

STRATEGIC SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN LOCAL
COMMUNITIES. EXPERIENCE OF
INTEGRATED TERRITORIAL
INVESTMENTS (ITI) DANUBE DELTA

Abstract

Sustainable development strategic planning has become a challenge for local public administration as it should be implemented in all aspects of life, estimating economic, social, ecological, territorial, political and institutional issues. Local communities understood that the basis of strategic sustainable development plans has to be an integrated vision regarding the actions that are to be made in order to accomplish their objectives. The differences between communities make it impossible to create an universal sustainable development strategy, but finding similarities between close communities can generate an integrated strategy for a larger area. Sustainable development concept, principles of sustainable development and strategic planning, and integrated vision towards actions are used in the article.

Keywords: sustainable development, strategic planning, integrated territorial investments, Danube Delta

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PLANIFICAREA STRATEGICĂ A DEZVOLTĂRII DURABILE ÎN COMUNITĂȚILE LOCALE. EXPERIENȚA INVESTIȚIILOR TERITORIALE INTEGRATE (ITI) DELTA DUNĂRII

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Rezumat

Planificarea strategică a dezvoltării durabile a devenit o provocare pentru administrația publică locală deoarece ar trebui implementată în toate părțile vieții, estimând aspectele economice, sociale, ecologice, teritoriale, politice și instituționale. Comunitățile locale au înțeles că baza planurilor de dezvoltare durabilă strategică trebuie să fie o viziune integrată privind acțiunile ce trebuiesc realizate pentru a-și atinge obiectivele. Diferențele dintre comunități fac imposibilă crearea unei strategii de dezvoltare durabilă universal valabilă, dar găsirea similitudinilor dintre comunități apropiate poate genera o strategie integrată pentru un areal mai mare. Conceptul de dezvoltare durabilă, principiile de dezvoltare durabilă și planificare strategică, și viziunea integrată privind acțiunile sunt concepte folosite în acest articol.

Cuvinte cheie: dezvoltare durabilă, planificare strategică, investiții teritoriale integrate, Delta Dunării



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1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning had been practiced in the private sector for many years when city and county leaders applied those practices in the public sector with good results. Communities embarked on their strategic planning exercises by determining their vision for the future and by addressing broad themes of common interest to all. So, strategic planning prescribes a „systematic process that enables a community's leadership to understand the numerous future environments in which the community will exist, establish consensus about how best to achieve its most desired vision, and illuminate the actions that will most likely make that happen – all within the context of expected available financial and human resources” (Gordon, 2005, p. 25).

As it is well known that each community is influenced by a series of factors, strategic planning has become a challenge for local public administration as it should be implemented in all aspects of life, estimating economic, social, ecological, territorial, political and institutional issues.

Moreover, in recent years there has been a growing interest in sustainable development as a guiding principle to allow the integration of economic development and the environment within policy and strategy. Sustainable development involves many things. More appropriate technologies, supportive policies, different ethics, and changes in individual behavior are among the more obvious factors.

New legislation places a statutory duty on all local authorities to prepare 'community strategies' for promoting the „economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development of the country” (Williams, 2002, p.198). Local communities understood that the basis of strategic sustainable development plans has to be an integrated vision regarding the actions that are to be made in order to accomplish their objectives.

2. NEW INSTRUMENTS USED IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

The multiple challenges confronting Europe – economic, environmental and social – show the need for an integrated and territorial approach to deliver an effective response. This approach is multi-dimensional, tailored to place-specific features and outcomes, which may mean going beyond traditional administrative boundaries, and may require greater willingness from different levels of government to co-operate and co-ordinate actions in order to achieve shared goals. This is in line with the new territorial cohesion objective introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, which acknowledges that economic and social cohesion cannot be achieved at the European level without a stronger focus on the territorial impact of EU policies. For this reason the Common Provisions Regulation has introduced new integrating tools that can be used to

implement territorial strategies on the ground, linking the thematic objectives identified in the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes and the territorial dimension: community led local development (European Parliament, 2013) and integrated territorial investments (European Parliament, 2013).

The integrated territorial investments (ITI) allows EU Member States to combine investments from several priority axes of one or more Operational Programmes for the purposes of multi-dimensional and cross-sectorial intervention.

Integrated territorial investments (ITI)

ITI is a tool to implement territorial strategies in an integrated way. The key elements of an ITI are:

- a designated territory and an integrated territorial development strategy;
- a package of actions to be implemented; and
- governance arrangements to manage the ITI.

It is essential to develop a cross-sectorial integrated development strategy that addresses the development needs of the area concerned. The strategy shall be designed in a way that the actions can build on the synergies produced by coordinated implementation. Any geographical area with particular territorial features can be the subject of an ITI, ranging from specific urban neighbourhoods with multiple deprivations to the urban, metropolitan, urban-rural, sub-regional, or inter-regional levels. For example, ITI existing in Romania, ITI Danube Delta, is located on an area with particular features, being on a sub-regional level. ITI territory is the territory of 38 local public administrations from the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Tulcea County and the northern part of Constanta County, as it is represented in the map below.

