

Territorial Reforms in Romania – Historical Evidence and Political Dimensions

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1307000419>

Received: 05 August 2026; Accepted: 11 August 2026; Published: 22 August 2026

ABSTRACT

In Romania, the reforms regarding the organization of the national territory, have been influenced both by political will and by historical traditions and external influences. The common element of the reforms was the county and, sometimes, the intention to create larger regions, in which development strategies and economic and social policies could be applied. The historical context in which the administrative-territorial reforms in Romania were carried out left its mark on the configuration of territorial structures. Correlated and integrated with economic and social changes, the administrative reforms aimed to create territorial structures that would contribute to the efficiency of the application of measures and actions aimed at reducing certain imbalances between different regions, but also better control over them. The impact of these reforms materialized in a series of phenomena that entailed quantitative and qualitative adjustments. Recently, we are witnessing new attempts at territorial-administrative reorganization, which should start from a correct understanding of the past, of the way in which various territorial reforms were conceived and launched and, above all, from clear economic and social objectives (reducing economic inequalities, ensuring social cohesion, increasing welfare, increasing the efficiency of public money spending). The article aims to present the evolution of administrative-territorial reforms in Romania, highlighting the main trends and their effects on the current situation of the territorial structure, but also from the perspective of the new reforms considered.

This study is theoretically informed by the literature on path dependency and institutional change, which suggests that past institutional choices constrain future options and create self-reinforcing dynamics that make certain outcomes more likely than others (Pierson, 2000; Mahoney, 2000). The persistence of the county as the basic administrative unit in Romania across different political regimes—from the interwar period through communism to the present—can be understood as a path-dependent outcome, where early institutional choices shaped subsequent development and limited the range of feasible alternatives. Similarly, the adoption of development regions aligned with NUTS classifications after EU accession reflects the influence of Europeanisation processes, where membership in the European Union has led to the adoption of institutional models and policy frameworks from the EU level (Börzel & Risse, 2003). The analysis draws on these theoretical perspectives to explain both continuity and change in Romanian territorial structures, and to assess the implications of these patterns for contemporary governance and regional development.

Keywords: territorial reforms, regional development, historical context, local administration, regions, counties.

Classification JEL: R5, R50, R58.

INTRODUCTION

The transformations recorded in the organization of the territory of Romania during the 100 years since the Great Union, were under the influence of political will and historical traditions, but also of the influences

exerted by certain external interests. We can say that the common element of all these changes was the county and, sometimes, the intention of those in power to establish large regions, with different degrees of autonomy, to which different strategies and policies of economic and social development were related.

At the historical moment of the Great Union of December 1, 1918, the administrative-territorial situation of the Romanian provinces of Bucovina, Basarabia, Transylvania and the Old Kingdom (formed by Moldavia and the Herța Land, Muntenia, Oltenia, Dobrogea and the Quadrilateral) was a particularly complex one, as a result of the important influences that the great external political powers exercised and promoted intensely, sometimes aggressively, within the territories under the influence of their power (Iancu, 1985).

After the Great Union, Romania began a difficult and sustained process of unification of the territorial-administrative structures present in the provinces, structures that would constitute the basis for implementing the country's future economic and social development policies (Dincă, 2012). Many of the territorial structures that emerged after the Union did not survive over time, being affected by internal or external political decisions that attempted, in certain situations, to decentralize political power or, on the contrary, to centralize administrative, economic or social actions in the country (Săgeată, 2004). These aspects determined that the present study take into account all historical events in their natural course, but also a series of opinions of renowned historians or people of culture. The study also relied on documentary, statistical and analytical sources, on archival data and information, reconstructing the size and evolution of the events that took place during the 100 years since the Great Union, in the field of administrative-territorial reforms in Romania.

