

## IMPACT OF REGIONAL OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME ON CULTURAL HERITAGE. THE ROMANIAN CASE

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### **Abstract**

Cultural heritage is an important factor for people in a sensitive way, as they feel pride and ownership, which is not immediately and directly quantifiable.

The value added of projects should therefore be sought in the impact that heritage sites have on the local, regional and national communities, and the opportunity to use the sites for education in heritage, culture, art, history. Preservation and promotion of cultural heritage is very specific and costly. The Structural Funds provided more than M€ 7.2 for territorial projects in Romania (period 2007-2013). The article aims to evaluate the impact of structural and national Funds on cultural heritage, in Romania.

**Keywords:** regional development, cultural heritage Structural Funds, evaluation

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The concept of 'cultural heritage' as a rule is defined by two perspectives: the tangible and intangible one. Tangible cultural patrimony is represented by monuments, churches, archeologic sites, sculptures, paintings, manuscripts, ruins of old towns, etc. intangible cultural heritage includes traditions, oral history, rituals, etc. that are acknowledged as part of local or regional communities.

Romania has a significant cultural patrimony, both tangible and intangible. Thus, according to a report drafted by the Ministry of Culture and National Identity, in Romania are 27,384 worship places (18 religious beliefs), out of which 16,403 are held by the Orthodox Church (60%) [1].

The cultural-historic, and ethno-folklore patrimony of high value and tourist attractiveness shows an advanced decline state, a fact with negative impact on the quality of life for the resident population and on the development of the local economies.

After 1990, the funds allotted to protecting cultural patrimony diminished considerably, as several times this sector was left beyond in shadow (the amounts dedicated to culture were among the lowest within the European Union). The development of the cultural patrimony's infrastructure might provide for increased opportunities, assimilated in particular to tourism promotion. Moreover, it is found that the less developed areas concentrate the most important cultural/tourist objectives [2].

After the accession to the European Union, Romania had at disposal the required funds for rebuilding the general, medical and roads infrastructure, and the one corresponding to the cultural patrimony being found amongst the investment

priorities. By the end of the first period of programming, an attempt was made to evaluate the regional impact that community and national funds had on rebuilding the national cultural patrimony, and indirectly on tourism.

In the following, we present the main aspects and findings that resulted from evaluating the regional impact of implementing the regional development policy on the cultural patrimony in Romania.

## **2. EVALUATION CONTEXT**

Tourism contributes to GDP by 2.6% (in the year 2017), on increase as compared with 2016 (1.5%). Within the EU, the average contribution is by 3.9%, and at global level by 3.1%. The development of the tourism sector leads to triggering local economic development and to creating new jobs either directly (in institutions with attributions in the field of patrimony), or indirectly (in the field of patrimony preservation and restoration), and inclusively (in the cultural industry and in tourism) [3].

After the EU accession, Romania developed the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) that benefitted from Structural and Cohesion Funds financing by 4.4 billion Euros. The main ROP objective aims to diminish inequalities among regions and to support balanced and sustainable economic and social development. ROP pursues predominantly infrastructure investments (urbane, transportation, schools, hospitals, tourism, etc.).

ROP is implemented on regions, based on *Priority Axes and Major Fields of Intervention (MFI)*. One of the main Axes is the one dedicated to tourism. The Priority Axis 5 entitled *Sustainable development and tourism promotion* received an allocation by 14% from ROP 2007-2013. Tourism is supported by the Regional Operational Programme, the allotted funds reaching about 616.77 mill. Euro, out of which 558.90 mill. Euro ERDF contribution and 57.87 mill. Euro national contribution. In the framework of this Axis, there is the Major Intervention Field 5.1 *Restoration and sustainable valuation of the cultural patrimony and creating/modernising related infrastructures* that received funds in value of 235.40 mill. Euro, out of which 200.09 million are ERDF contribution, while the rest is represented by the national (public sources) contribution, from which 30.60 million Euro are from the State Budget, while 4.71 million Euros are from the local budgets [4].

The types of projects financed by MFI 5.1 aim to preserving, restoring, consolidating, rehabilitating and protection cultural monuments (historical monuments of national and universal value, of the local cultural patrimony, UNESCO).