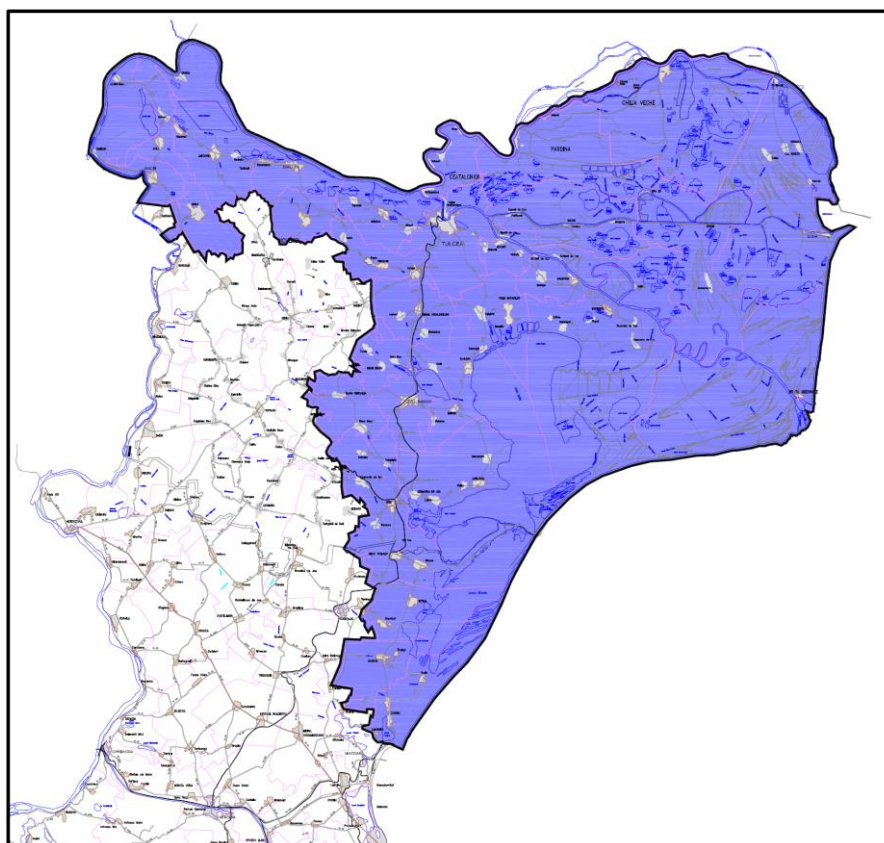


FIGURE 1 - TERRITORY OF ITI DANUBE DELTA

Source: The draft of Integrated Strategy of Sustainable Development for Danube Delta (2030) published on www.mdrap.ro (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2015)

The integrated territorial development strategy for Danube Delta is realized with the support of the World Bank, and it will be a document that addresses strategic development objectives on a long term for this territory and that defines an action plan that contains ideas of financeable projects from different sources.

At a theoretical level, the actions to be implemented through ITI shall contribute to the thematic objectives of the relevant priority axes of the participating Operational Programme(s), as well as the development objectives of the territorial strategy. They can involve investments from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and Cohesion Fund. The funding can be complemented with support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) or the European Maritime and Fisheries Funds (EMFF). It is not compulsory to combine all Funds in each ITI. Nevertheless, it is encouraged that ITI combine different funds. The combination of physical investments in infrastructure from ERDF with the investments in human capital from ESF is particularly relevant in the case of sustainable urban development. Combined investments from ERFD and EAFRD are particularly relevant for support to urban-rural partnerships. An ITI can deliver support not only in the form of grants

but also through financial instruments (European Parliament, 2013) where they are appropriate to deliver actions defined in the development strategy.

For example, ITI Danube Delta is composed by all funds, as it has indicative allocations for all operational programmes in Romania. These allocations are listed below.

TABLE 1 - INDICATIVE ALLOCATIONS FOR ITI DANUBE DELTA

Programme	Fund	Indicative allocations
Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	358.11 mil Euro
Big Infrastructure Operational Programme 2014-2020	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund	407.64 mil Euro
Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020	European Social Fund (ESF)	60 mil Euro
Technical Assistancy Operational Programme 2014-2020	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	5 mil Euro
Competitiveness Operational Programme 2014-2020	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	60 mil Euro
Administrative Capacity Operational Programme 2014-2020	European Social Fund (ESF)	16 mil Euro
Rural Development National Programme 2014-2020	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	168 mil Euro
Fishing and Marine Affairs Operational Programme 2014-2020	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)	37 mil Euro
TOTAL		1,125 billion Euro

Source: www.itideltadunarii.com

The last key element of an ITI is regarding governance arrangements for the management of the ITI. Ultimately the 'Managing Authority' for the Operational Programme will be responsible for managing and implementing the operations of an ITI. It is not specified who a managing authority is, but one could presume that these could be the various government departments responsible for the different strands of funding. The managing authority can designate intermediary bodies to manage all or some of the operations of the ITI, e.g. a local authority or non-government organisation. Again, this multi-stakeholder approach does not appear to be a compulsory element.

