Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme

Annex A: Final version of the Support Measure Proposal 05.02.2025, including Logframe

on

the Support Measure

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) Programme

Second Swiss Contribution

Romania

Support Measure Proposal

05.02.2025

Title	Energy efficiency and renewable energy
Executing Agency	The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration
Partner State Support Measure Code (if any)	n/a
Support Measure Type	Programme

Content

1. Basic information

Title	Energy efficiency and renewable energy
Support Measure Type	Programme
Objective	Protecting the environment and the climate
Thematic Area	Energy efficiency and renewable energy
Planned Duration [months]	**58**
Requested Swiss contribution (CHF)	60 million
Requested co-financing rate of Switzerland [%]	85%

Name of the Executing Agency	The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration
Type of entity	National administration
If type of entity is "other", describe the type briefly	-
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Has the Executing Agency previously received funding from the Swiss Contribution?	Yes☒ No☐

2. Strategic Support Measure description

2.1 Lead

The support measure is aimed at improving the quality of life for Romanian citizens through increasing the energy efficiency and supporting the use of renewable sources of energy in Romanian cities by implementing high quality technological solutions, while using the Swiss experience as well as building on previously funded interventions.
The purpose of the support measure consists in strengthening the energy efficiency and the use of renewable sources represents a national strategic objective, of higher public interest, as national policies are focused on the transition towards a clean energy environment.

The programme shall be implemented through four components:

1. **Financing of investments in larger cities;**
2. **Financing of investments in smaller, disadvantaged communities;**
3. **Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities (Romanian eea Programme);**
4. **Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners.**

2.2 Context and relevance

The 2030 Agenda, through the Objectives of Sustainable Development, established the general framework of evolution at the international and European level, fighting climate change and environmental degradation representing one of the main directions of action at the European level. The European Green Deal represents the EU's road map to reach a sustainable economy, and member states must focus their joint efforts to contribute to the goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Thus, the increase in energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies have become priority areas for fulfilling the obligations assumed by Romania. The general framework is completed with: a) The EU strategy "Renovation wave"[1] according to which buildings are responsible for approximately 40% of the total energy consumption of the EU and for 36% of greenhouse gas emissions; b) The REPowerEU initiative proposed by the European Commission in 2022, as a planning document that proposes the rapid reduction of dependence on fossil fuels from Russia and the faster transition to renewable energy sources.

At the national level, Romania has adopted the Long-Term National Renovation Strategy SRTL) since 2020 to support the renovation of the national park of residential and non-residential buildings, both public and private, and its gradual transformation into a real estate park with a high level of efficiency energy and decarbonation until 2050[2] (The strategy shows that at the national level, the final energy consumption in the buildings sector represents 42% of the total final energy consumption, of which 34% represent residential buildings, and the rest (approximately 8%) commercial and public buildings. Also, buildings with the lowest energy performance were identified, among them being public/private office buildings, with gas and heating sources, as well as multifamily buildings and educational units, with gas and heating sources, located in climatic zones I to V[3], as well as office buildings located in climatic zone I[4].

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[1] *COM (2020) 662 final, A Renovation Wave for Europe - greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives*
[2] *Government Decision no. 1,034 of November 27, 2020. The strategy is developed according to the requirements of Directive (EU) no. 2018/844 (revised EPBD).*
[3] *in Romania there are five climatic zones. They are numbered with Roman numerals from I to V and are taken into consideration in the thermotechnical calculation of construction elements at the time of construction design. The climatic zone I is warmer and V is the colder climatic zone: Zone I (-12˚ C), Zone II (-15˚ C), Zone III (-18˚ C), Zone IV (-21˚ C), Zona V (-24˚ C),*

[4] *In Annex L to Order No. 2055/2005, amended and supplemented by the Order issued by MRDPW, No. 386/2016, the required energy level for buildings is provided in tabular form for the 5 climatic zones, whose energy consumption is nearly zero. Office buildings in climatic zone I (-12˚C) recorded, as of 31.12.2020, 45 kWh/m2 per year in primary energy and 12 kg/m2 per year in CO2 emissions.*

The Integrated National Plan in the field of Energy and Climate Change 2021-2030 (PNIESC)[5] represents Romania's commitment to contribute to the fulfilment of the ambitious European objectives set for the year 2030 in the field of energy and climate, by establishing (a) national targets regarding the reduction of domestic gas emissions greenhouse effect, increasing the share of energy from renewable sources in final energy consumption, improving energy efficiency in all economic sectors and increasing the degree of interconnection of the internal electricity market to the European energy market, as well as some (b) policies and measures to achieve those targets.

The Partnership Agreement 2014-2020[6], as well as the one for the period 2021-2027, maintain the issue of energy efficiency as a priority and substantiate the correlated intervention between European funding sources. Both documents refer to the need for solutions to obtain energy from renewable sources (photovoltaic panels, solar panels for hot water, geothermal pumps), as a *„maximum package„*[7]

At the local level, without explicit attributions in the field of energy[8], local councils and mayors are responsible for the organization at the local level for development, the provision of public services of local interest, including community services of public utilities, urban development or social services, education and the protection and restoration of the environment according to the Administrative Code[9], which involves energy consumption and related costs. The local public administration authorities in localities with a population greater than 5,000 inhabitants are obliged to draw up energy efficiency improvement programs that include short-term measures and 3–6-year measures. In addition, the local public administration authorities in localities with a population greater than 20,000 inhabitants are obliged to appoint an energy manager, certified according to the legislation in force, or to conclude an energy management contract with an authorized natural person, certified under the conditions the law, or with a legal entity providing energy services approved under the law. The local public administration authorities have the obligation to ensure a strategic planning process for which they have limited human and financial resources, the development of the level of expertise being achieved by accessing European funds available through the RRNP (Romania's recovery and resilience plan) or other programs related to the programming period 2021-2027, the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2014-2020. The ROP contributes to strengthening the strategic planning capacity of the beneficiaries, especially in the field of urban development and the development of local partnerships. However, local public administrations, especially the smallest or those with less financial resources, are still faced with a lack of human resources or a level of their training inadequate to fulfil these strategic planning functions (Lot 3 – Evaluation of ROP interventions 2014-2020, FINAL REPORT).

As specific obstacles, in the case of public buildings at central and municipal level, the SRTL presents institutional and informational obstacles, such as: the lack of appropriate data on buildings and energy use, the low administrative capacity of public institutions, the insufficient correlation of actions at the level of the government apparatus, the assumption of Leadership - regarding energy efficiency in Romania at the level of the Government, fragmentation of policies in the field of energy efficiency, communication regarding energy efficiency. In addition, the Country Report Romania 2023 mentions that administrative capacity, especially at the local level, remains problematic, requiring the strengthening of coordination between institutions and collaboration between levels of government. The capacity of the public administration in Romania to provide services and carry out reforms is limited, and the government's effectiveness is well below the EU

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[5] *PNIESC was approved by Government Decision no. 1076/2021, and according to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the governance of the energy union and climate actions, it is currently at the stage where a project to update the PNIESC has been completed, with the final form of the revised/updated plan to be submitted Commission until June 30, 2024. https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/MEMO-1.pdf*

[6] *The Partnership Agreement is the document elaborated by Romania, as a Member State of the European Union, in collaboration with socio-economic actors, which establishes the strategy, priorities and institutional framework for the implementation of European funds in the period 2014-2020. On August 6, 2014, the European Commission adopted the Partnership Agreement with Romania, which sets out the strategy for optimal use of European structural and investment funds for the period 2014-2020.*

[7] *When establishing the financing solution within the two Partnership Agreements, three "renovation packages" were analysed: the minimal package, the medium package, and the maximum package, the difference being given by the weight of rehabilitation and the degree of utilization of solutions in the field of renewable energy. The maximum package assumes the standard of deep renovation or NZEB (Nearly Zero Energy Building), including all options regarding energy from renewable sources.*

[8] *Law no. 121/2014 regarding energy efficiency*

[9] *GEO no 57/2019 with subsequent amendments and additions.*

average, and administrative capacity, especially at the local and regional level, needs to be strengthened.[10]

Relevance and gap analysis

The Country Report Romania for the year 2020 within the European Semester[11] takes into account the fact that investments in energy efficiency remain at a low level, despite good incentives, and it is necessary to attract additional financing to stimulate such investments. It is considered that, although significant sums have been allocated from European structural and investment funds for the energy efficiency of buildings, including from national programs, the pace of renovation is low, which indicates the need for improvement in this area. In recent years, Romania has made progress regarding the energy rehabilitation of homes, but the final energy consumption decreased very little, by 8.4%, from 8.10 Mtoe to 7.42 Mtoe, while the needs and the possibility of saving are very big.[12]

The research of the Buildings Performance Institute Europe[13] states that investing in energy efficiency is the most effective way to get reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and 30% of energy savings could be obtained from investments in energy renovation of buildings, for achieving the objectives of the EUROPE 2020 Strategy (A European strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth).

The development of municipalities and cities tends to be driven by available funding and less by strategic and longer-term considerations and planning. There are many EU and national funding programs covering different areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy, which require a major effort in the simultaneous management of a large number of projects. Cities face challenges with the lack of qualified personnel and hiring freezes. In this context, the Swiss contribution is distinctive because, beyond contributing added value towards achieving energy efficiency objectives, the implemented projects will also serve as exemplars of innovation and best practices. This is achieved by selecting high-performance technologies, which will enable sustainability at minimal costs.

Thus, we are emphasizing that four components bring added value in an integrated manner, as the actions of the Program are interconnected in a logical manner, in the sense that, through the support provided under Component no. 3, the municipalities recognize their current situation in the field of energy efficiency and define their strategic directions, which involve both investment measures and other types of measures that correspond to the achievement of the proposed objectives (information, awareness, enrollment in the EEA community, citizen involvement, etc.). In continuation of the logical process, the most relevant investment objectives receive co-financing from Swiss funds, following that within component no. 4, municipalities to benefit from technical expertise so to implement the best solutions. Therefore, a holistic approach to the entire Program is ensured.