The tourism sector has significant economic potential and may contribute to regional and local development. The impact of this field on the development level a region consists mainly in creating jobs by putting to good use the cultural and natural patrimony specific to each area. The estimated impact of the allocated structural funds was shown by the realisation of 100 restoration projects for the patrimony infrastructure with touristic potential and by the creation of 200 jobs, concomitantly with the increase by 5% in the number of tourists. The total value of a project is comprised between a minimum value by 0.4 million Euro/project and a maximum one by 2.92 million Euros/project (EU funds), depending on the size and complexity of the projects [4, 5].

On regions, the distribution of the allocations from structural funds dedicated to this sub-field was realised by taking account of the GDP/inhabitant value, and most

restauration projects are located in the North-East Region (16 projects), followed by the Regions South-Muntenia, and South-West (14 projects) and South-East (13 projects) (Table 1).

Table 1: Situation at the time of drafting ROP 2007-2013, at regional level

Region	Allocation (mil. euro)	% from allocation	No. of financeable projects	Jobs created by ROP (initial estimate)
North-East	38.42	16.32	16	33
South-East	31.19	13.25	13	26
South-Muntenia	33.5	14.23	14	28
South-West	32.98	14.01	14	28
West	24.34	10.34	10	21
North-West	28.46	12.09	12	24
Centre	25.66	10.90	10	22
Bucharest-Ilfov	20.85	8.86	9	18
Total	235.4	100.00	100	200

Source: [6]

The average value of a restauration project for the cultural patrimony is of about 2.354 million Euros, the average number of jobs created by project being of two workplaces.

As regards the current programming period 2014-2020, in ROP is maintained the Priority Axis (PA) 5 entitled *Improvement of the urban area and preservation, protection, and sustainable valuation of cultural patrimony*, and in its framework, *Major Fields of Intervention 5.1* (MFI) is concerned with *Preservation, protection and promotion of natural and cultural patrimony* (the allotted amount being by 30% higher). Thus, this field has an allocation by 8.25 billion Euro, out of which 6.7 billion Euro from European Regional Development Fund, and 1.5 billion Euro, the national contribution [7].

PA-5 is correlated with the Sectoral Strategy in the field of Culture and National Patrimony 2014-2020. The cultural patrimony measures are identified just as part of the tourism development priorities (exceptions: the regions South-East, South, Bucharest-Ilfov, and South-West).

Romania has a wide range of tourist attractive destinations, included both on the list of the UNESCO objectives of cultural patrimony, and on the list of national and universal interest cultural patrimony that are identified by the national legislation as historical monuments.

The number of historical monuments from Romania, according to the listing of historical monuments realised by the Ministry of Culture and National Cultural Patrimony is close to 20,000, and which are regarding necessary funds and volume of works very different as weights [8]. Respectively, from buildings requiring tens of millions of Euros, like large residential buildings, castles, and the fortified churches from Transylvania, monasteries, and historical urban areas that requiring only modest investments (such as wood churches, or small village houses owning the same historical value as the large assemblies).

The cultural-historic and ethno-folklore patrimony present a high touristic value and attractiveness but are at the same time in advanced states of deterioration, thus having negative impact on the quality of life for the resident population, and for the development of the local economies.

After 1990, the specific issues of the field were placed on a secondary position (the amounts allotted to culture were amongst the lowest within the European Union, 2010).

The investment potential of the field is huge, not only from the perspective of the supply, but also from the one of the intervention availabilities, and of the fundamental resources for sustainable local/regional development.

According to the final Implementation Report [6], the expected outcomes were the following:

- 100 restauration/protection/preservation projects for the cultural patrimony and for modernising the related infrastructure (immediate realisation indicator/output);
- 200 new jobs created/maintained – cultural patrimony (result indicator/result).
- +5% increase in the numbers of tourists (output indicator) [9].

The main beneficiaries of the projects finalised within the MFI 5.1 are religious entities and the Local Public Authorities, while the benefits of MFI 5.1 were directed to monuments financed within the intervention and to tourist activities in the area of implementing the projects.

### **3. THEORETICAL APPROACH**

Evaluation is a process of “judging the value of a public intervention based on some explicit criteria and standards” (for instance, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, equity, etc.). The purpose of this process is to contribute to achieving accountable governance by feedback about efficiency, efficacy, and performances of public policies, organisations, or programmes.

At EU level, evaluation is compulsory for all programmes financed by structural and cohesion funds, irrespective of the level of intervention (sectoral or territorial) [10]. Evaluation pursues a series of objectives and is realised during various stages of the process of drafting and implementing the programme.