For example, in the case of ITI Danube Delta the Managing Authority for each Programme is the main responsible for managing and implementing the operations of an ITI. In Romania, for all the programmes part of this instrument there are three main ministries:

1. Ministry of European Funds;
2. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration;
3. Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

According to the protocol signed between these three ministries and Intercommunity Development Association ITI Danube Delta, these four entities share joint responsibilities regarding the implementing of the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of Danube Delta 2014-2030, such as:

- Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration is the national authority responsible with monitoring and implementing the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of Danube Delta 2014-2030, being also the Managing Authority (MA) for Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2015f), Administrative Capacity Operational Programme (ACOP) 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2015a);
- Ministry of European Funds is the national coordinator of European Structural and of Investments Funds 2014-2020, being also the Managing Authority for Big Infrastructure Operational Programme (BIOP) 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2015b), Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2015e), Technical Assistancy Operational Programme (TAOP) 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2015h), Competitiveness Operational Programme (COP) 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2015c);
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is the national authority responsible of coordinating the process of implementing the Common Agricultural Policy, being also the Managing Authority for Rural Development National Programme (RDNP) 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2015g), Fishing and Marine Affairs Operational Programme (FMAOP) 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2015d);
- Intercommunity Development Association ITI Danube Delta will coordinate the implementation of the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy of Danube Delta 2014-2030 Action Plan; it has an important role in ITI, supporting the local beneficiaries (local authorities, public and private institutions, members and no-members) to develop projects according to the approved Action Plan and checking the projects proposed by the beneficiaries with the objectives stated in the Strategy.

The coordination of the financing of European Structural and of Investments Funds 2014-2020, at an operational level, will be made by the Functional Work Group ITI Danube Delta. This group will be formed by representatives from the Managing Authorities, Intercommunity Development Association ITI Danube Delta and other relevant partners to reach the Strategy's objectives.

The relations between these structures are represented below.