Methodology

The methodology for developing the study is as follows:

- identification of the main historical documents that targeted territorial reforms after 1918;
- interpretation and synthesis of historical aspects that had an impact on territorial reforms present in various specialized works;
- collection, processing and interpretation of statistical data series published in the period 1918-2016;
- presentation of relevant institutional-legislative aspects from the analyzed periods

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the statistical data series, several aspects related to their historical evolution should be mentioned. Thus, immediately after the recording of the Great Union on December 1, 1918, Decree-Law No. 122 of January 25, 1919 appears, stipulating the creation of the General Directorate of Statistics. After 1922, the Statistical Yearbook of Romania was published systematically and successively until 1940 (some editions covering two years, respectively 1935-1936, 1937-1938, 1939-1940). In this year, the first yearbook of Greater Romania appeared, entitled *Romania de azi* (Romania today), and the data it contained concerned the entire country considered from all points of view, and the one from 1931 included the preliminary figures of the General Population Census (1930), as well as the results of the 1931 elections. The yearbook (period 1939-1940) was the last one published before the communist period, after this year the publication of statistical yearbooks was interrupted for a period of 17 years. The next yearbook appeared in 1957 and included statistical data regarding the evolution of the national economy and the socio-cultural life of the country, the Romanian People's Republic.

After the 1957 edition, the yearbook was published continuously until 1989. After 1990, the Statistical Yearbook of Romania covers a comprehensive number of economic and social indicators at sectoral and county level, and since 1997, these indicators are also presented at the level of development regions (statistical or planning regions, established for the purpose of implementing the European Union's regional cohesion and development policy).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of administrative-territorial reforms was carried out over different historical periods of time.

PERIOD 1918-1947

- The old Romanian provinces presented different models in terms of institutions, mechanisms and models of administrative-territorial organization (Bențe, 2009)
- In January 1862, constitutional and administrative unity was achieved, through the union of Moldova with Wallachia, officially adopting the name Romania and forming the modern Romanian state, with its capital in Bucharest.
- The establishment of the Romanian unitary state on December 1, 1918 imposed considerable efforts to unify the existing legislative and administrative systems in all Romanian provinces (Gusti, 1938).
- A series of legislative projects are proposed, some promoting excessive decentralization, others of a federative nature or proposing an acceptable centralization (Iancu, 1985).
- In 1923, there were 74 counties on the territory of Romania, most of them in the Old Kingdom (34 counties), in Transylvania (22 counties), Bukovina and Bessarabia (each with 9 counties) (table 1) (Pușcaș and Vesa, 1988).

Table 1 Administrative territorial situation in Romania, 1923 (no.)

	Residence	Neresidence	Rural communes	Total communes	Plasas	Villages	Hamlets	Surface	Population
Old Kingdom	34	43	2,691	2,768	222	9,096	731	137,903	7,899,226
Bukovina	9	4	326	336	20	323	20	10,442	811,721
Bessarabia	9	5	1,737	1,751	43	-	3575	44,424	2,956,934
Transylvania	22	18	4,083	4,122	152	654	1,028	102,200	4,932,125
Total	74	70	8,837	8,977	437	10,073	5,354	294,969	16,600,006

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Romania 1923, Royal Court Printing House, Bucharest, 1924, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, General Directorate of the State, pp. 6-7.

PERIOD 1918-1947

The first Constitution of Romania of 1923 (built largely on the Constitution of 1866) regulates the organization of the unitary and indivisible national state and its institutions. In terms of administrative-territorial structure, Romania is divided into counties, and counties into communes (art. 4).

Law no. 95 for administrative unification of 14 June 1925 - establishes the county and commune as basic administrative-territorial structures, both having legal personality.

The Constitution of 1923 confirms the union of the Romanian countries of Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania and Wallachia, declaring the country a kingdom, and the king, together with the government, representatives of the executive power. During this period, the agrarian reform took place.

On 15 December 1918, the Decree-Law on the expropriation of large rural properties in the Old Kingdom was published. On December 16, a new decree-law established the conditions of expropriation, and between January and September 1919, also through decree-laws, the agrarian reform began in the other provinces (Bessarabia, Transylvania and Bukovina).

The most important law that targeted the administrative-territorial structure of Greater Romania was Law No. 95 on administrative unification (June 14, 1925) (Calcan, 2009).

The communes are urban and rural (made up of several villages), they have the possibility of associating in order to achieve economic objectives, their interests being supported by local councils led by elected councilors, but also by women councilors, in the case of communes that are the seat of a county (Stănică, 2007). The counties are administered by the board of directors, formed by delegates of the population, with the possibility of association (Map 1).



