

Questions 3, 4 and 5 on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

Q.3. Please describe efforts made by the Government in the last few years that allowed the progressive realization of the human rights to water and sanitation?

The 2020 European Semester Country Report for Romania draws attention to persisting deficiencies in terms of water and wastewater infrastructure. Considering the insufficient level of compliance with wastewater collection and treatment requirements, investments in the sector will remain a priority in the medium and long term in Romania.

Connection to public water infrastructure is still incomplete, covering only 67.5% of the population, which represents the lowest rate in the European Union. That again, compared with data presented in the 2019 Country Report, there is an overall increase of 10 percentage points of people connected to the public infrastructure. The main investment source for extending and upgrading the water infrastructure is represented by EU co-financed regional projects.

As a way to increase the effectiveness of territorial outcomes related to investments financed through the Large Infrastructure Operational Programme, the Regional Operational Programme and the National Programme for Rural Development, the Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration promotes those measures aimed at reducing the distance to the target of general access to water supply and sewerage network by financing investments within the National Program for Local Development, in order to achieve the compliance end values assumed by the Accession Treaty.

The promotion of investments in the field of water and wastewater aims to fulfil the commitments deriving from the European directives on wastewater treatment (Council Directive 91/271/EEC) and ensuring the quality of water intended for human consumption (Council Directive 98/83/EC).

Q.4. Please describe how planning in the water and sanitation sector is guided by the principle of progressive realization of the human rights to water and sanitation, and how it reconciles the two priorities - increasing levels of access to services on one hand, and reducing inequalities between different groups on the other.

Within setting up and implementing programs financed from the state budget, a first step was to draw a most comprehensive image of the needs for investment which was followed by deciding on priorities for budgetary allocation to support local development. The budgets for local investments in water and wastewater infrastructure are designed in relation to the financial capacity of administrative territorial units and the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries, with an emphasis on an efficient use of resources, the implementation of modern construction technologies and the existence of low maintenance costs.

Thus, the National Program for Local Development supports the need identified at the level of each community so that each citizen can benefit from access to basic services and opportunities for developing individual wellbeing.

These principles are promoted through the Strategy of Territorial Development of Romania (under approval procedure in the Parliament), which emphasizes the reduction of territorial disparities and the need of putting into place specific measures for different types of territories, particularly for shrinking areas, as well as remote or isolated areas. These measures are mainly oriented towards the diversification of economic activities, the development of rural communities by improving access to basic services and infrastructure.

Q.5. Please describe methods of budgeting and budgetary planning which aims to ensure that the maximum available resources are utilised for the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation for all. Please include the process of allocating budget as well as the output achieved.

Considering a more efficient use of public funds, the infrastructure development programs in the rural and urban areas have been brought together in a single financing framework from the state budget, represented by the National Program for Local Development, which ensures a better coordination at national level and unitary implementation of investments in local infrastructure.

The financing requests were submitted by the local public administration authorities, in accordance with the principle that the administrative territorial units are organized and function on the principle of local autonomy, resulting in the deliberative and executive authorities of the administrative territorial unit being the only ones with prerogatives to identify and implement eligible and sustainable projects that contribute to local development.

In order to allocate project-based financing through the National Program for Local Development, the Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration carried out a technical analysis of all the investment proposals for which financing applications were submitted and which complied with the specific investments sections of the Program. Also, water supply and waste water systems were considered as priority fields during this internal analysis, after kindergartens and schools without sanitary functioning approval.

In the proposed allocation for the National Program for Local Development, the aim was to achieve a balanced distribution of the funds from the state budget for each county, as well as avoiding overlaps with the objectives of projects funded through the Large Infrastructure Operational Program, the Regional Operational Program and the National Program for Rural Development.

In the fields of water supply and sewage, during the two stages of implementing the National Program for Local Development were registered: 1628 investment objectives in the first phase (2013-2020), with a total allocation of 5.58 billion lei and 1320 investment objectives in the second phase (2017-2020), with a total allocation of 8.59 billion lei.