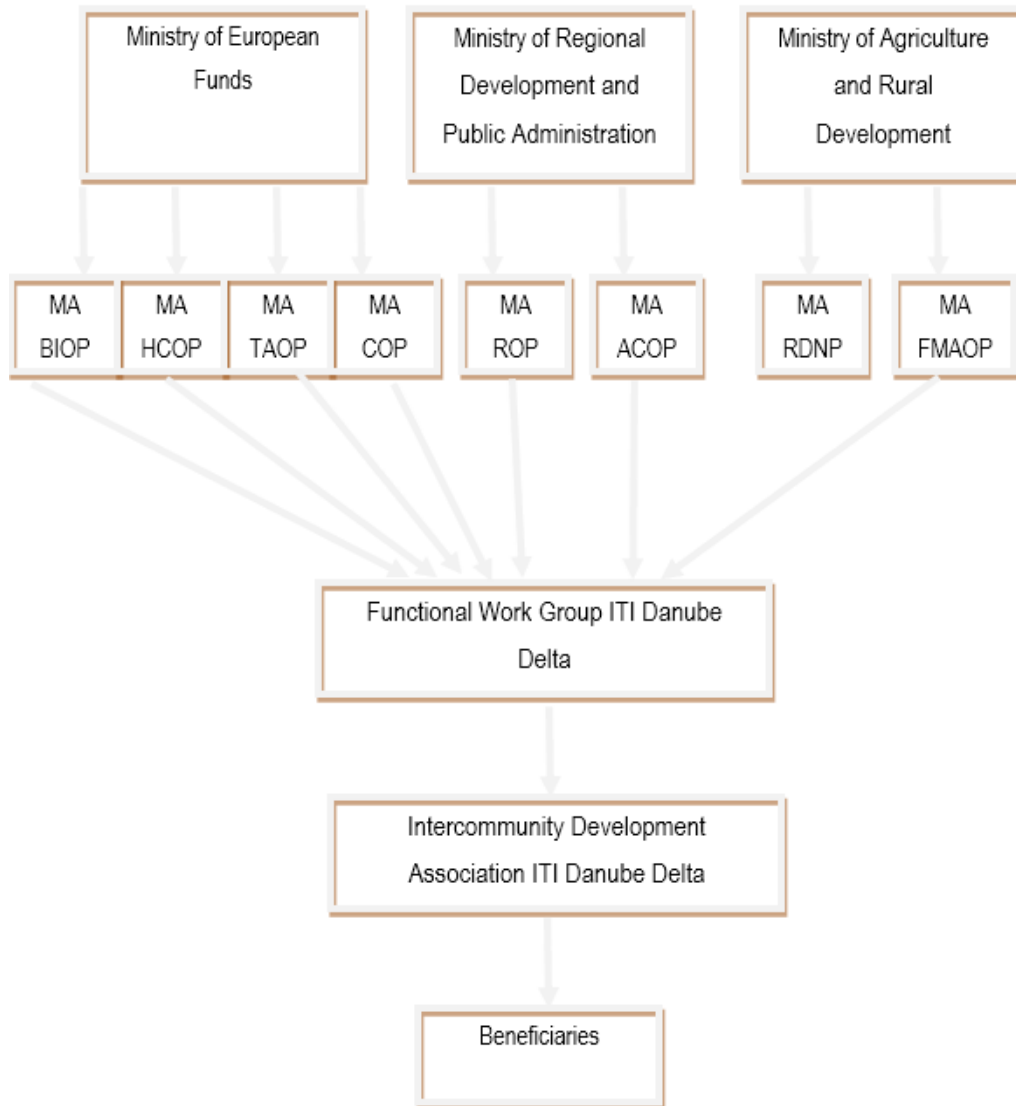


FIGURE 2 - RELATIONS BETWEEN STRUCTURES REGARDING ITI

Source: The Protocol signed between the Ministry of European Funds, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Intercommunity Development Association ITI Danube Delta (Ministry of European Funds, 2014)

Benefits of using Integrated Territorial Investments

The provisions regarding ITI have several potential benefits:

- The ITI as an instrument promoting the integrated use of Funds has the potential to lead to a better aggregate outcome for the same amount of public investment.

- The possible delegation of management of ITIs empowers sub-regional actors (local/urban stakeholders) by ensuring their involvement and ownership of programme preparation and implementation.
- As an ITI will have its various funding streams secured at its inception, there will be greater certainty regarding the funding for integrated actions.
- ITI is an instrument designed for a place-based approach to development that can assist in unlocking the under-utilised potential contained at local and regional levels.

In October 2011, the European Commission adopted draft legislative proposals for EU cohesion policy for 2014-2020. The new proposals are designed to ensure that EU investment is targeted on the Commission's long term goals for growth and jobs and aim to harmonise the rules related to different European Funds (European Parliament, 2013). EU Cohesion Policy invests in areas such as energy efficiency; training; research and innovation; transport; support for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs); renewable energy; and cooperation between European regions. The Commission is proposing changes to the Cohesion Policy for 2014-2020 in order to deliver the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives with a greater focus on results and positive outcomes and to maximise the impact of European Funding (European Parliament, 2013). One aspect of the cohesion policy is promoting social cohesion and tackling issues such as social and economic deprivation.

In an effort to reinforce territorial cohesion the Commission believes that European cities have the potential to make a much larger contribution to policies for growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. To this end it is proposing that a minimum of 5% of the European Regional Development Fund (The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) finances a number of areas in order to reduce economic, environmental and social problems – e.g. SME investment to create sustainable jobs; environment, energy and transport infrastructure; research, technology and innovation, communications; the development of economic and cross-border relations) resources for each Member State for 2014-2020 should be invested in integrated actions for sustainable urban development with the management and implementation delegated to cities (European Parliament, 2013).

What types of Integrated Territory Investments (ITIs) could be formed?

A research paper by Soto et al (2012), which explores the possibility of ITIs as a powerful tool for innovation and change in European cities, identified six possible types of ITIs:

- Single area ITIs: i.e. ITIs in single neighbourhoods or areas of the city, these do not necessarily have to be limited to deprived urban neighbourhoods, they could also take place in science quarters, declining industrial areas or brownfield sites, heritage areas, city centres.
- Multiple Areas of Intervention ITIs: multiple neighbourhoods or areas within cities e.g. an integrated approach to certain types of areas spread across the city (e.g. areas of industrial and industrial decline, areas of deprivation).
- Small City ITIs: i.e. small and medium sized service centres and attached rural hinterlands (e.g. could be applicable, for example, to Newry).
- Functional ITIs: i.e. ITIs dealing with functional urban areas, covering more than one city (e.g. Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Lisburn, Newry).
- Rural-Urban Linkages ITIs: ITIs dealing with certain key urban-rural linkages (e.g. transport and business corridors between urban and rural areas, cross-border areas).
- Thematic or Target Group ITIs: i.e. whereby an ITI priorities particular target groups e.g. migrant populations, or target particular themes such e.g. the labour market – this approach should form a coherent part of an overall integrated strategy for the entire area.

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