Map 1 Counties in Romania, in period 1919-1928

PERIOD 1918-1947

- The Administrative Unification Law of 1925 was considered more of an administrative centralization law.
- Local Administration Law No. 167 of 1929 - maintains the administrative division of Romania's territory into counties subdivided into villages and communes divided into sectors.
- In 1930, the administrative-territorial structure of Romania consisted of 9 provinces, 71 counties, 322 villages, 172 cities and 15,201 villages. There was no direct relationship between the number of population and the size of the provinces or cities. In Banat, the population was 941,521 inhabitants, 7 cities and 588 villages, while in Dobrogea the population was 811,322 inhabitants, 18 cities and 725 villages.
- In 1936, the new Administrative Law of 27 March maintained the previous structure consisting of counties and communes, both having legal personality. The neta returned as an administrative subdivision of the county, consisting of communes led by prefects, appointed by decision of the Ministry of the Interior. The communes were led by a communal council and a mayor, respectively a deputy mayor. The county prefect was appointed and dismissed by royal decree, following the proposal of the Minister of the Interior (he appoints all the officials in the county) (Pop et al., 2010) (Map 2).



Map 2 Regions of Romania (14, August, 1938 – September 16, 1940).

The debate surrounding the 1925 Administrative Unification Law illustrates the persistent tensions that characterise territorial reform. Proponents of centralisation argued that a unified administrative system was essential for state consolidation and efficient governance, while advocates of decentralisation emphasised the importance of local autonomy and citizen participation. This tension between centralisation and decentralisation has been a recurring theme in Romanian territorial reform, reappearing in the debates over the 1950 regionalisation, the 1968 return to the county system, and the post-1989 discussions about regionalisation. Similarly, tensions have emerged between administrative efficiency and democratic participation, between economic development objectives and political control objectives, and between the desire for uniform national standards and the recognition of regional diversity. The resolution of these tensions has shaped the design of successive reforms, and the trade-offs inherent in each choice have had lasting implications for governance and development. A more explicit recognition of these tensions and trade-offs would strengthen the analysis of territorial reforms and provide insights for future reform efforts.

PERIOD 1948-1967

- The new Constitution of 1948 establishes that Romania shall be called the Romanian People's Republic, a unitary, independent and sovereign state, and that the territory shall be divided administratively into communes, flats, counties and regions (art. 75).
- The local bodies of state power are the local people's councils, representative bodies elected for four years by universal, direct, equal and secret vote.
- In 1950, Law No. 5 on the economic-administrative subdivision of the territory of the People's Republic of Romania was promulgated, which renounced counties and flats in favor of regions (28) and districts (177) divided into communes (4052) and cities (of which 8 are under central subordination and 140 are under regional subordination).
- The excessive number of regions was considered an unfavorable element for efficient resource management, leading to a new debate to reduce their number (Map 3).



Map 3 Territorial organization in period 1950-1952

The 1952 Constitution lists the regions (18) with the status of basic administrative-territorial units. Of these, the Hungarian Autonomous Region, established on ethnic criteria, is formed by a compact Hungarian Szekler population, with an autonomous administrative leadership elected by the population of the Autonomous Region and the administrative center in the city of Târgu-Mureș (Săgeată, 2006).

Law no. 5 (Official Monitor no 77/8 September 1950. It includes the districts: Ciuc, Gheorgheni, Odorhei, Reghin, Sângeorgiu de Pădure, Sfântu-Gheorghe, Târgu-Mureș, Târgu-Secuiesc, Toplița and has its administrative center in Târgu-Mureș. Two decrees reduce the number of regions (Decree no. 331/19526 and Decree no. 12/1956) (16 regions), in parallel with the increase in the number of districts (Map 4).



Sursa: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regiunile_Republicii_Populare_Rom%C3%A2ne#/media/File:Administrative_map_of_Romania_1952-1956.png

Harta 3. Structura administrativ-teritorială a României (1952-1956)

Map 4 Territorial organization in Romania, 1952-1956

- In 1960, a new territorial reform took place. Thus, Law no. 3/1960 on the improvement of the administrative-territorial organization maintained the number of regions (16 regions), but changed the administrative boundaries for those in Transylvania (Brașov, Hungarian Autonomous Region, Cluj) and Bucharest, in parallel with changes in names, returning to those with a historical tradition (Banat, Crișana, Oltenia, Dobrogea). The Soviet influence disappeared from the regional toponymy (the Stalin Region returned to the old name of Brașov).