- *Strategic evaluation* – pursues the analysis of the public policy evolution, as compared with national and community priorities.
- *Operational evaluation (ongoing)* – realised during the public policy implementation.
- *Ex-ante evaluation* –for optimising allotted resources by intervention (programme, project) and for improving the quality of the programming process as a whole right from its implementation start.
- *Ex-post evaluation* – examines the final impact of the programme.

Frequently, evaluation represents a true challenge, because it does not pursue just the contribution of each element, but also the synergies between them, or the cross-sectional impact matrix. Evaluation is affected by a series of factors, among which we mention:

1. Public intervention management;
2. Level of involved evaluators;
3. Receptiveness of management authorities;
4. Involved financial resources.

Evaluation presupposes a cognitive process by which are defined the main elements and the relationships between foreseen inputs, planned activities, and

expected outputs. Public interventions have as basis causality links between events occurred at various levels (inputs, activities, outputs, objectives) as shown with the aid of the following formula:

**Needs → [Objectives → Inputs → Activities → Outputs → ] Outcomes → Effects**

*The relational system between needs, objectives, inputs/outputs, outcomes and effects substantiate the evaluation process of the programme's impact. Thus, whenever the objectives determined by the programme are expressed in terms of outputs, the efficiency may be measured as relationship between outputs (exits) and inputs (entries), costs and benefits, etc.*

The most important element of the evaluation – impact – may be regarded in terms of outputs (outputs-physical results) and effects (outcomes, long-term effects on the beneficiaries). In the practice of evaluating public interventions financed by structural funds, the initial impact is known as output of implementing the programme, while the long-term impact is regarded as sustainable effect in time and space. At the same time, the usefulness of the programme is evaluated, along with the way in which outputs mitigate economic and social needs, and the long-term effects, etc. Depending on the impact categories taken into account, the objectives of the programme can be determined that are regarded as operational (outputs), specific (results), or general (outcomes) [11].

The indicators used in public evaluations must satisfy a series of quality criteria: (1) they must overlap with the needs identified by the programme; (2) they must be simple and easy understandable (number of jobs, number of kilometres of modernised public roads, number of hospitals, etc.). Moreover, (3) there must be a certain balance between indicators; (4) they must present the significant implications of the decision process, and (5) they need to be found in the national or regional statistics.

The system of indicators represents the most important instrument of evaluation, and the categories of indicators can be grouped as following: specific indicators, generic and key-indicators, context and programme indicators, resource indicators, output indicators, outcome, impact, relevance, efficiency, efficacy, and performance indicators. On evaluating public policy, input indicators and output indicators, together with outcome and impact indicators are taken into account predominantly.

In order to evaluate impact and progresses recorded in implementing the various public policies in the EU member-states, a number of key-indicators were set up (Regulation no. 1083/2005 – Art. 37) that must meet the imposed quality criteria: specificity, measurability, availability, relevance and timeliness (SMART).

The quality of the evaluations is directly influenced by the quality of the existing and analysed data and information, but also by the experience and independence of the evaluators involved in the process.

#### **4. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

For evaluating the impact of ROP 2007-2013 on the cultural patrimony in Romania, the following evaluation instruments were used:

1. Documentary research – the data banks and official statistical information sources (NIS, Eurostat, etc.), and at local/regional level were analysed the relevant documents (implemented projects; procedural handbooks, guides),

specialised literature (studies, analyses, etc.), the site [www.fonduri-ue.ro](http://www.fonduri-ue.ro); [www.inforegio.ro](http://www.inforegio.ro), and web sites of the projects.

2. Semi-structured interviews with involved factors;
3. Case studies – for obtaining additional qualitative information (in-point issues, specific conditions of implementation, determinant factors for the success of the intervention, etc.), and which ensured the regional coverage on types of interventions and categories of projects.

Finally, it should be mentioned that as regards ROP a series of evaluations were realised, some of them contributing to the realisation of the present article, as follows[12]:

- Ex-ante ROP 2007-2013 evaluation
- Intermediary evaluation (Oct. 2009)
- Ex-post ROP 2007-2013 evaluation
- Impact evaluation of MFI 5.1 (Jun. 2015).

