involving relevant stakeholders to coordinate policies related to transport, health and the environment with an effective exchange of information;
- (b) Identify policies and good practices based on the experience acquired within the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme to be implemented in the country.

Recommendation 6.5:

The Government should request the ministries in charge of the environment, regional development and agriculture to:

- (a) Set land degradation neutrality targets;
- (b) Evaluate the agri-environment measures implemented so far and draw up and implement new ones that are efficient for the purpose for which they are intended.

Recommendation 6.6:

The National Institute of Statistics, in cooperation with the Department for Sustainable Development and other relevant authorities, should ensure the collection of data for global SDG indicators 15.7.1, 15.c.1 and 11.4.1.

Recommendation 6.7:

[The Government should enhance institutional coordination and administrative capacity for the implementation of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians.](#)

Recommendation 6.78:

The Government should consider accession to:

- (a) The Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments;
- (b) The International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships.

Chapter 7: Climate change

Recommendation 7.1:

The Government should:

- (a) Set up a monitoring framework for the evaluation and reporting of the state of implementation of the National Strategy on Climate Change and Economic Growth Based on Low Carbon Emissions for the period 2016–2030, providing indicators that present quantitative estimates of impacts and effects;
- (b) Evaluate the indicators used in the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy on Climate Change and Economic Growth Based on Low Carbon Emissions for the period 2016–2020, use the lessons learned from the evaluation in setting up a new national action plan for the next implementation period and ensure regular, annual or biannual reporting on the progress of the action plan with substantive information, including qualitative and quantitative data and costs and benefits of measures, and increase the public information and awareness of the results of the actions.

Recommendation 7.2:

The Government should:

- (a) Consider replacing older coal- and gas-fired power plants by new installations based on renewable energies;
- (b) Consider enhancing the share of energy from renewable sources in order to reach at least 34 per cent by 2030;
- (c) Improve the energy efficiency targets to a level that is more consistent with the EU level and Romania's potential.

Recommendation 7.3:

The Government should:

- (a) Improve the energy efficiency of old district heating systems in apartment buildings by subsidizing technical provisions and rehabilitation of buildings and by stimulating awareness of energy use of the inhabitants by installation of individual meter systems;
- (b) Create incentives to stimulate a more economic use of energy sources considering the concerns of poor and vulnerable parts of the population;
- (c) Support the enhancement of energy efficiency and address the issue of seismic risk in buildings by considering the introduction of specific incentives and also increasing the use of EU Funds such as the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund;
- (d) Develop financing products to support beneficiaries of renovations and the use of renewable energy in buildings;
- (e) Support research and development and demonstration projects for new technology and techniques to enhance energy efficiency in buildings.

Recommendation 7.4:

The Government should:

- (a) Stimulate the demand for low emission vehicles and the move of transportation to low emission modes;
- (b) Encourage municipalities to invest in better public transport with lower GHG emissions, public transport lanes and in more safe walking and biking zones, especially in urban areas;
- (c) Encourage municipalities to limit urban driving by applying low emission zones that are forbidden to high emission vehicles;
- (d) Encourage municipalities with heavy traffic and high levels of pollution to apply user fees in congested areas;
- (e) Prepare for infrastructure that accommodates the use of electric cars;
- (f) Consider the possibility of modal shifts from road to rail transport;
- (g) Implement emission performances standards and promote the use of biofuels according to the national legislation.

Recommendation 7.5:

The Government should:

- (a) Invest in the water storage capacity, including dam safety, while minimizing the environmental impacts of its interventions;
- (b) Implement measures to increase the efficiency of irrigation in the main agricultural areas (mainly the southeast) by improved reservoir management and transfer between basins;
- (c) Investigate the selection of climate resistant crops and the optimization of fertilizer use;
- (d) Stimulate minimum tillage and modern manure management in fields in order to minimize GHG emissions;
- (e) Improve the awareness of farmers about climate change mitigation and adaptation measures;

- (f) Assess and address the impacts of extreme weather events on the industrial and mining sectors, to avoid possible heavy environmental damages.