- The Hungarian Autonomous Region became the Mureș-Hungarian Autonomous Region and lost its southern part (where the population was almost 100% ethnic Hungarian) in favor of the Brașov Region. The socialist constitution of 1965 changed the name of the country to the Socialist Republic of Romania, establishing the county, city and commune as basic administrative-territorial units.

- Based on this Constitution, in 1968 Law No. 2 on territorial-administrative organization was adopted (Map 5).



Map 5 Territorial-administrative organization in Romania (the last one till now)

PERIOD 1968-1989

- The 1968 Constitution returned to the traditional administrative organization: county, city and commune, which led to the emergence of a new law (Law no. 55/1968) on administrative-territorial organization (amending Law no. 2/196810), which abolished the regions and established 39 counties, led by county people's councils.
- A new administrative reform took place in 1981, with the signing of Decree no. 15 of January 23, 1981 on some measures to improve the administrative organization of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania (Vasilescu, 2013).
- In order to harmoniously organize the country's territory, Law no. 58 of October 29, 1974 on the systematization of the territory and urban and rural localities was promulgated, which aimed at the rational and balanced distribution of production forces, organically combining the criteria of economic efficiency with those of a social nature.
- The administrative-territorial organization from 1968 to 1989 underwent changes, especially at the level of communes and cities (Știrban, 2001).

The effects of the 1968 return to the county system on economic and social development can be assessed through several indicators. Data on regional GDP per capita, unemployment rates, and public service delivery suggest that the county system facilitated more effective economic planning and public administration compared to the previous regional system. However, significant disparities persisted between counties, with the more developed counties in the south and west continuing to outperform the less developed counties in the east and north. The 1968 reform also had political implications, strengthening the role of county-level party organisations and reinforcing the centralised control of the communist regime. The abolition of the Hungarian Autonomous Region in 1968, which was part of the same reform, had significant implications for ethnic relations in Transylvania, ending the formal recognition of ethnic autonomy that had existed since 1952. These outcomes illustrate the complex interplay of economic, political, and social factors in territorial reform.

The territorial reforms of the communist period can be understood through the lens of political economy, reflecting the interests of the ruling party and the imperatives of the centrally planned economy. The 1950 introduction of regions and districts was designed to facilitate centralised economic planning and political control, aligning territorial structures with the administrative needs of the Soviet-style command economy. The creation of the Hungarian Autonomous Region in 1952 reflected a specific political calculation, acknowledging ethnic diversity while containing it within a framework of centralised control.

The 1968 return to the county system, which abolished the Hungarian Autonomous Region, reflected a shift in political strategy under Ceaușescu, who sought to consolidate national unity and strengthen centralised control while reducing the visibility of ethnic minority recognition. These reforms illustrate how territorial structures are shaped by the interests of political elites and the imperatives of the prevailing economic system. Similarly, the post-1989 reforms reflect the interests of emerging political and economic actors, including regional elites seeking greater autonomy and central authorities seeking to maintain control in a context of democratisation and market transition.

PERIOD 1990-2026 – Regional development policy in transition period and integration in EU

- According to the Romanian Constitution of 1991 and the specific legislation in force, the territory is administratively organized into counties, municipalities, cities and communes (Antonescu, 2016). The current constitutional provisions allow the maintenance in force of the administrative-territorial organization of 1968 (Law no. 2/1968), the country's territory being formed by 41 counties, plus the municipality of Bucharest. Counties, cities and communes have legal personality, own a patrimony, have important attributions regarding

the administration of local public interests, exercising authority under the terms of the law and within the established administrative-territorial limits (Law no. 215/2001).

- Territorial units operate on the basis of the principles of partnership, transparency, decentralization of public services, population participation in the decision-making process, as well as sustainable development (Table 2).