## **5. SITUATION AFTER IMPLEMENTATION**

The funds spent and aimed to the cultural patrimony (MFI 5.1) amounted to 235.40 million euro. According to the Applicant's Guide, the types of financed projects were preservation, restauration, consolidation, rehabilitation, and protection of cultural monuments (historical monuments of national and universal value, of the local cultural patrimony, UNESCO). In total, 93 projects were finalised, the distribution on regions being as follows: *North East (16.32%), South East 13.25%, South-Muntenia (14.23%), South West (14%), West (10.3%), North West (12%), Centre (10.9%), Bucharest-Ilfov (8.86%)* [6].

Overall, the average value of the implemented projects was of about 4 million EUR (total funds, EU, State Budget, and the beneficiary's contribution). The highest average value was recorded in the West region (4 projects with an average value of about 8.3 million euro) and the lowest average value in the South-Muntenia Region (2.9 million euro). There were 82 unique beneficiaries, from whom 34 local public authorities, 32 worship places, 15 partnerships, and 1 non-governmental organisation.

## **6. GENERAL EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT**

Based on performed analyses, the findings are as follows:

- The financing shares were different at regional level.
- The impact was different from one region to another, but also at local level.
- The North East Region received most funds (3 times as many funds than the Bucharest-Ilfov Region), followed by the South-East one (2 times as many funds than Bucharest-Ilfov). At the same time, here was recorded also the most significant impact.
- Local Public Authorities were the main beneficiary of MFI 5.1 (68%), while worship institutions received 32% from the financial allocation.

On regions, the situation is presented hereunder [13].

*North-East Region*

- Important cultural potential (strongholds, memorial houses, museums, monasteries, churches).
- The financing mitigated pressing needs.
- Financed projects: 22 projects.
- Value of project: 414.61 million Lei.
- Beneficiaries: 50% were Territorial Administrative Units – TAU (especially county Councils and town halls of municipalities), and 50% worship institutions.
- Balanced territorial distribution, with somewhat higher density in the counties Suceava and Botosani.
- Project with major regional impact: "Touristic valorisation of the Metropolitan Assembly from Iasi" – in value of 60. 2 mill. Lei.

Project of reference: The touristic valorisation of the Metropolitan Assembly from Iasi, SMIS code 10904 [14] (60.2 million Lei, out of which 98% non-reimbursable financial assistance). The financed operation aimed to the restauration, protection and preservation of the national cultural patrimony of touristic potential. The beneficiary was the Metropolitan of Moldova and Bukovina. The actual investment consisted in:

1. 6 historical monuments from Group A restored and protected;
2. 19.134 sqm. of restored surface;
3. over 18.000 sqm of landscaping, pedestrian and car roads realized; 5000 cubic meters of concrete, 800 lighting appliances; 450 tons of steel fibber reinforced concrete reinforcements; 80.000 bricks for realising the domes and cubicles; 8000 metres of pipes for installations; 20 km of cables.
4. 300 workers and 50 experts involved.



Picture 1: Metropolitan Assembly from Iasi  
Source: [14]

### *South-East Region*

This region is the second region as regards attracting and using funds from the MFI 5.1. There were 19 projects, with a total value of 253.77 mill. Lei. The main profile of the beneficiaries is: 3 beneficiaries were worship units, 16 Local Public Administration (LPA), and the territorial distribution was balanced, the counties having in average three projects. The restauration and consolidation projects are predominant for patrimony objectives of intrinsic patrimonial/historical value, while their touristic potential was secondary. The sound geographic distribution of the projects, in relation to the morphology of the region does not ensure the basis for developing cultural tourism. The projects are dissimilar, without thematic or historical links, and thus dedicated cultural tourism routes are lacking. The HIPERB

project aimed the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the facades of the National Museum of History and Archaeology from Constanta. At the same time, we might remind here the project "Restoration, consolidation, protection, preservation and valorisation of the archaeological site Capidava Stronghold", in value of 74.23 million euro.

The *Bucharest-Ilfov Region* holds 10% of the built patrimony. However, the lacking touristic or cultural strategy at the time of selecting the projects resulted in the action of the town hall of the Bucharest Municipality based on some ad-hoc taken decisions. The entire intervention logic at that time considered much too less the specifics of the cultural tourism activity, and the projects were not prioritised depending on accessibility and connections to other patrimony objectives that could have been included in cultural routes. Bucharest is attractive because it is the Capital of Romania, and the main city, and tourists do not come purposely to visit patrimony objectives, being a complement of the touristic behaviour. The main financed patrimony objective targeted the consolidation and protection of the monument Palace of Patriarchy owned by the Orthodox Church. Moreover, the budget of this project was higher than the total for all the other financed projects: Arcul de Triumf (the Arch of Triumph), Cesianu House, the museum Mina Minovici, the Astronomical Observatory Vasile Urseanu, and the Church Saint Sophia Floreasca. The projects were concentrated exclusively in the Bucharest Municipality, while for the Ilfov County no project was financed.