A lesson learned after the 1st Swiss Contribution implementation is the need for efficient and sustainable energy management for public stakeholders, combined with a strengthening of capacity development in energy efficiency and renewable energy at local level. The previously supported *eea Programme* aimed to build capacities towards this goal, however it did not reach the desired impact. A revised *eea Programme* in Romania can contribute to address the above-mentioned challenges. The proposed revised *eea Programme* aims to reinforce capacities at local level through a low-threshold accessibility to national and international best practice examples as well as offered training services and support instruments. This support measure has also been developed taking into account the evaluation conducted by experts contracted by SECO during two missions (October 2022 and February 2023). Following these missions, they presented the "Report on Program Components Identification and Concept Proposal." This proposal includes lessons learned from the first contribution and suggestions regarding funding needs and relevant investment sectors.

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[10] *SWD (2023) 623 final, Commission Staff Working Document, 2023 Country Report on Romania of the Council regarding the Convergence Program of Romania for 2023*

[11] *European Semester - is a yearly exercise to coordinate economic, fiscal, employment and social policy within the European Union*

[12] *Government Decision no. 1,034 of November 27, 2020*

[13] *https://bpie.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/HR_EU_B_under_microscope_study.pdf*

Complementarity/synergies with funding programs

The main aspects presented in SRTL are found in The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)– *Component 5 The wave of renovation* or in the foundation of ROP 2014-2020, Priority Axis 3 AP 3. Supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy. Although with good results at the end of the 2014-2020 period[14] financial resources are still needed. According to the 2023 Country Report, Romania's NRRP provides for the renovation of 2.4 million sqm of public buildings and, respectively, 4.4 million sqm of residential buildings, given that within the cohesion policy funds have been allocated for the renovation of 1.6 million sqm in both sectors. More ambitious national targets for 2030 involve additional funding for the country's real estate stock. In particular, better access to finance for private households and smaller businesses to increase energy efficiency would significantly contribute to reducing the country's dependence on fossil fuels. In this sense, it would be useful for regional and local authorities to better disseminate information on how to access energy rehabilitation funds and the type of small renewable energy installations that could be used in private buildings and households. Another relevant input source is the Large Infrastructure Operational Program (POIM), Priority Axis 6 - Promoting clean energy and energy efficiency to support a low carbon economy. Specific objective 6.1 Increasing energy production from less exploited renewable resources (biomass, biogas, geothermal).

The 2021-2027 programming period brings financial availability through the Regional Programs managed by the Management Authorities (Regional Development Agencies) for energy efficiency and the Sustainable Development Operational Program, Priority 4. Promoting energy efficiency, intelligent energy systems and networks and reducing gas emissions with greenhouse effect. To these sources should be added the Fund for modernization that finances investments in the priority sectors identified by the Ministry of Energy based on national strategies and objectives at the European level[15], as well as the funds allocated through the Environment Fund.

In the context of the strategies described above, funding from the Swiss contribution is synergistic, ensuring logical coherence among various funding measures that contribute to achieving energy efficiency objectives. We are considering allocating funds from the Swiss contribution to sectors not covered in existing programs, such as aqueducts. Furthermore, Swiss expertise will enhance local specialists' understanding, knowledge that will be reflected in future approaches, regardless of the funding program.

As a member of the European Union (EU), Romania is committed to the union's ambitious new Green Deal which requires all member states to cut their absolute greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 55 percent (relative to 1990) by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

However, the country's road to climate neutrality in 2050 is a long and challenging one. The World Bank estimates the investment required for this objective at around 360 billion Euros[16]. These funds would be directed to key sectors, especially energy and transport. Nevertheless, the benefits of the zero emissions target are immeasurable: triple budget revenues, increasing resilience to climate change and creating new jobs.

To support Romanian cities in their transition towards climate neutrality and urban development, a national hub is established by The Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digitalization aiming at implementing the Mission 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030. The Coordination

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[14] *The improvement of energy efficiency as a result of the rehabilitation of residential buildings and investments in street lighting is at the level of European standards (in both types of operations the potential for a 50% reduction in energy consumption was reached). The increase of the efficiency in the case of the rehabilitation of the public buildings is even greater (71%), but this may be determined by the high degree of deterioration of the buildings before the intervention - Lot 3 - Evaluation of ROP 2014-2020 interventions, Evaluation Report, Theme 3. Supporting energy efficiency and promoting carbon reduction strategies*

[15] *The funds allocated to Romania through the Modernization Fund aim to finance investments in the following priority sectors: a) renewable energy sources - SRE: renewable energy sources in the electricity sector; renewable energy sources in the heating and cooling sector; b) energy storage, including research, development, innovation activities; c) energy infrastructure: electricity transport and distribution networks; natural gas transmission and distribution networks, natural gas storage; heating networks; d) high efficiency cogeneration; e) new electricity production capacities to replace coal and balance the grid; f) nuclear energy, including research, innovation and development; g) production and use of technologically neutral hydrogen; energy efficiency in industrial installations included in the EU ETS; i) production of biofuels.*

[16] *https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/b6dfeaca-c430-4877-9f2c-547885bf9cc1*

Committee for the operationalization of the M100 National Hub - National Hub for the implementation in Romania of the EU Mirror Mission "100 smart and climate-neutral cities by 2030[17]" was approved during the meeting of the Government of Romania on October 12, 2023. The Coordination Committee of the M100 National Hub is coordinated by the Ministry of Investments and European Projects (president state secretary MIEP).

In this context, M100 will have the main objective to support all 100 cities, including the three Romanian cities selected under the EU Mission - Cluj-Napoca, Suceava and Bucharest - District 2, in implementing green transition projects and identifying funding sources. Romania as well as other MS, has launched a Mirror Mission, using the same EU-level tools to ***support with targeted funding 10 other Romanian cities***[18] on the path to climate neutrality (https://m100.ro/competing-cities). However, their number is too little compared with the targets envisaged at the national level. This leads to the need to encourage and support other cities in the country to follow their example. Therefore, the Mirror Mission Cities Hub Romania will directly support 10 more cities in Romania to become climate neutral by 2035. The remaining 300 urban centres will indirectly benefit from the efforts made by M100 and will hopefully join this effort in the following years. The process they will go through will be a complex one, inspired by the path designed for the cities in the EU Mission network. It will entail, first of all, the development of coherent and realistic plans of action and investments for climate neutrality, in the framework of a large-scale participatory effort involving all interested stakeholders.

M100 will function as a virtual space to facilitate dialogue between central, regional, and local public authorities, universities and public research-innovation institutes, civil society, and citizens to maximize Romania's impact within Horizon Europe to achieve the Mission 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030.

Thus, MIEP's quality as Programme Component Operator is strengthened by the role of this ministry as central authority that coordinates, at the national level, the policy in the field of structural instruments 2007-2013, of structural and investment funds 2014-2020 and of non-reimbursable European funds related to the cohesion policy allocated to Romania for the 2021-2027 programming period, but also of the coordinator of the M100 National Hub - National Hub for the implementation in Romania of the EU Mirror Mission "*100 smart and climate-neutral cities by 2030*".

Swiss contribution

The present Support Measure Proposal capitalizes on the results of the first Swiss contribution, made within Focus Area 4 "Improving the environment" Objective 1: Contribution to the management of "Sustainable Energy" in cities, by improving the infrastructure, urban infrastructure, institutional capacity and increasing awareness of energy efficiency and renewable energy to raise living standards, promote economic development and provide a response to climate change.
The Romanian eea Programme is a management and certification scheme for municipalities and regions in the energy efficiency field, supporting them to achieve the specific goals on energy efficiency.

The financing objectives stipulated by the present Support measure are based on the principles from the first contribution, meant to strengthen and support further actions aimed at a sustainable and efficient management of energy, thus contributing significantly to an improvement in terms of capacity building for energy efficiency and renewable energy at local level.

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[17] *M100 is a Mirror Mission of the EU Mission 100 Smart and Climate Neutral Cities by 2030, https://m100.ro/index.php?&ddpN=4024262806&we=96cd4c9d3c9fb6e727b17bb1ba268593&wf=dGFCall&wtok=&wtkps=VY6xbsMwDET/hXsUU2KomF46dioK9AsYSHXVxrEcxXWAwv9eq0OBbPOvMOpkPwUcQIlBeiKHKwAxzBx6x0i9sOH9u7zTj5wLiProveE9mTTDr+WCb95N12jDl-SzW3SJVbhNDWOYz9GM195oziZrH4t50VsaL3p+nk/1D1kghHx5fdujf6QDH5vqtwlPvNU93aBTwTp2o2D/CUlA5rSnxpJle2z4bwEK5GleD4a9izG8e/KMLXTruv4C&wchk=8867ef92d8bc8a669d20c67a286e99e037c1f950*

[18] *18 https://m100.ro/competing-cities*

Compared to the time of the first contribution, the current social and economic situation in Romania has evolved. Progress has been made in the field of energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy resources, yet it remains insufficient to ensure appropriate energy sustainability at the local level. Consequently, the support measure is apt and addresses the evolving needs within Romania. In this regard, the proposed financing brings added value to the objectives of energy efficiency.

The Swiss contribution will support the coordinated efforts of the M100 Mirror Cities by awarding 10 extra points (out of 100) in the evaluation sheet for the cities that receive funding from this initiative. In this way, the impact of energy efficiency measures will be increased.