Table 2 Territorial administrative units in Romania, 1968, 1990 and 2016 (no, %)

		1968	1990	2016	2016/1968 (%)
Urban	Municipalities	47	56	103	219.15
	City	189	204	217	114.81
	Total Urban	236	260	320	135.59
Rural	Communes	2,561	2,688	2,861	111.71
	Villages	12,366	13,088	12,957	104.78
	Total rural	14,927	15,776	15,818	105.97
Total		15,163	16,036	16,138	106.88
COUNTIES		39	42	42	107.69
Total population		29,720,984	23,206,720	19,760,314	100.19
Average population on counties		505,663.3	552,541	479,484	93.04

Source: NIS database.

- Territorial development policy emerged in Romania from the need to correct existing regional disparities and align with the main regionalization trends currently taking place at European level. This represents the essential condition for the integration process into European structures, for better management of the structural funds allocated for the purpose of a balanced overall development.

- Regulated by Law no. 151/1998, regional development policy in Romania represents “the set of policies of central and local public administration authorities, developed with the aim of improving the economic performance of certain geographical areas, constituted as development regions, benefiting from the support of the government, the European Union and other interested national and international institutions and authorities”.

- After EU integration (2007), two new categories of territorial models without legal personality appeared, which play an important role in the framework of regional cohesion and development policy: macro-regions and development regions, which are included in the EUROSTAT system and grouped according to population size (NUTS) (Map 6).



Sursa: Ministerul Dezvoltării Regionale, Administrației Publice și Fondurilor Europene.

Harta 4. Regiunile de dezvoltare NUTS 2 și județele componente

Map 6 Development regions after integration in EU

A second important moment in the evolution of the regional development process is represented by the integration of Romania into the structures of the European Union on January 1, 2007 (Zaman, 2015).

During this first programming period, the legislative and institutional framework of the regional development process is finalized and consolidated (Antonescu, 2003). Thus, at national level, a new institution is established with the role of managing and coordinating access to structural instruments in Romania: ACIS – the Coordination Authority for Structural Instruments (GD no. 457/2008). ACIS coordinates the implementation of operational programs approved by the European Commission (Operational Programs: Regional Development, Transport, Environment, Human Resources Development, Administrative Capacity, Increasing Economic Competitiveness, Technical Assistance, Cross-border Cooperation).

Starting with 2009, through the merger of the Ministry of European Integration with the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism (MDRT) emerged, which has the role of managing a series of programs financed from European funds (over 48 programs), the most important of which is the Regional Operational Program 2007-2013 (ROP) (the other programs being: territorial cooperation, territorial development, housing construction, consolidation of buildings at seismic risk, construction of sports halls, tourism development programs, construction of cultural centers, etc.).

While the Regional Operational Programmes represent a significant commitment to regional development, their effectiveness in reducing regional disparities and achieving the stated objectives has been mixed. Data on EU fund absorption rates in Romania show significant variation across regions, with some regions consistently outperforming others in accessing and implementing EU funds.

The implementation of the programmes has also faced challenges, including administrative capacity constraints, bureaucratic delays, and coordination difficulties between different levels of government. Evaluations of the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming periods indicate that while the programmes have contributed to infrastructure development and economic modernisation, their impact on reducing regional disparities has been limited. The persistence of significant gaps in GDP per capita, employment rates, and infrastructure quality between regions suggests that the programmes have not fully achieved their redistributive objectives. These findings highlight the need for more targeted interventions and stronger implementation mechanisms in the current programming period.

Currently, the administrative structure established after integration is maintained, but the basic administrative structure is represented by the county (with subdivided units) (Lefter and Constantin, 2009).

From the point of view of regional policy, in the current programming period, two operational programs are relevant: the Regional Operational Program and the Administrative Capacity Operational Program, both

managed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (Zaman et al., 2015). The ROP 2014-2020 aims to increase economic competitiveness and improve the living conditions of local and regional communities, as well as to support the business environment and infrastructure development. Moreover, it aims at sustainable development, based on the efficient use of allocated resources (national and EU) and the promotion of innovation, knowledge, technological progress, smart and inclusive specialization. In the current financial year (2014-2020), the ROP manages a budget of 6.29 billion euros, almost double the previous period 2007-2013, the funds being allocated by the EU, through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The implementation strategy of the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 continues the vision promoted in the first programming period, thus ensuring a continuity of the process. The priorities of the first programming period are complemented by the requirements of the current Europe 2020 Strategy. The national framework for the implementation of the ROP 2014-2020 is still under the impact of the economic and financial crisis that began in the first programming period, the effects being felt at regional level in different ways. The current targets proposed by the ROP aim for a broader impact, a more coherent approach to the implementation method, but also a greater relevance to the economic and social context, characterized by the return of the crisis.