#### *South-West Region*

*The South-West Region* is a land of monasteries, churches and hermitages, as it is second after Moldova regarding numbers and importance of these worship places. The region totals over 60 monasteries and orthodox hermitages covering all historical periods of the region as of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Some of them have exterior frescoes of particular value and are places of pilgrimage with good touristic potential, as well. 11 projects financed by MFI 5.1 were finalised amounting to 176 mil. Lei, their majority concentrated in the Craiova municipality (7 projects).

High interest was shown for rehabilitating the museum assemblies/buildings, the main beneficiaries of the projects (7 projects) being represented by the local authorities. In the cult patrimony area (4 projects), remarkable is the project *Consolidation, restoration, and re-operationalising the Seat of the Craiova Archdiocese, the Stronghold Sucidava from the town Corabia*. Other such projects were the *Rehabilitation of the Cultural Palace Theodor Costescu, along with the Stronghold Severin (the Local Council Drobeta Turnu Severin)*, and the *Rehabilitation and touristic integration of the historical monument the Church "Toți Sfinții" (All Saints) Proieni* (Brezoi Local Council).

The investments fall within the typology of the projects targeting the rehabilitation/preservation of ensembles with intrinsic patrimonial value and lower touristic potential. The main issue felt in the area is access to the rehabilitated objectives, as many investments are required for the transport infrastructure.

*The West Region* had a low number of projects (four projects), the funds dedicated to the cultural patrimony being of 176 mill. lei. The main beneficiaries were the local public administration (two municipalities and a village) and one worship ensemble, the Roman-Catholic Episcopate of Timisoara (for the project Maria Radna). The projects were well planned and executed, with direct impact on increasing the numbers of tourists. This aspect is obvious especially in the case of



the "Stronghold Mălăiești from Salasu de Sus" which entered the tourist routes. The largest project was "Rehabilitation of the Old Historical Centre in the Arad Municipality" (58.78 mill. Lei). The project "Development of cultural tourism in the West Region by renewing and including in the tourist routes the Radna Church and Monastery" had the most significant local impact. As result of the rehabilitation, the cultural and ecumenical life increased, as more tourist were attracted (from about 80,000/ year to 110,000/ year), and the local economy gained as result.



Radna Monastery  
Source: [15]

Stronghold Mălăiești - Sălașu de Sus  
Source :[16]

Picture 2: Projects financed in West region

#### *The North-West Region*

In this region were recorded limitations because of the ownership regime, as ROP does not finance patrimony objectives in private ownership (retroceded like the Castle from Bontida, the Castle from Jilau, etc.). Nevertheless, the region has good potential for attracting tourists by its cultural circuits. In the region were finalised 12 projects, with a total value of 185.43 mill Lei. The specific of the projects was focused on creating tourist circuits, medieval fairs, wood churches, and Roman castra. The beneficiaries were most represented by TAU (eight projects), and four cult entities.

*The Centre Region* has significant touristic-cultural potential. Remarkable are the fortified evangelical churches from Transylvania, and the rearrangement and preservation of some medieval strongholds. Seven projects were finalised with a total budget by 175.6 mill. Lei. The beneficiaries were 5 TAU and 2 cult entities (both evangelical). From among these projects we mention "Rehabilitation of the Historical Centre – Eastern Route, Southern Route – Northern Route – the Vauban-type buttresses Alba Iulia – access path, lightning and specific urban furniture" (a record number of 154,700 tourists were reported yearly). From among the six counties constituting the region, four received financing by MFI 5.1, and in particular the counties Alba and Sibiu, and synergy effects existed due to the correlation with other projects.

In the *South-Muntenia Region* were implemented 14 projects with a total value of 183.73 million Lei and the main beneficiaries were TAUs from small towns. The beneficiaries' profile is represented by 6 cult entities, and 8 TAUs. The financed projects are too small and unrelated, and with a low potential of being part of tourist circuits.