Social inclusion and climate change mitigation and adaptation

The SMP aims to improve energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources to support local authorities in efforts to manage the phenomenon of energy poverty. According to the 2023 country report, despite improvements in recent years, Romania already had a relatively high share of households affected by energy poverty before the recent sharp increase in energy prices, and this can be expected to worsen the situation. The SMP aims at increasing the capacity of the local authorities of the cities that will benefit from funding in the development of local policies in the energy field and cost efficiency, by improving the energy performance of public buildings used especially in the social, health or education fields.
Thus, the actions financed under Support Measure aimed at the rehabilitation of public buildings will represent a first stage in the process of eradicating energy poverty, and in the following stages funds (from other sources) also will be allocated for households affected by energy poverty.
It is very important to mention that the modernization of public buildings not only reduces energy consumption, but, indirectly, also helps energy-poor households, since the savings generated by the energy use of these buildings allow the redirection of public, funds to other social needs, including supporting people affected by energy poverty.

2.3 Impact hypothesis / Objectives

The objective of the Support Measure is to improve the quality of life of the Romanian population by increasing energy efficiency and promoting the use of renewable energy sources in selected Romanian cities and socially or economically disadvantaged communities.

The programme shall be implemented through four components:

1) Financing of investments in larger cities
2) Financing of investments in smaller, disadvantaged communities
3) Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities (*Romanian eea Programme*);
4) Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners.

The four components of the program are complementary in several ways, each reinforcing the overall goal of sustainable development and capacity building in cities and communities. Here's how they complement each other:

1. Financing of investments in larger cities
Complementarity: Larger cities typically have more established infrastructures and can implement larger-scale projects that serve as models or benchmarks. Investments in these cities help demonstrate the effectiveness of projects and can serve as learning examples for smaller cities and disadvantaged communities.

Link to other components: Projects in larger cities create best practices that can be shared through Component 4 (know-how exchange and technical support). They also need specific skilled management, which ties into Component 3 (capacity development).

2. Financing of investments in smaller, disadvantaged communities

Complementarity: Smaller, disadvantaged communities often have greater need for investment but fewer resources and expertise. By focusing on these communities, the program ensures equity in development.

Link to other components: Investment in smaller, disadvantaged communities requires strong Component 3 (managerial and technical capacity development by eea tools), as these communities may lack the expertise needed to manage projects. Additionally, the technical support from Component 4 (Swiss partners) can be crucial in bridging knowledge gaps.

3. Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities
Complementarity: Capacity development equips both large and small cities with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage and sustain investments. This ensures that the projects funded by Components 1 and 2 are implemented effectively and maintained over time.

Link to other components: Training and development provided here is essential for both large and small cities to optimize their investments. It also creates the foundation for knowledge sharing in Component 4.

4. Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners

Complementarity: Swiss partners provide specialized technical expertise and international best practices. Their involvement ensures that both large and small cities have access to advanced knowledge and innovative solutions.

Link to other components: The know-how exchanged by Swiss partners can inform and improve investments in both larger cities (Component 1) and disadvantaged communities (Component 2). It also feeds into the capacity development provided by Component 3, ensuring that the skills and methods taught are up-to-date and globally relevant.

Summary of Complementarity:
Investment (Components 1 and 2) depends on strong managerial and technical capacities (Component 3) to be effective.
Know-how exchange (Component 4) enhances the success of both investments and capacity-building efforts.
Best practices from larger cities can inform the development of smaller, disadvantaged communities.
The combination of financial investment and technical support ensures that projects are sustainable and that local stakeholders can continue benefiting long after the initial funding.

We underline the fact that the four components are parts of a logical process, which complementarily lead to the achievement of the objectives of the Support Measure (no measure can be analyzed and implemented individually, being interconnected).

The actions in Component 3 ensure the definition of the current situation at the level of the municipality as well as the identification of the measures that lead to the fulfillment of the objectives of energy efficiency and renewable energy. At the same time, Component 3 is particularly important because within it local authorities become part of a community that will inspire and motivate them to achieve the objectives of the Support Measure (the interest is created for increasing energy efficiency).

From the list of measures provided in SEAP and identified within Component 3, through Components no. 1 and no. 2 the most relevant measures to achieve the objectives will be financed (the possibility of making the investment is created)

At the same time, the support of Swiss experts in the development of investments ensures the exchange of experience, so that the best solutions are approached (access to knowledge is created).

Thus, the non-refundable funding granted according to the Support Measure ensures the achievement of the Program's objective and the intervention strategy aims briefly, for each component, at the following:

1&2. Financing of investments in larger cities and in smaller, disadvantaged communities

- **impact:**
  Improve the energetic performance of Romania big and smaller cities, the perception of quality of life in the beneficiary cities and reduce disparities between Romania and more advanced European countries, as well as within Romania, through the targeted inclusion of cities in poor, under-developed regions
- **outcomes**:
  Energy is managed in a (more) sustainable way at the municipal level in 8 larger and medium Romanian cities and in 5 smaller, disadvantaged communities in Romania leading to an improved environment, through reduced CO2 emissions, as well as improved municipal finances, through cost savings
- **outputs:**
  - 8 investments projects to enhance sustainable energy management (2 in Sector 1; 2 in Sector 2; 2 in Sector 3; 2 in Sector 4) are financed and implemented in 8 larger cities of Romania
  - 5 investments projects to enhance sustainable energy management (2 in Sector 1; 1 in Sector 2; 1 in Sector 3; 1 in Sector 4) are financed and implemented in 5 smaller, disadvantaged communities of Romania

3. Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities (Romanian eea Programme)

The non-refundable funding granted according to the Support Measure ensures the achievement of the Program's objective and the intervention strategy for Component 3. Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities (*RO- eea Programme*), aims briefly the following:

- impact:
Increase the capacity of beneficiaries in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy

- outcomes:
Managerial and technical capacities of cities and communities are developed through RO-eea Programme

- outputs:
- Creation of RO eea programme, led by the MIEP and the eea Office
- Officialization of the Regional Coordination of eea programme by the Association of Regional Development Agencies from Romania (ROREG)
- One city per region per year of implementation which have gone through the *RO-eea* certification process;
- Consolidation and strengthening of the experience through event participation.

4. Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners

- impact:
Increase the capacity of beneficiaries in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy

- outcomes:
The technical staff capacity is developed thanks to the transfer of experience and information (by Swiss partners), Know how exchange.

- outputs
- 13 selected investment projects have been advised and accompanied during implementation by Swiss support partner

- 13 administrative-territorial units (public administration or utility) participated in introduction and follow-up technical seminary on implemented investment sectors

For the **first two components**, the proposal is to deliver investments to cities, based on a call for proposals, in the sectors mentioned below:

a) Sector 1 Supporting the transformation of existing public building towards NZEBs (S1);
b) Sector 2 Shallow geothermal energy production and energy storage (S2);
c) Sector 3 Power stations on aqueducts and sewers (S3);
d) Sector 4 Energy from municipal organic waste (S4).

The exact number of cities for which funding will be granted will be known only after the evaluation of funding applications, at which time the number of eligible beneficiaries and the estimated number of beneficiaries can be determined. The forecasts are the following:

Components	No of eligible beneficiaries	S1	S2	S3	S4	Potential beneficiaries (no) estimated
1. Financing of investments in larger cities						
a. Large municipalities (Rank I)[19]	11	1	1	1	1	4
b. Middle sized municipalities (all other capital cities of the county)	29	1	1	1	1	4
2. Financing of investments in smaller, disadvantaged communities	32	2	1	1	1	5
3. Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities *Romanian eea Programme*	all administrative territorial units	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	min 14
4. Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners	72 (11+29+32)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13

Note To the number of beneficiaries estimated for components 1a, 1b and 2, if the projects selected following the evaluation will not cover the Swiss contribution related to a component, other project/city will be added, using the amounts recorded under the three components that will be allocated to the project below the line with the highest score, regardless of component and sector, in accordance with the provisions of the Applicant's Guide (annex no. 8).

The 32 potential beneficiaries identified for Component 2, were determined by applying the following criteria:

[19] According to point 3.8 of Annex no. 2 of Law no. 351/2001 regarding the approval of the National Territorial Development Plan - Section IV The network of localities, with subsequent amendments and additions, the following localities: Bacău, Brașov, Brăila, Galați, Cluj-Napoca, Constanța, Craiova, Iasi, Oradea, Ploiesti and Timișoara are of rank I

a) Identification of 60 administrative-territorial units (municipalities) with a population between 20,000 and 70,000 in-habitants, on January 1st, 2023, according to the information provided by the National Institute of Statistics, regarding the population by residence; The territorial administrative-units within Ilfov county and capital cities of the county that meet the population criteria were not included in the list (Ilfov is not eligible, and capital cities of the county are already included for funding in Component 1).

b) For the municipalities enclosed in the list mentioned at point a) the value of the broken down income tax rates at 31.12.2022 has been identified. From the list established according to letter a), the municipalities that were ranked below the average (corresponding to the 60 municipalities) of the broken down income tax rates per capita were retained.

The criterion „broken down income tax rates" is the most appropriate to be applied in the selection process of eligible municipalities under Component no. 2 (respectively, it can ensure that the Support Measure reaches the targeted municipalities that are most in need), because this is the criterion most used by the Romanian Government in establishing administrative-territorial units that require financial support from the state budget (administrative territorial units that cannot be self-sustainable without Governmental intervention).

The broken down income tax rates are a mechanism by which centrally collected tax revenue returns proportionally to the collective. The broken down income tax rates are a fiscal income realized in an indirect manner, in the sense that the collection of the income tax is centralized, and the distribution of these shares is done procentually, according to the provision of Law no. 273/2006 on local public finances, with subsequent amendments. This type of financing highlights the major differences between the administrative-territorial units, as the split rates are proportional to the income tax collected and, implicitly, to the collected income tax, with the economic development of the area to which the commune, city or municipality belongs. Thus, different local communities, although comparable in size, receive different broken down income tax rates.

As a result, the use of this criterion creates the premises for identifying and subsequently supporting areas with lower economic development.