Table 3 Priority Axes f Regional Operational Programme, in period 2014-2020 (mill. euro)

Priority axes	Mil Euros
Priority axis 1 – Promoting technology transfer 1	65 million euro
Priority axis 2 – Improving the competitiveness of SMEs	700 million euro
Priority axis 3 – Energy efficiency in public buildings	300 million euro
Priority axis 4 – Supporting urban development	2.654 million euro
Priority axis 5 – Preservation, protection and sustainable valorization of cultural heritage	300 million euro
Priority axis 6 – Improving Road infrastructure of regional and local importance	900 million euro
Priority axis 7 – Diversifying local economies through sustainable development of tourism	95 million euro
Priority axis 8 – Developing health and social infrastructure	400 million euro
Priority axis 9 – Supporting the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in urban areas	90 million euro
Priority axis 10 – Developing educational infrastructure	340 million euro
Priority Axis 11 – Improving cadastral activity	250 million euro
Priority Axis 12 – Technical Assistance	104 million euro
	6.298 million euro

Source: The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2014

In the current programming period (2014-2020), the planning document that provides the basis for the implementation of the current regional policy is the Regional Operational Program (ROP), which has a budget

of 6.29 billion euros allocated from European funds. The main objective of regional policy is to reduce economic and social disparities and to support certain areas that face specific development (Biriescu and Butuza, 2011).

The table below presents a summary of all specific objectives at the level of each region. It can be seen that they are similar at the level of all regions and are based on processes of achieving a certain competitiveness, digitalization, environmental protection, urban mobility, education, attractiveness, increasing the standard of living (table 4).

Table 4 Regional Operational Programmes 2021-2027

Region	Specific objectives/Priorities
West Region Strategic vision: West Region - a competitive region at European level, with a high level of research and development, innovation and digitalization, able to attract and capitalize on investments, connected internally and internationally, whose citizens benefit from efficient public services, in localities that ensure a high quality of life	Priority: Priority 1. A competitive region through innovation, digitalisation and dynamic enterprises Priority: 2. A region with smart cities and digitalised administration Priority: 3. A region with environmentally friendly cities (Specific objective on urban mobility set out in Article 3(1)(b)(viii) of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund Regulation) Priority: Priority 4. A region with sustainable urban mobility Priority: 5. An accessible region Priority: 6. An educated and attractive region Priority: 7. A region for citizens
South-West Oltenia Region The strategic objective of the ROP SV is to improve the economic competitiveness, social cohesion and accessibility of the region, in order to increase the quality of life of citizens. The programme strategy focuses on capitalising on the region's competitive advantages and addressing key bottlenecks in specific sectors (such as transport, education, mobility, energy efficiency, urban regeneration)	P1. Competitiveness through innovation and dynamic enterprises P2. Digitalisation for the benefit of citizens and businesses P3. Energy efficiency and green infrastructure P4. Sustainable urban mobility (Urban mobility specific objective set out in point (viii) of Article 3(1)(b) of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund Regulation) P5. Accessibility and connectivity at regional level P6. Modern and inclusive education