The advantage is represented by the closeness to Bucharest, which provides opportunities for the so-called 'one day trip' tourism. From among the projects, we mention the "Restauration and sustainable valorisation of the cultural patrimony, as well as the creation/modernisation of connected infrastructures in the area of the Brancovenesc Potlogi ensemble" in value of 42.81 mill. Lei. However, a weak promotion was found in the case of the objectives financed by ROP (for instance, the museum complex Golesti, the Brancovenesc ensemble from Potlogi, the Pana Filipescu Mansion from Filipestii de Targ).

## **7. FINDINGS - SYNTHETICALLY**

As result of evaluating the implementation of MFI 5.1 in the framework of the ROP 2007-2013, the conclusion was reached that this field mitigated an important need of financing in the field of rehabilitating the cultural patrimony. The beneficiaries of the projects considered that all modernised projects "*did not have any other chance of being rehabilitated and consolidated, and that no other financing alternatives were on hand*", as the governmental resources allocated to the field are limited.

At the time of initiating the projects, the majority of the rehabilitated structures were closed or outside tourist circuits. Moreover, at the time of the financial allocation (the year 2006), but also at the time of selecting the projects, a national vision to be included in a strategy was inexistent. The coordination at the level of the public institutions was not good, both at central and local level in the field of cultural tourism, at the respective time.

The highest success enjoyed the *stronghold-type* projects (Suceava, Alba Iulia, Deva, Oradea, Piatra Neamt), and the ones of the *monastery-ensemble* type (Maria-Radna, Moldovita, Sucevita, Dragomirna from Suceava). The ensembles from the Iasi Metropolitan, and of the Bucharest Patriarchy benefitted of massive financing and contributing significantly to the development of the pilgrimage/ecumenical type tourism.

All beneficiaries reported the *increase in the number of tourists*, and some increases were significant (in some instances, the casual link could be made easily between the rehabilitated objective, and the increase in the number of tourists). The implementation of the projects financed by ROP, did not influence the extension of the touristic season, though many of the financed projects have set the achievement of this indicator after finalisation.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

The interventions financed in view of restoring the cultural patrimony had actual and positive impact at local level. Thus, benefits were reported for the local entrepreneurs (guesthouses, restaurants, small manufacturers), and the use of the local labour force for the various works led to increased local attractiveness as touristic destination [17].

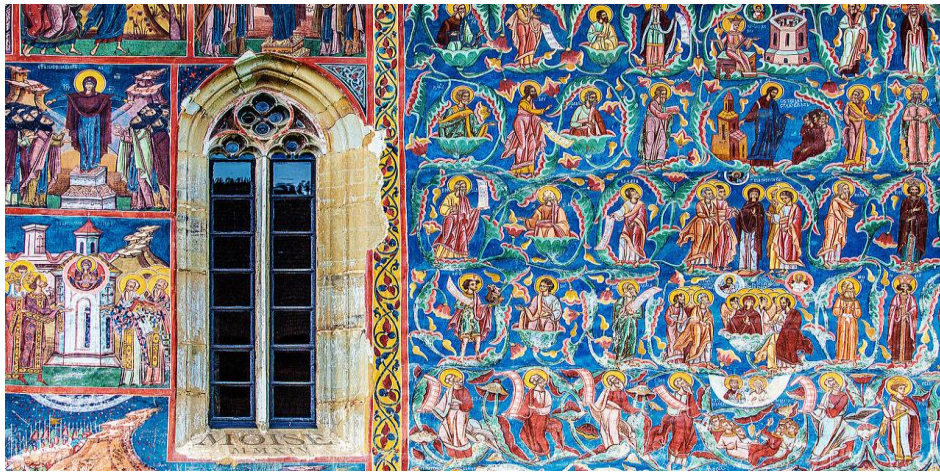
It was found that it also had particular impact on local identity, the local communities becoming aware about the value of the patrimony entities in their localities. The impact on the community and on the local identity was in reverse proportion to the size of the locality.

At regional level, the impact was given by major projects and less by the synergy between them. The North East region is the region reporting the most significant impact.

Overall, the regional impact was better within the regions if there was successful correlation between various projects with historical value.

The national impact was not significant, as this was perceived as a process of remedying some emergencies and of restoring some patrimony objectives with intrinsic value.

The general remark was that the projects financed by MFI 5.1 contributed significantly to extending the life of numerous objectives of national patrimony.



Source: [18]

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