Component 3 will establish a national institutional structure for the implementation of the eea Programme. This result will be achieved by establishing the institutional framework and operationalizing it, as well as by improving the level of expertise at the level of the relevant institutions. Capacity development will generate on long term a significant impact on the quality of life and reducing the differences in economic development and social inclusion. Success stories will pave the way for including the eea approach in all stages of the PCM.

Component 4 will generate a ground for innovation or seeds for new ideas on how to implement practical solutions for energy efficiency and renewable energy. Technical level related to energy efficiency and renewable energy investments at the level of public authorities is increased following know-how exchange with Swiss experts. During the implementation of this measure, Swiss experts from partner organizations will have field missions for analysis and feedback on the proposed local technical approach, equipment and technologies. By interacting with them, local experts will improve their level of knowledge and inspiration, which can be the source of innovation in the future.

The "Financing of Investments in Smaller, Disadvantaged Communities" component aligns with the objective of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Program, which seeks to reduce economic and social disparities.

By channelling funds into the energy sector of disadvantaged communities, it mitigates the disparities that escalate the population's risk of poverty. Investments lead to the implementation of the Energy Cities Award, facilitating the exchange of experience and relevant information on modern approaches and reducing existing inequalities. Consequently, it is observed that the financing

component indirectly benefits the poor and vulnerable, representing a significant initiative complementing those implemented by the Romanian state, targeting public authorities in impoverished and marginalized areas.

The four components, through their specific activities, are synergistic and together lead to the achievement of the energy efficiency and renewable energy targets.

Component no. 4 also responds to the need of the beneficiaries of the first two components to be supported through expertise and know-how exchange.

As a result, the 4 components are closely linked and lead to the achievement of the objectives of the Programme, being met all the stages of integrated management: component no. 3 and no. 4 - analysis of the existing situation, strategic planning; components no. 1, no. 2 and no. 4 - investments and component no. 3 – auditing, measuring indicators achieved.

Theory of change: IF solutions to increase the energy efficiency in different cities (larger and small, including disadvantaged communities) are identified based on the specific studies and technical documentations and also an improved administrative capacity of local authorities is added with the support of Swiss professional partners, THEN the quality of environment and of life of the citizens will be improved, BECAUSE the new technologies for energy efficiency will improve the quality of the air and use of renewable sources of energy.

2.4 Intervention Strategy

The Support Measure includes four components:

1. Financing of investments in larger cities;
2. Financing of investments in small, disadvantaged communities;
3. Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities (*Romanian eea Programme*);
4. Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners.

The Component 1 focuses on the capital cities of the county and the eligible cities under Component 2 were established based on the number of the population and the broken-down income tax rates. Moreover, the separation of large and smaller cities into two components is based on the one hand on the importance of cities in ensuring climate neutrality in relation to energy efficiency and on the other hand on the urban development approach. Thus, it was considered necessary:
a) to continue to support capital cities of the county (that also include the localities of rank I) as poles of economic development and knowledge at the regional level in order to face the challenges posed by the expansion of metropolitan areas, the accentuation of environmental and social problems;
b) to create opportunities for development and population maintenance in small and medium-sized cities facing demographic decline, economic and social problems. This distribution of funding sources by different categories of cities is reflected in the regional programs approved for the programming period 2021-2027, at the level of development regions in Romania.
c) to ensure visibility on the promotion of innovation and good practice. The characteristics of the program regarding innovation and practice, through the exchange of experience, determine a high visibility of the program. The program, the results and good practice will be disseminated both informally (through direct contacts at the level of specialists/experts and on political level, between mayors) as well as officially, through specific communication and information actions.

There are four sectors covered by these two components: Sector 1: Supporting the transformation of existing public building towards NZEBs; Sector 2: Shallow geothermal energy production and

energy storage; Sector 3: Power stations on aqueducts and sewers; Sector 4: Energy from municipal organic waste. Investments in these sectors will contribute to increasing the degree of use of renewable energy sources, giving an added value to the whole endeavor.
Component no. 3: Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities. The Romanian *eea* Programme aims to empower Romanian local authorities to improve their energy and climate policy and the management of the corresponding areas, in alignment with national targets. It also aims to facilitate work at local level through a low-threshold accessibility to national and international best practice examples as well as offered training services and support instruments. Since the *eea* also serves as a know-how management instrument and the process is based on regular re-audits, it also aims to achieve a better continuity of the municipal energy and climate policy, even after changes of key staff within a local authority.

Cities participating in the M100 programme will be encouraged to join the European Energy Award (eea) Programme, thus obtaining accreditation and certification for their actions towards climate neutrality. The two programs are complementary because M100 focuses on improving leadership and governance at the local level, empowering city authorities to drive climate and energy transitions, while the eea Programme provides a structured framework for measuring, managing, and certifying these efforts. By combining the strategic guidance of M100 with the operational tools and recognition of the eea, cities can both enhance their administrative capacity and receive international acknowledgment for their progress towards sustainability goals.
The complementarity between the M100 and eea Programmes can also extend to other climate-neutral instruments, such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, the EU Green Deal, and the Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission.

Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy is an initiative that encourages cities to commit to reducing CO_2 emissions, improving climate resilience, and ensuring sustainable energy transitions. The M100 Programme's focus on leadership development complements the Covenant by helping local authorities enhance governance capacity, while the eea Programme provides a certification framework that measures progress against the Covenant's targets.

The EU Green Deal's aim of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 aligns with both M100 and eea objectives. The M100 Programme empowers local authorities to adopt Green Deal-aligned policies, while the eea certification ensures cities' energy efficiency actions meet these ambitious targets, ensuring both policy and practical action are aligned.

Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission focuses on helping cities become climate-neutral by 2030 through innovation and technology. M100 strengthens governance and strategic planning, ensuring local authorities can effectively manage smart city solutions, while the eea Programme offers a measurable and certifiable approach to achieving climate neutrality, making sure that cities are recognized for their climate-smart achievements.

These instruments complement each other by providing cities with a comprehensive approach—strategic governance (M100), certification of energy actions (eea), and broader frameworks (Covenant of Mayors, EU Green Deal, and Climate Neutral Cities) to advance towards climate neutrality.

Component no. 4 also responds to the need of the beneficiaries of the first two components to be supported through expertise and know-how exchange. Component 4: Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss professional partners includes three main activities: a) Transfer of know-how and technical knowledge- Thematic introductory seminars on the selected technological sectors on site; b) Technical support; c) Best-practices exchange by In-depth seminars (follow-up) online later. Component no. 4 also responds to the need of the beneficiaries of the first two components to be supported through expertise and know-how exchange.

The four components, through their specific activities, are synergistic and together lead to the achievement of the energy efficiency and renewable energy targets.

Thus, concretely, the program offers a strategic approach with significant impact at the local level, as it offers integrated and coherent support, so that, in the implementation process, the beneficiary who receives support under component no. 3, by strengthening capacities and strategic orientation at the level of local policies, is stimulated, through Swiss co-financing, within one of components no. 1 or no. 2, to implement relevant measures, and within component 4 to have access to knowledge through the concrete use of innovative technologies.
Therefore, at local level, components no. 1 and no. 2, that involve investments in the energy infrastructure, are directly related to component no. 3, which involves planning, forecasting and strategic approach as well as evaluating and auditing energy efficiency measures. Thus, in order to ensure a direct link between components no. 1, no. 2 and no. 3, a criterion regarding the beneficiary's intention to adhere to the *eea* community (letter of intent and local council decision) is introduced in the administrative criteria related to the 4 funding sectors within Component no. 1 and no. 2.
In order to ensure the integration of the investment components with those related to the Romanian eea Program and Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners, the financing contracts concluded by MDPWA with the beneficiaries will contain clauses regarding the beneficiary's obligations to implement and financially support the actions related to component no. 3 and component no. 4.
Social inclusion is an important element of the Support Measure, which is addressed in all 4 funding components. Thus, Component no. 2 is addressed directly to disadvantaged communities. Also, the rest of the financing components through the strategic approach have an impact on the reduction of energy poverty.
Moreover, in order to reflect the dimension of social inclusion, when evaluating investment projects within Components no. 1 and 2 are considered favorable scores to projects that also have as results advantages in favor of disadvantaged groups.

2.5 Beneficiaries

For components no. 1 and no. 2 funding shall be awarded based on a call for proposals. The call will be addressed to the administrative-territorial units, meaning large municipalities, middle sized-large municipalities and also small, disadvantaged communities, as they are described in the table below:

Component	Description	No of potential beneficiaries	Grant (Mio CHF)
1.A	Large municipalities	11 capital cities of the counties that Rank I, according to Law no. 351/2001	19,50
1.B.	Middle sized municipalities	29 all other capital cities of the counties	17,54
2	Financing of investments in small, disadvantaged communities	32	17,98

When establishing the budget, consideration was given to the balanced division between the two components of the programme, taking into account that component no.1 addresses two categories of potential beneficiaries (large municipalities + middle sized – large municipalities). However, from the analysis of estimates on the projects to be financed (regardless of the size of the funding), it follows that their number is also balanced.

The Support Measure includes four components:

1. Financing of investments in larger cities;
2. Financing of investments in small, disadvantaged communities;
3. Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities (*Romanian eea Programme*);
4. Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners.

For **Component 1: Financing of investments in larger cities and Component 2: Financing of investments in small, disadvantaged communities**, a call for projects will be launched, according to the Applicant's Guide provided in annex no. 8, following which the beneficiaries for the two components will be selected. This Guide is presently under public consultation and thus could be further improved. All further changes shall be commonly agreed with SCO and NCU.
The projects will be implemented in all 4 sectors, respectively:
Sector 1: Supporting the transformation of existing public building towards NZEBs - This sector targets buildings in the property of the administrative-territorial units, within which take place activities of public interest and which involve presence of the public (temporary or permanent). The renovated buildings should already be seismic consolidated. The access to financing will be done by respecting the legislation in force regarding the necessary technical- economic documentation, notices and agreements provided by it. At the level of the administrative-territorial unit, for rehabilitation of the building/buildings provided for in the project, the approval documentation for the intervention works (DALI) will be drawn up (the approval documentation for the intervention works represents the technical-economic documentation, similar to the feasibility study, developed on the basis of the technical expertise of the existing construction/constructions and, as the case may be, studies, audits or specialized analyses in relation to the specifics of the investment). In order to ensure the energy performance of the building, the financing will target the in-depth energy renovation of public buildings. Renovated building should reach the energy performance certificate A or B.
NOTE! Buildings classified as historical, architectural or archaeological monuments will not be supported by this sector, due to the delays that occur in accessing the necessary permits.