Chapter 8: Air protection

Recommendation 8.1:

The ministry in charge of the environment should:

- (a) Revise the list of air quality zones and agglomerations merging them when practical for air quality assessment purposes;
- (b) Optimize in each zone or agglomeration the necessary minimum number of air quality stations and monitor all parameters for which the mandatory monitoring is required;
- (c) Revise the classification of the types of stations within the air quality monitoring network in accordance with their locations and impacts monitored;
- (d) Increase the number of stations with automatic PM_{2.5} monitoring;
- (e) Increase the number of rural background stations in order to assess background level of pollution;
- (f) Resume reporting data from three EMEP stations to the EMEP Programme;
- (g) Require industries subject to environmental permits or integrated environmental permits to monitor and report on air quality to the respective LEPA.

Recommendation 8.2

The ministry in charge of the environment, through the National Environmental Protection Agency, should:

- (a) Ensure the calibration of instruments for air quality monitoring, in line with the EU Air Quality Directive;
- (b) Improve data time series coverage in zones and agglomerations where continuous automatic monitoring is necessary through regular maintenance of the air quality network.

Recommendation 8.3

The Government should:

- (a) Adopt a comprehensive strategic framework for the improvement of air quality, ensuring measurable targets and indicators, a high level of coherence with local air quality plans and regular reporting on implementation effects;
- (b) Improve mechanisms for air quality management at the local level by promoting joint air quality plans and providing clear guidance on air quality maintenance and improvement measures within the national strategic framework for the improvement of air quality.

Recommendation 8.4

In order to achieve global SDG targets 3.9 and 11.6 by 2030, the Government should develop a roadmap to reduce the impact of air pollution on human health and the environment through a special focus on air quality and a substantial reduction in the number of deaths and diseases caused by air pollution.

Recommendation 8.5

The Government should raise public awareness on the negative impact of air pollution on human health and the environment, ensuring that data on air quality provided to the public contain all necessary information, such as sources of air pollution, short- and long-term impacts, recommendations for protection of vulnerable population groups and advice on how to contribute to emission reductions.

Chapter 9: Water management

Recommendation 9.1:

The Government should develop and adopt a comprehensive water management strategy, addressing all water relevant issues, including gender mainstreaming, in a long-term approach, by launching effective dialogues with all relevant groups and organizations to benefit from information about the ongoing situation and suggestions for the future.

Recommendation 9.2:

To improve monitoring of global SDG indicator 3.9.2 on the estimated mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene, the Government should ensure that:

- (a) Drinking water quality data are collected;
- (b) An in-depth analysis is carried out assessing whether all the requirements of the Council Directive 98/83/EC are fulfilled.

Recommendation 9.3:

The Government should:

- (a) Invest in water infrastructure, such as water supply systems, water pipes, wastewater treatment plants and sanitation networks, in particular in rural areas;
- (b) Review the requirements in technical normative documents on industrial wastewater discharges, in order to set wastewater discharge limits for different branches of industry;
- (c) Ensure that, when revising river basin management plans, future drinking water needs and water quality objectives are taken into account in order to consider exploring additional water sources such as additional reservoirs.

Recommendation 9.4:

The Government should review, adopt and implement the strategy for the management of sewage sludge considering new trends in this area.

Chapter 10: Waste and chemicals management

Recommendation 10.1:

The ministry or ministries in charge of the environment, water and forests should complete and implement waste-related regulations that undergo Regulatory Impact Assessment and be targeted and tailor-made to achieve high recycling rates and standards in the construction and demolition waste and wastewater treatment sludge sectors.

Recommendation 10.2:

The Government should encourage the remaining counties and Bucharest to implement and operate solid waste integrated management systems to substantially reduce the adverse impact of waste on human health and the environment and to achieve global SDG target 11.6 by 2030.

Recommendation 10.3:

The Government should introduce a comprehensive landfill tax, with a transitional period to announce and negotiate this intention to the public and for economic sectors to be able to make necessary arrangements, with a view to support the country's efforts to fulfil SDG 12.