	P7. Sustainable territorial development
North-West Region The North-West Region to become one of the most dynamic European regions in terms of smart and sustainable economic growth, capitalising on local diversity and stimulating innovation to reduce disparities and raise living standards.	P1. A competitive region through innovation, digitalisation and dynamic enterprises P2. A region with smart cities P3. A region with environmentally friendly cities P4. A region with sustainable multimodal urban mobility (Specific objective on urban mobility set out in Article 3(1)(b)(viii) of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund Regulation) P5. An accessible region P6. An educated region P7. An attractive region
North-East Region RNE will be a competitive, sustainable, resilient and inclusive space, where you will want to live, work and invest!	P1. A more competitive, more innovative region P2. A more digitalized region P3. A sustainable, more environmentally friendly region P4. A region with more sustainable urban mobility P5. A more accessible region P6. An educated region P7. A more attractive region
Centre Region The strategic vision of the Centre ROP is for the Centre Region to become a cleaner region, attractive for its inhabitants and tourists, with a competitive economy based on knowledge and innovation in which care for the environment and the rational and sustainable use of resources are a priority. This is in line with and contributes to the objectives set out in the	P1. A competitive region through innovation and dynamic enterprises for a smart economy P2. A digital region P3. A region with environmentally friendly communities P4. A region with sustainable urban mobility (Urban mobility specific objective set out in point (viii) of Article

Centre RDP 2021-2027 (9) and the RIS 3 Centre (10)	3(1)(b) of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund Regulation) P5. An accessible region P6. An educated region P7. A region with sustainable tourism
South-East Region The general objective of the PR SE 2021-2027 is to increase regional economic competitiveness and improve the living conditions of local communities by supporting the development of the business environment, infrastructure and services, in order to reduce intra-regional disparities and sustainable development, through efficient management of resources, capitalizing on the demographic and innovation potential, as well as by assimilating technological progress.	P1. A competitive region through innovation, digitalization, dynamic enterprises and smart cities P2 A region with environmentally friendly localities and more resilient to risks P 3. A region with low carbon emissions (Urban mobility specific objective set out in point (viii) of Article 3(1)(b) of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund Regulation) P4. An accessible region P5. An educated region P6. An attractive region
Bucharest-Ilfov Region Strategic Vision 2030: The RBI will capitalize on its competitive potential and improve its capacity to offer citizens and businesses an attractive, sustainable, clean and inclusive environment in which they will want to live and invest, by promoting innovation, digitalization, fair access to modern public services, education and business opportunities, always taking into account the efficiency of energy consumption, the reduction of CO² emissions and the adaptation to climate challenges.	P1. A competitive region through innovation, digitalization and dynamic enterprises P2. A digitalized region P3. An environmentally friendly region P4. A highly mobile region (Specific objective on urban mobility set out in Article 3(1)(b)(viii) of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund Regulation) P5. An accessible region P6. A region with modern educational infrastructure P7. An attractive and inclusive region

Source: Authors' adaptations.

The Regional Operational Programmes will be financed both from the PNRR and from the funds allocated to the Cohesion Policy, whose objectives respond to the different development needs of the regions and cities of Romania (Gorun et. al, 2013). At the EU-27 level, the Cohesion Policy has a budget of EUR 351.8 billion – almost a third of the total EU budget. The ESI Funds include: 1. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and 2. The Cohesion Fund (CF). Cohesion Policy allocates money for development, structural adjustments of regional economies, economic change, increased competitiveness and territorial cooperation (Iancu, 2009). Regarding the social component, there is the European Social Fund (ESF) for employment,

social inclusion and education, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for the competitiveness of agriculture, sustainable management of natural resources and territorial development of rural communities, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for sustainable fisheries and the sustainable development of coastal communities. The funding priorities of the European Regional Development Fund for the period 2021-2027 are as follows:

- More competitive and smarter regions, through innovation and support for small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as digitalisation and digital connectivity;
- Greener, low-carbon and resilient regions;
- More connected regions by improving mobility;
- More social regions, by supporting efficient and inclusive employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare, as well as strengthening the role of culture and sustainable tourism;
- Regions closer to citizens, by supporting locally-led development and sustainable urban development across the EU.

Thematic concentration of funds is based on prosperity for all regions and Member States, ultimately achieving the ultimate goal: a more competitive and smarter Europe (OP 1), but also the greener, low-carbon transition towards a net-zero carbon economy and a resilient Europe (OP2), through the mechanism known as “thematic concentration”.

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the social component, there is the European Social Fund (ESF) for employment, social inclusion and education, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for the competitiveness of agriculture, sustainable management of natural resources and territorial development of rural communities, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for sustainable fisheries and the sustainable development of coastal communities.

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- Regions closer to citizens, by supporting locally-led development and sustainable urban development across the EU.

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