Sector 2: Shallow geothermal energy production and energy storage. This financing line aims to support administrative-territorial units for the production and distribution of geothermal energy and energy storage, as integral parts of heat pumps projects. This sector is limited to near-surface (shallow) geothermal energy for heat production with heating pumps. Geothermal energy used for heating and cooling through heat pumps and district cooling systems is considered, provided that the final energy generated significantly exceeds the primary energy input required to operate the heat pumps. The geothermal sondes are connected to the heating pumps and are used for both heating and cooling.
Sector 3: Power stations on aqueducts and sewers - This financing line aims to support administrative-territorial units for the production of hydropower and heat. This additional renewable energy production can be achieved with the following technologies: a) Small hydropower stations on aqueducts (where the turbine has the function of reducing the pressure and generates additional electricity from reducing the desired water pressure) or on wastewater pipes. b) Photovoltaic electricity production in pumping stations and sewage treatment plants. c) Heat recovery in wastewater pipes and wastewater treatment plants (heat from cleaned water released into water bodies).
Sector 4: Energy from municipal organic waste - This funding line aims to support administrative-territorial units for biogas energy production from biogenic waste. The objective is to provide municipalities or public service owned by municipalities with a renewable energy production, which at the same time contributes to the circular economy. The organic waste, which would otherwise be disposed of in landfills or otherwise, is used to produce biogas through fermentation. Biogas can be directly used for heating, to generate electricity and heat through cogeneration or to be feed into the gas network after purification. In this context, financing assumes biogas energy production from biogenic waste (kitchen, garden, food production) for municipalities which already have separate biogenic waste collection.
The Programme operator (PO) will provide financing to local authorities through a call for proposals with selection criteria that will ensure, to the best extent possible, a balanced coverage of

the four above-mentioned investment sectors. Additionally, beneficiaries that apply for the investment component will provide a letter of intent regarding the enrollment in the *Romanian EEA Programme*, with Swiss funding provided for this purpose from Component 3. Also, funded local authorities shall be supported from Component 3 along the process.

Component 3: Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities (*Romanian eea Programme*);

The implementation of the *eea Component* will be assured by the General Directorate for Technical Assistance and Financial Mechanisms (GDTAFM) within MIEP in partnership with RO REG - Association of Regional Development Agencies in Romania.

Under component 3, GDTAFM is responsible for the set-up, overall programme management and implementation of *eea* programme. The main responsibilities include: coordination of all actors within the EEA programme, financial programme management, communication, administration; coordination with international level; management of *eea* Council bodies; Organization of events, exchange of experience. The partner, RO REG - Association of Regional Development Agencies in Romania will contribute to further development of *eea* programme/*eea* tools - through assessment guidance, dissemination of *eea* to new municipalities, communication activities, regional thematic campaigns, helpdesk for *eea* municipalities and eea consultants.

Component 4: Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners includes three main activities: *a) Transfer of know-how and technical knowledge* - Thematic introductory seminars on the selected technological sectors (S1, S2, S3, S4) on site with a minimum length of 2-3 days in presence. The aim is to share a certain basic level of knowledge and know-how with the broadest possible technical staff. The program includes theory, exercises, and application examples, providing detailed real case studies with lessons learned and concrete solutions; *b) Technical support* - Specific technical support for the selected investment project. The Swiss experts will analyse the technical solutions (feasibility study or, as the case may be, DALI) proposed by the beneficiaries and will follow throughout the project implementation (including through on-site visits), achieving the program objectives. *c) Best-practices exchange* by In-depth seminars (follow-up) online later. The content will be defined after the introductory seminars to address specific needs.

Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners shall be implemented in partnership with the Swiss Partners identified according to the List of the Swiss Partners for component no 4, provided by the Swiss side and enclosed in the annex no 9, and in line with the sectors that will be financed under Component 1 and Component 2.

4.2.2 Detailed description of selection process for Programme Components

As regards the first two components, which aim at financing investments, the selection of projects will be carried out following a call for proposals, which will be launched in January 2025 followed by an official event to launch the Support Measure, in February 2025. In addition, before the official launch, the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration will submit an official letter to all potential beneficiaries, to inform them about Support Measure and financing conditions.

Financing of investments in larger cities, under component no. 1, is addressed to capital cities of the county (rank I). Moreover, considering the fact that, for component no. 1, the list of potential beneficiaries includes one locality per county, determines a balanced distribution of beneficiaries, at the level of the entire territory of Romania. Establishing the cities to which the financing under component no. 2 is addressed - *Financing of investments in small, disadvantaged communities* - was made on the basis of indicators (*broken down income tax rates* and *population number*), which are found at national level. The broken-down income tax rates will be used taken into consideration that this criterion is commonly used by Romanian Government in identifying the administrative-territorial units that needs financial support from the state budget in order to balance their budget. This decision was also taken to ensure a balanced distribution of projects at territorial level.

The administrative-territorial units interested will have 5 months for the submission of the projects to be financed, respectively, until June 30st, 2025. The evaluation of the projects will be carried out by a Commission, composed of independent experts (Program provides budget allocated for

contracting by the Program Operator of the project evaluation services). Experts selected to be part of the Evaluation Commission must meet the following general conditions: a) specialized studies: university, or long-term higher education, graduated with a bachelor's degree or equivalent, in the field of engineering sciences and engineering /architecture/urbanism; b) minimum 5 years of general professional experience; c) minimum of 3 years of experience in the field of energy policy (for example: urban and regional planning/environmental protection/energy consultancy/energy efficiency/renewable energy/building constructions, etc.); d) authorized natural person.

The evaluation commission will have one month to evaluate the projects submitted in all 4 sectors. For each project, an evaluation form will be drawn up, which will include the points awarded.

Also, for each category of beneficiaries (1A+1B+2), the Evaluation Committee will draw up one list of the potential beneficiaries, in descending order of the scores obtained, regardless of the sector, by applying the following tie-breaking factors:

- coverage, by category of beneficiaries, of all 4 sectors: the project with the highest score will be retained for each sector (1 project per sector);
  In order to ensure that each component is within the allocated budget, the four projects will target sectors in the following order:
  -power stations on aqueducts and sewers (S 3),
  -energy from municipal organic waste (S 4)
  -shallow geothermal energy production and energy storage (S 2)
  - supporting the transformation of existing public buildings towards NZEB (S1).
  If an applicant scores equal points for two projects, scores that ensures him the right for obtaining the financing, the Evaluation Committee will make a proposal to fund only one of them.

- efficient use of funds: If the projects selected following the establishment of the ranking and the application of the specific criterion, do not cover the Swiss contribution related to a component, the projects that obtained the highest score will be proposed for financing, regardless of the sector:
- When, after applying the above tie-breaking factors, per component, the amount does not cover the Swiss contribution provided for by the project that ranks below those proposed for financing, the amounts recorded from the three components are distributed to the project below the line that obtained the higher score, regardless of component and sector. If the value of the project exceeds the Swiss contribution, the administrative-territorial unit must assume the insurance of its own contribution until the difference between the available grant and the total value of the project is covered.

The Evaluation Commission will also present a Report for any appeals filed.

The final lists will be presented by the evaluator experts to the Program Operator.

In order to be endorsed by the Swiss side, within one working day from the date of receipt of the final List of projects proposed for financing, on which the Program Operator expresses its agreement, the list is forwarded by e-mail by the PO to the National Coordination Unit and The Swiss Contribution Office, accompanied for each project evaluated by:

a) Application form;

b) Requirements for the project proposals.

As appropriate, evaluators and applicants will be required to provide all necessary information requested by the NCU and the Swiss Contribution Office, through the Program Operator.

After receiving the agreement of the Swiss part regarding the final List of projects proposed for financing, the Program Operator will present it to the Steering Committee. During the Steering

Committee meeting, the experts will present the conclusions of the evaluation process, the resolution of appeals and the relevance of the projects proposed for financing to achieve the objectives of the Program. The Steering Committee will analyze the final list of projects proposed for funding and make the final decision.

The evaluation will be based on the eligibility and evaluation criteria set out in Annex no 13, a), b) c) and d) to the Applicants Guide.

We underline the fact that, in addition to the technical criteria, related to the achievement of energy efficiency objectives (e.g.: energy savings achieved, innovative nature of investments, sustainability of investments), evaluation criteria that support the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, as well as the support of cities already selected in the M100 National Hub project, are also retained.

It is estimated that mature projects will be financed, implementing, at least, innovative technologies in large municipalities, to be taken as a benchmark and to achieve the energy efficiency objectives of the Programme.

As it was shown previously, the investment sectors are:

Sector	Component	Grant value	No of financed Projects estimated
Supporting the transformation of existing public building towards NZEBs	1a + 1b	Minimum 3,5 mio CHF	2
	2	Minimum 2 mio CHF	2
Shallow geothermal energy production and energy storage	1a + 1b + 2	minimum 5,5 mio CHF	3
Power stations on aqueducts and sewers	1a + 1b + 2	minimum 0,5 mio CHF	3
Energy from municipal organic waste	1a + 1b+ 2	between 3 - 10 mio CHF	3

The above situation was realised starting from the following estimate:

Sector	LARGE		Medium		Small/disadvantaged	
	Projects	Value per project	Projects	Value per project	Projects	Value per project
I NZEB buildings	1	3.500.000,00	1	3.500.000,00	2	2.700.000,00
II Geotermal	1	7.000.000,00	1	7.000.000,00	1	5.550.000,00
III Apeducts	1	1.000.000,00	1	1.000.000,00	1	774.969,59
IV Waste	1	7.000.000,00	1	5.031.513,70	1	5.000.000,00
Totals	4	**18.500.000,00**	4	**16.531.513,70**	5	**16.724.969,59**

The budget is not strictly established by each sector.