Recommendation 10.4:

The Government should elaborate and implement programmes to remediate contamination caused by the State prior to privatization of enterprises and not addressed within privatization contracts, and act to rehabilitate the contaminated sites.

Recommendation 10.5:

The Government should progressively adjust the waste collection tariff for citizens within a medium-term horizon so that it gets closer to a full-cost-recovery scheme, while preserving its affordability by taking into account the need to protect poor and vulnerable parts of the population.

Recommendation 10.6:

The Government should entrust the National Institute of Statistics and the National Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that waste management data are collected, enabling timely reporting to international institutions to the required reporting quality, and made publicly available in an online database.

Chapter 11: Biodiversity and protected areas

Recommendation 11.1:

The Government should:

- (a) Assess the results of implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2014–2020 and draft a new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the coming period;
- (b) Develop national level Red Lists and ensure their adoption by the ministry in charge of the environment;
- (c) Ensure the elaboration and approval of the list of invasive alien species;
- (d) Develop a methodology for the designation of ecological corridors to ensure coherence of conservation actions taken in neighbouring protected areas;
- (e) Establish, in cooperation with academia and relevant institutions, a national level system to elaborate studies on species and habitats and monitor their trends;
- (f) Increase and secure a dedicated budget for biodiversity conservation.

Recommendation 11.2:

The Government should:

- (a) Develop a comprehensive long-term strategy for protected area management with a view to provide coherence to the protected area system;
- (b) Introduce a system for timely approval of management plans of protected areas;
- (c) Introduce a system of regular self-assessment of the effectiveness of management of protected areas, including economic analysis of the impact of economic activities on protected areas;
- (d) Re-evaluate the conservation value of the natural protected areas of national interest and, if necessary, revise the conservation objectives that were set at their designation;
- (e) Revise the Guide for developing management plans of protected natural areas, approved by the Ministerial Order No. 304/2018, in line with national legislation and best international practice (e.g., IUCN, CBD, EU Directives) to enable the effective and straightforward use of protected area management plans by protected areas administrations and other stakeholders;
- (f) Ensure effective involvement of Romsilva, other relevant stakeholders (such as land tenants, natural resource managers and environmental NGOs) and the public in the decision-making process regarding the management of natural protected areas;
- (g) Mobilize resources to strengthen the territorial units of the National Agency for Natural Protected Areas to provide management of protected areas under the responsibility of the Agency;
- (h) Develop a dedicated budget for the management of protected areas, especially in Natura 2000 sites;
- (i) Develop a national system of ecosystem services assessment that quantifies their value and establish effective mechanisms for granting payments to the landowners or tenants concerned;

- (j) Develop effective mechanisms for compensating the economic losses of landowners or tenants in protected areas due to restrictions imposed by protected area management plans, in line with Law No. 49/2011 approving the Government Emergency Ordinance No. 57/2007 on the Regime of Protected Natural Areas, Conservation of Natural Habitats, Wild Flora and Fauna.

Recommendation 11.3:

The Government should:

- (a) Ensure the integrity of the forest ecosystem by including, to the extent possible, virgin and quasi-virgin forests adjacent to the designated World Heritage Sites in the National Catalogue of Virgin and Quasi-Virgin Forests;
- (b) Ensure that, within Romania, logging is and remains strictly prohibited within the World Heritage property “Ancient and Primeval Beech Forest of the Carpathian and Other Regions of Europe”, and that no logging operations are allowed in the buffer zones of the site components if they could have a negative impact on the natural processes of the World Heritage property;
- (c) Develop an adequate legal framework on building ecological reconstruction of degraded forest ecosystems, including due to illegal logging, and take measures and allocate funds for its implementation.

Recommendation 11.4:

The Government should:

- (a) Increase expenditures related to biodiversity, forests and ecosystems conservation;
 - (b) Ensure that data on expenditures related to biodiversity, forests and ecosystems conservation are collected in order to report on the global SDG indicator 15.a.1 (b) and be used for decision-making processes related to these topics.
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