When drawing up the final ranking, investments targeting the *power stations on aqueducts and sewers* (3), *energy from municipal organic waste* (4) and *shallow geothermal energy production and energy storage* (2) sectors will be prioritized for funding, with the rest of the budget being reallocated to the projects that obtained the best score *within the supporting the transformation of existing public building towards NZEBs* sector. Also, regardless of the sector targeted for financing, in the evaluation process, favourable scores will be given to projects that result in the obtaining of advantages for disadvantaged groups and to the cities already selected in the M100 National Hub project (as reflected in the evaluation sheet). If, within a component, no project is submitted within a sector, the next sector will be funded, in the order provided above.

The applicant administrative-territorial unit has the right to submit projects for each sector, but will receive funding for only one project, i.e. the one that will obtain the highest score. The applicant administrative-territorial unit may submit project proposals individually, not in the form of partnerships. Also, a project containing investments in several sectors can receive funding from the Swiss grant, depending on the score, according to the main sector for which it applied.

The list of projects/beneficiaries, as well as any modification of the budget will be subject to the approval of the Steering Committee. Prior presenting the list of project/beneficiaries to the Steering Committee, after having the formal list from the evaluators, the PO will submit officially the list of projects to NCU and SCO (accompanied for each project rated by application form and requirements for the project proposals) in order to have also the agreement from the Swiss part on the list of projects to be financed.

In case of savings registered in project implementation under Components no. 1 and no. 2, the beneficiaries will make proposals for additional activities/investments to contribute to the achievement of the project objectives or be complementary to it, with the inclusion in the total savings recorded within the project. In this case, the beneficiary sends to the PO brief information on the value of the savings recorded and the activities proposed for financing. The Steering Committee may approve either the redirection of the savings to other projects/components (for example, a project for which the beneficiary has assumed a co-financing higher than 15%) or the financing of additional activities with the appropriate modification/supplementation of the financing contracts.

For component nr. 3 - Managerial and technical capacity development for cities and communities - will undergo a strategic selection: focus on maximizing impact, promoting diversity, inclusivity. As a result, the strategic selection process will take into account the principles listed below. Moreover, the already awarded cities will be prioritized to continue their ongoing activities. These cities will be encouraged to further their efforts in sustainable energy management and climate action, in line with the award's objectives. In addition, they will be required to enhance their existing strategies by developing innovative projects, improving energy efficiency measures, and integrating renewable energy solutions. This continued engagement will not only ensure compliance with the eea standards but also contribute significantly to meeting broader climate and sustainability goals.

a) The principle of maximizing impact:
   - Will encourage the cities participants in component no. 1 and no. 2 to enter in *RO eea* community. A criterion regarding the beneficiary's intention/adherence to the eea community is introduced in the eligibility criteria for component no.1 and no.2. The cities that are awarded investments will undergo a RO eea audit.
   - The *RO eea* programme particularly encourages large cities to participate due to their potential on energy efficiency programmes.
   - The smaller cities are encouraged for participation as well, if they demonstrate the ability to coordinate effectively the process.
b) The diversity principle: adhesion in *RO eea* will ensure representation from each of the 7 regions in Romania by selecting at least one city in each of them.
c) The inclusiveness principle:

- The Strategic selection process will ensure equitable access for cities of various sizes and types.
- The RO eea seeks to encompass a diverse range of cities, engaging those with differing starting points toward. Consequently, the Strategic selection process will consider cities at different stages of readiness and pursuing efforts and pathways, also considering the *RO eea* impact and added value.

The strategic selection will be conducted by accredited eea private experts (national/international eea consultants) and RDA experts with the requisite expertise in and relevant field experience.

During the second phase, the Cities selected will receive customized support based on their requirements/needs/expert's evaluation. This assistance will encompass tailored technical, regulatory and guidance for developing the Action Plan and eea certification.

As it is pointed out to the Impact hypothesis chapter, the 4 components are closely related ensuring coherence and unity of the Program approach. As a result, Swiss support is integrated for the 4 funding components, all of which lead to the achievement of the programme objectives.

We underline again the fact that the four components are parts of a logical process, which complementarily lead to the achievement of the objectives of the Support Measure (no measure can be analyzed and implemented individually, being interconnected).

The actions in Component 3 ensure the definition of the current situation at the level of the municipality as well as the identification of the measures that lead to the fulfillment of the objectives of energy efficiency and renewable energy. At the same time, Component 3 is particularly important because within it local authorities become part of a community that will inspire and motivate them to achieve the objectives of the Support Measure (the interest is created for increasing energy efficiency).

From the list of measures provided in SEAP and identified within Component 3, through Components no. 1 and no. 2 the most relevant measures to achieve the objectives will be financed (the possibility of making the investment is created)

At the same time, the support of Swiss experts in the development of investments ensures the exchange of experience, so that the best solutions are approached (access to knowledge is created).

Prioritizing the financing of the *power stations on aqueducts and sewers* (3) *energy from municipal organic waste* (4) and *shallow geothermal energy production and energy storage* (2) sectors creates the prerequisites for financing impact projects, in particular those in Component no.1. As a result, it turns out both the coherent integration of the 4 funding components and the focus on a limited number of beneficiaries.

For component nr 4: Know-how exchange and technical support from Swiss partners

The projects financed under this component are the projects selected for financing under Components no. 1 and no. 2.

Thus, according to the Applicant's Guide, Financing under component 4 is mandatory and is granted implicitly, in compliance with the financial rules.

4.2.3 Communication activities

The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration and the Ministry of Investments and European Projects will carry out communication activities related to the Programme for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

The communication measures considered cover two categories:

- information of potential beneficiary administrative-territorial units;
- informing the general public, in the sense of knowing about the Swiss-Romanian Co-operation Programme, plus the value brought by it, as well as on the objectives achieved through the realization of investments.

The communication will play an important role in raising awareness of beneficiaries and local communities about the program's mission. The communication and public relations activity is carried out in accordance with the relevant applicable regulations, with the main purpose being to transmit in a transparent and efficient manner, to the public information about the indicators and objectives achieved in the field of energy efficiency, with Swiss support.

During the implementation of the program, communication activities to inform the public about the second Swiss contribution will target the general public, local communities, including direct and indirect beneficiaries, as well as professionals (media, public institutions, collaborators, etc.). Thus, the MDPWA will inform the general public, including the mass media (through press releases), and the target group of this programme about the Programme for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, for which the MDPWA acts as a Programme Operator, through its own website, which will include both a button dedicated to this programme and a direct link to the official website of the Second Swiss Contribution in Romania (The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme), namely https://www.swiss-contribution.ro/web/swiss. In addition, the MDPWA will also inform potential beneficiaries about the specific project calls and potential partners as described in section 4.2.1.

Moreover, in its role as Programme Operator, in principle, MDPWA will:

- organize two events, a launching and a closing event for the Programme for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy; during the launch conference, it will present to the general public, but also to potential beneficiaries information on the objectives of the programme, its components, the actions that can be funded, the types of projects to be funded under this programme and potential partners; during the final conference, it will present the list of beneficiaries funded by the Programme for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, the main results achieved by the beneficiaries, the level of absorption of the allocated funds, examples of good practices, challenges and lessons learnt during the implementation of this Programme for which MDPWA acts as Programme Operator;
- ensure, through information and dissemination activities (in particular online meetings), that all beneficiaries are aware of the assistance offered under the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme and the assistance offered under the Programme for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, including assistance related to the visibility obligations specific to this programme (e.g., correct use of the Swiss Cooperation Programme logo and the logo of the Swiss Confederation).
- facilitate, with the help of the Swiss Contribution Office (BCE) and the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, the exchange of experience between the Swiss partners and the beneficiaries of projects funded under the Programme for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

- monitor (including through on-site missions) and verify in the beneficiary's reports accompanying the payment requests, that the beneficiary adheres to the visibility measures outlined in the communication and information guidelines.

Also, in its role as Programme Component Operator, in principle, MIEP will take care to integrate the eea component into the overall communication strategy for energy efficiency support measures, raising awareness, increasing participation, and driving measurable improvements in energy efficiency across targeted cities and stakeholders.

Communication strategy for promoting eea will be part of business plan and will have as key components:

- Target Audience:
- Local governments and municipalities (eea member and non-member cities)
- Energy professionals and consultants
- Citizens and community groups
- Public institutions and businesses
- National and regional policy-makers
- Core Messages:
- Promoting the importance of energy-saving measures for long-term sustainability, economic benefits, and climate action.
- Highlighting the significance of eea membership, its role in benchmarking and certifying energy efficiency efforts, and its contribution to achieving European climate goals.
- Showcasing financial incentives and capacity-building tools available to municipalities that participate in energy efficiency and eea initiatives.
- Communication Channels
- eea exchange events to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among eea member cities
- National/Regional Energy Efficiency Conferences
- Social Media Campaigns through platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook to engage different stakeholder groups.
- Partnerships with Influencers/Experts: Collaborate with energy experts and thought leaders to share content that promotes the eea and the broader energy efficiency support measures.
- Publications and Media Relations
- Website - develop a dedicated section for eea, on the main energy efficiency support website.

This communication strategy integrates eea into the broader framework of energy efficiency support measure. By using a mix of digital platforms, events, and targeted outreach efforts, the goal is to enhance visibility, build networks of collaboration, and foster an accelerated uptake of eea initiatives across the cities. This strategy provides a structured and flexible approach to communicating the benefits of energy efficiency measures while promoting the eea as a key driver of success.

Moreover, specific communication activities will be carried out by the beneficiaries, who will carry out specific measures both to inform the local community and regarding the visibility of the financier of the investment, through elements of visual identity.

4.2.4 Detailed implementation schedule

Detailed implementation schedule

The detailed tentative Gantt is presented in Annex no. 10

Has the Programme Component Operator previously received funding from the Swiss Contribution?	Yes☐ No☐

8.2 Programme Component Operator Management

[Insert text and/or chart. Alternatively, include chart as annex

The Programme Component Operator performs the following general functions and responsibilities:

- EEA and Norwegian National Contact Point for Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021
- National Contact Point and Administrative Authority for institutional twinning and technical assistance
- Paying Authority for the "Sustainable Energy Management Action Fund" - FAED
- Paying Authority for the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme
- Delegated Authority for the Internal Security Fund 2014-2020 – Police Cooperation Component and Borders and Visa Component
- Intermediate Body for European Funds Dedicated to the Field of Home Affairs 2021-2027
- Authority with competences in the management of European funds, according to the provisions of the Emergency Ordinance no. 66 of 29 June 2011 on irregularities, including recovery of debts established by the EC/audit authorities/control authorities/courts
- Authority responsible for the closure of ISPA and Phare programmes.

8.3 Programme Component Management

Will external management personnel be hired to implement the Programme Component?	Yes☐ No☒	
What personnel capacity will be dedicated for the management of the Programme Component implementation (in full-time equivalents FTE)?	Internal resources 3 persons	External resources

[Component 3]

The management at Programme Component Operator level will be provided as explained below:

3. General Director of General Directorate for Technical Assistance and Financial Mechanisms (GDTAFM) within MIEP, acting as the Head of the Program Component Operator, responsible with the management of the component's activities;
4. The team - 3 persons as follows from which 2 persons within GDTAFM - Program Management, Project Preparation and Evaluation Directorate, Management of Programs and Preparation of Projects Compartment, who will provide the technical expertise necessary for the promotion, implementation (financial, technical and public procurement), monitoring and evaluation of Programme Component and 1 person, within GDTAFM - Program Management, Project Preparation and Evaluation Directorate, Project Evaluation Department. The 3 persons of GDTAFM are in totally separate units than Paying Authority.

1. Head of the Program Component Operator:

The main responsibilities include:

- the general management of the programme- coordination of all actors within the RO-eea program, financial program management, communication, administration;

- the establishment of the organizational structure for the RO-eea national program (tasks of the national office/RO-eea regional offices);
- the coordination of activities with the RO-eea regional offices;

Tasks:

- initiates, elaborates, modifies normative acts specific to the fields of competence and formulates points of view and proposals for modification regarding the legislation with direct or indirect impact on the RO-eea management process;
- concludes the implementation agreement to be signed between the program operator and the program component operator;
- concludes partnership agreements/
- Concludes the financing contracts with beneficiaries, together with the partner;

2. Technical experts

The main responsibilities include the technical expertise necessary for the promotion, implementation (technical and public procurement), monitoring and evaluation of the Programme

Tasks:

- the connection with the regional coordination office established at ROREG level;
- ensures the development and preparation of RO-eea program communication materials;
- ensures dissemination activities (public promotion of the RO-eea program);
- ensures the organization of events, e.g. annual meetings, exchanges of experience, etc.;
- monitor and participate in the preparation of annual status reports for participation in the European Energy Award community;
- ensures the connection with the bodies created at the national level (the steering committee, the accreditation and certification commission) and potential technical working groups;
- facilitate the interministerial coordination body
- participate in trainings/experience exchanges organized by the RO-eea program;
- ensures participation as members in the procurement evaluation commissions, in the field of expertise, in order to award public procurement contracts, when DMFEN is the beneficiary;

5. Financial expert

The main responsibilities include financial planning, budgeting, reviewing, monitoring and reporting activities, working closely with the project management team.

Tasks:

- transmits to the Financial Department the information necessary for the preparation of the budget, the opening of budget credits and the recording in the accounting of the operations performed;
- initiates the financial operations (payments/transfers/currency exchanges) necessary for carrying out the activities within the RO-eea program;
- informs the Program Operator about the irregularities found in its own activity or whenever necessary and responds to the alerts received on the dedicated notification addresses;
- supports the preparation of the certification file for the RO-eea national office; draws up and submits to the OP the reimbursement/advance request, as the case may be, of the funds allocated for component 3 – Development of managerial and technical capacities for cities and communities.

Are CVs attached to this documentation? Yes☐ No☐

Are terms of reference for the management functions to be established attached to this documentation? Yes☐ No☐

8.4 Programme and Project Management Experience

The MIEP, respectively GDTAFM, as the Program Component Operator, has a complex expertise on programs and projects management, as follows:

- CFCU for ISPA Program (1-billion-euro grant) - absorption 95% and Phare Programs (1.4-billion-euro grant) - absorption 92%,
- National Focal point for FM EEA and Norwegian 2014-2021 (502 m. euro grant) and FM EEA and Norwegian 2009-2014 (281.5 m. euro grant) absorption 82%
- Paying Authority and intermediate body for Swiss-Romanian cooperation program 2009-2019 (CHF 81 million) – absorption 76%, verification of all public procurements carried out within 59 projects,
- Paying Authority within Action Fund in the field of Sustainable Energy management (FAED) (18.217.341,31 lei),
- Delegated Authority for Internal Security Fund 2014-2020 – 120 m. euro, carry out checks on beneficiaries' procurement procedures (financial allocation 272,3 M euro),
- Intermediate body for Internal Affairs Funds 2021-2027, verification of all public procurements carried out within financed projects (financial allocation 272,3 M euro),
- Twinning and Technical Assistance Authority- continuous activity together with CE; financial and management administration of 32 twinning projects implemented by Romanian authorities in 9 countries

The people with responsibilities in the preparing and managing the eea Programme, were involved also in the first Swiss contribution, establishing a close collaboration, both at formal (institutional) and inter-human level, thus achieving the necessary compatibility to build a proactive, professional and result-oriented team.

9. Programme Component Description

9.1 Short Summary

MIEP as PCO is responsible for the set-up, overall programme management and implementation of eea programme. The main responsibilities include: coordination of all actors within the eea programme, financial programme management, communication, administration; coordination with international level; management of eea Council bodies; Organization of events, exchange of experience. The partner, RO REG - Association of Regional Development Agencies in Romania will contribute to further development of eea programme/eea Tools - through assessment guidance, dissemination of eea to new municipalities, communication activities, regional thematic campaigns, helpdesk for eea municipalities and eea consultants.

National eea office:

MIEP as the national eea office will sign a partnership agreement with ROREG as coordinator of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) with the role of regional offices.

From the perspective of its accreditation, MIEP as a national eea office will sign a license agreement with AISBL Switzerland - Association European Energy Award (Association-sans-but-lucratif), which regulates the granting of the right to use the trademark together with the related process and tools and to which MIPE will pay a license fee.

MIEP also acquires the services of an international country eea consultant through a service contract, which will develop a business plan for the future eea Romania program and will support the establishment of a certification and licensing system for eea experts and auditors. He will be selected from a list of accredited experts, communicated by the Swiss contribution office or the licensing body (see Annex 6.1 c3 – List International eea Advisor).

MIEP is responsible for organizing the annual meetings in which the coordination committee will meet, whose main duties are:

- to analyse the coherence of interventions, complementarity and synergies in the promotion and efficient and effective use of eea,
- to make recommendations on the topics under discussion in these committees
- to analyse and approve, as appropriate, the proposals submitted by the national office/regional offices
- to pursue transparency in the implementation of the eea

The Committee members are:

- Ministry of Development as Programme Operator
- MIPE as Programme Component Operator & National eea Office
- Ministries (e.g. Energy, Environment, Digitalization)
- ROREG, as coordinator of the 8 RDSs (Regional eea Offices)
- AMR (Board)
- UEFISCDI

Observers/Invitees:

- SECO/SDC
- SCO
- Association eea AISBL
- International eea Country Advisor
- Others (to be invited case by case – eg. eea city/municipality, etc.)

The majority of the members of this committee are part of the Coordination Committee who operationalize the national Hub M100 – National Hub for the implementation in Romania of the EU Mirror Mission "100 smart and climate-neutral cities by 2030", considering the fact that the M100 Hub is a national project through which Romania coordinates its efforts to achieve the climate neutrality targets at European level.

The establishment of the Coordination Committee will be approved by Memorandum by the Romanian Government and MIEP is responsible for issuing the Organization and Functioning Regulations establishing the composition, attributions and manner of organization and functioning of the committee. The secretariat of the Coordination Committee will be provided by the eea national office.

The composition of the CC eea and the decision-making process - CC eea is composed of representatives with the status of permanent members of the Ministry of Investments and European Projects, the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Environment, ROREG, and representatives with the status of guests. Permanent members have the right to vote and guests do not have the right to vote. Each institution with representation in the CC shall appoint a full member and an alternate member. The alternate member participates in the work of the CC eea in the absence of the full member. Alternate members shall have the right to vote only when they attend meetings of the CC eea in place of the full members.

The President of CC eea is a representative of the Ministry of Investments and European Projects, at the level of director/secretary of state. The President has the right to decide (vote).

The adoption of the decisions of the CC is done by consensus. If there is no consensus, the president of the CC will proceed to the vote. Decisions are taken by simple majority; in the event of a tie, the President shall have the decisive vote;

It will also participate/organize award events for cities that are certified, where communities from the region interested in joining this program will be invited. These events bring on stage representatives from the academia, business, civil society, national and regional support initiatives in eea implementation together with Swiss embassy representatives and experts, to provide support to all the cities in Romania in their journey towards climate neutrality.

Briefing eea national office tasks:

- Further development of the eea programme and its dissemination
- Elaboration of a business plan for the future eea Romania program (with the support of the international expert)
- Establishment of a certification system and granting of eea certification.
- Communication activities, examples of good practices from municipalities, references of the energy and climate policy of municipalities in Romania

eea Regional Offices coordinated by ROREG
At the level of the regional offices, through ROREG, a body of accredited experts/consultants will be created, who will provide consultancy activities to municipalities interested in enrolling in the eea program.
Training sessions and seminars, coaching, etc., the organisation of 'experience exchange' events for municipalities, the provision of information for municipalities for the selection of consultants, auditors and other stakeholders (newsletters, website, etc.) will be provided.

- Regional offices should be set up to provide operational support (e.g. implementation of advisory services and events) to municipalities.
- The eea needs to be planned and used as a long-term instrument to ensure the continuity of success and work at municipal level.
- The efforts and obligations for municipalities must be clearly communicated in order to ensure a transparent basis for the decision to participate.

At the level of ROREG, the accreditation of independent auditors will be carried out, based on defined procedures, to carry out audit activities at the level of municipalities and all the necessary tools and documents for the certification process of municipalities will be provided.
At the administrative level, ROREG will be responsible for managing the certification files, the financial-accounting activities (collecting the membership fees from the member cities).
ROREG as regional coordination body could oversee the harmonization of energy-related efforts across regions, ensuring that the goals of the eea are integrated into regional policies and projects.
ROREG will be responsible for certifying municipalities based on the criteria established by the eea, tracking their progress, and supporting their energy transition plans.
The eea regional offices would focus on implementing energy efficiency strategies in line with the eea framework, working closely with municipalities, local governments, and public authorities.
The offices would help create local energy plans, facilitate energy audits, and guide regions towards achieving the necessary energy efficiency benchmarks for eea certification.
As regional development agencies, they could help secure funding, whether from the EU or national sources, to implement energy-saving measures and green projects.
They would regularly consult with municipalities and other stakeholders to monitor the effectiveness of energy efficiency initiatives and adjust strategies accordingly to meet both regional and national targets for energy reduction and sustainability.

Universities might develop training programs or workshops for local authorities and energy auditors to improve their knowledge of energy management, energy audits, and the criteria for achieving eea certification. This builds local capacity to manage energy transition projects.
Academic institutions could help design or improve tools used in energy audits to assess energy consumption more effectively, evaluate carbon emissions, and suggest practical, scientifically-backed improvements.
Universities could assist in analyzing the results of energy audits, providing detailed reporting and scientific backing for the recommendations made by the audits. They may also track long-term progress in energy efficiency at the regional level.

Private consulting firms that specialize in energy efficiency will be contracted by municipalities to conduct energy audits. These audits would evaluate the energy performance of public buildings, transportation systems, and other infrastructure.
Many private firms offer ongoing monitoring and maintenance services to ensure that the implemented energy-saving measures continue to perform effectively over time.
Private tech companies may also contribute by creating digital platforms that automate parts of the energy audit process, making it easier for local authorities to track energy consumption and measure progress towards energy efficiency targets.

The eea regional office, with support from ROREG, will assist the municipalities in energy audits as part of the eea certification process for municipalities.

Private Sector firms conduct the audit, using expertise and technologies to identify inefficiencies in energy use in public infrastructure, residential buildings, or transport.

After the audit, the private sector helps implement the proposed solutions, such as installing energy-efficient lighting, improving insulation, or integrating renewable energy sources. Universities may offer further consultations on the best technological or strategic approaches to optimize energy efficiency.
By engaging universities, academic consultancy and the private sector for practical implementation and technology transfer, the energy audit process can lead to a more sustainable and efficient energy management system that aligns with the goals of the eea.

Moreover, awarded cities can act as mentors for new cities seeking eea certification. Involving already awarded cities in the certification process of new cities under the eea can significantly benefit the program by sharing best practices, fostering collaboration, and using the expertise of experienced municipalities. Here are several ways to engage these certified cities in helping new cities through the certification process:

Pair already awarded cities with new cities based on similarities in size, climate, or energy challenges. This allows new cities to receive relevant and practical advice tailored to their needs.
Awarded cities can share successful projects, policies, or strategies that helped them achieve certification, such as how they conducted energy audits, implemented renewable energy projects, or engaged local stakeholders.
Awarded cities can share their experiences by presenting case studies or hosting workshops focused on their path to certification.
Organize workshops where representatives from awarded cities can share practical advice and lessons learned, focusing on specific areas like energy management, public engagement, or infrastructure upgrades.
Organize events where awarded cities present their success stories, explain the steps they took to achieve eea certification, and discuss how they overcame obstacles.
Facilitate visits and exchanges where representatives from new cities can see firsthand how awarded cities have implemented their energy efficiency strategies.
New cities can visit awarded cities to observe successful projects, such as energy-efficient public buildings, renewable energy installations, or sustainable

9.2 Activities and Expected Results

activities:

- development of business plan for RO eea programme with international eea country advisor,
- preparation of certification dossier for national RO eea office,
- participation in the nation-al/international European energy award,
- preparation of communication / marketing material, positioning of the eea on international level (mainly EU level),
- dissemination activities (public promotion of ro eea programme),
- organization of events, e.g. annual meeting, exchange of experience,
- organization of trainings for eea consultants (and auditors),
- regular assessments / internal audits, support in preparing the eea action plan,
- process and instruments: further development of the eea processes and instruments,
- accreditation of eea advisors and auditors,
- exchange of experiences and networking among eea countries (national level),
- participation European energy award event,
- awarding of municipalities with the European energy award gold,
- management of memberships and licenses with participating countries.

outcomes:

Managerial and technical capacities of cities and communities are developed through RO-eee Programme

outputs:

- Creation of RO eea programme, led by the MIEP and the eea Office.

- Officialization of the Regional Coordination of eea programme by the Association of Regional Development Agencies from Romania (ROREG)
- One city per region per year of implementation which have gone through the RO-eea certification process.
- Consolidation and strengthening of the experience through event participation.

9.3 Beneficiaries

Local authorities/municipalities take a top-level decision to engage with the eea process. They set aside staff and resources for this purpose and register with the national/regional eea office before they start the process.
The municipalities that will be enrolled in the eea Program will sign a financing contract with MIEP and ROREG for participation in the program. Through the signed contract, the beneficiary municipalities undertake to take the necessary steps for eea accreditation, by contracting eea experts and auditors by the municipalities.
Also, the beneficiaries undertake to pay a membership fee that will be available to ROREG (regional office), so that it can ensure part of its expenses (trainings, communication, meetings, exchanges of experience, etc.).
Local authorities choose to participate in the European Energy Award to receive:

- an action-oriented management instrument that leads to tangible benefits
- capacity building through coaching by experienced eea experts
- access to a comprehensive set of nationally-adapted support tools
- increased visibility through public events and awarding procedure recognized around eu
- regular exchange of experience and training

The local authority creates a working group responsible for carrying out the eea process and implementing the energy & climate action plan. This energy & climate team comprises all key players in energy and climate at the local level, i.e. various administrative and policy departments as well as committed residents, stakeholders etc., as applicable.
The national/regional eea office refers the municipalities to contract an advisor from the list of accredited eea advisor, who provides technical support throughout the entire eea process, as well as the eea auditor.

Using the eea catalogue of measures and the online eea Management Tool (EMT), the energy & climate team and the eea advisor collaboratively review which measures within the municipality's scope of action have already been implemented and identify potential areas that still provide potential for improvement. Based on this initial energy and climate review, a report is created that sets out the individual profile of strengths and weaknesses. Ideas for activities are documented for the action plan.

If the internal audit shows that a municipality actively utilizes at least 50% of its scope of action in energy and climate policy, the local authority progresses to an external audit, which must be completed every four years. As part of a four-year award cycle, local authorities are regularly assessed and rated in terms of the eea's areas of activity. This process provides an incentive for continuous improvement, as the bar for successful assessment is raised constantly as new technologies become available and policies evolve.

Once both the eea auditor and the national eea committee have confirmed the municipality's exemplary energy and climate policy and implementation, based on the results of the external audit, the local authority is credentialled under either the European Energy Award (implementation of 50% of the scope of action) or the European Energy Award Gold (implementation of 75% of the scope of action).
The eea recognises newly labelled European Energy Gold municipalities during an annual festive award ceremony.

Is the benefit of the Programme Component a national or regional benefit?	National☐ Regional☐

If regional, indicate the benefiting NUTS-2 regions.

9.4 Sustainability

As sustainability, the regional offices have to support the eea programme and processes in municipalities, according to the business plan developed with the support of the international eea country advisor. These regional eea offices, have to assign members of their staff to be the eea advisors for municipalities that joined the eea programme. The services of the eea advisor should be completely free of charge for the municipalities (once the municipality paid the annual programme fee).

Sustainability is a topic of dialogue between the central and local levels, the involvement of beneficiaries (administrative-territorial units) being a premise for a local public policy based on real data from the field. The improvement of the dialogue and the multi-level approach can lead to an improvement of the long-term effects, through implementation of activities enhancing strategic cooperation, networks and knowledge exchange, aimed at strengthening the relations between local level and national and encourage municipalities to adopt future-oriented energy policy.

Therefore, given the lower costs associated with maintaining the sustainability of implemented projects, beneficiaries will re-evaluate their policies and strategies in the field of energy efficiency at the local level. Furthermore, beneficiaries accessing the eea tools will gain a better understanding of the benefits of environmental protection and will adjust their public policies based on the outcomes of the conducted audits.

Addressing energy sustainability necessitates a holistic approach that combines policy interventions with technological advancements. Collaboration between government, industries, research institutions, and communities is vital to overcoming the challenges and achieving a sustainable energy future.

Additionally, public awareness and engagement are crucial to garner support for sustainable energy initiatives and drive meaningful change.