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Instrumente Structurale  
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# THEORY OF CHANGE

## Romanian National Urban Policy



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## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter 1

## Introduction

### *Why an Urban Policy in Romania?*

Urgent global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid digitalization and the subsequent digital divide, migratory movements, climate change, rapid changing economics, etc. have a direct and local impact on towns and cities worldwide.

In this unprecedented era of increasing urbanization, and in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the EU Green Deal and other global development agreements and frameworks, it has become clear that cities are knowledge hubs, and source of solutions to the challenges that our world is facing.

Today, several European cities are at the forefront in the fight against these global challenges by advancing pioneering solutions at the level of governance and citizen engagement, climate smart actions, innovation and creativity.

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Romania is one, however, of the few countries in the European Union without a clear urban development policy and without a State-budget program dedicated exclusively to urban / metropolitan areas.

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The absence of a coherent nationally framed and supported municipal planning regime, underpinned by good practices such as integrated development planning, multi-year budgeting and spatially informed capital investment planning is limiting the ability of cities and towns to respond to the most pressing challenges, and become drivers of national growth and prosperity.

The current development trajectory of Romanian cities is not sustainable. It is characterized by negative trends such as urban sprawl, suburbanization, rising housing and utility costs, alongside with strong environmental challenges such as pollution and heat-events.

Addressing these challenges whilst bridging the gap between dynamic and shirking cities lies at the core of an urban development approach that is inclusive, just and sustainable.

The development of Romania's National Urban Policy (RNUP) is fundamental to capitalize on the opportunities that cities offer to ensure long-term sustained, inclusive and sustainable development for Romanian's population.

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## Scope of the Urban Policy

The scope of the Urban Policy is to set the priorities for urban development in Romania, for the period 2021-2035, while offering guidance to local authorities when planning the local initiatives.

If well-planned, well-managed, and committed to offering the tools for leading a good life, cities can push forward behavioral and institutional changes that will benefit all.

## Theory of Change

Evaluation theorists and practitioners, such as Huey Chen, Peter Rossi or Carol Weiss, highlighted the challenges in evaluating complex programs, when the expected results are unclear.

Policy makers are often tempted to indicate the desired directions, without defining the exact impacts and outcomes of a program, or the “mini-steps” required along the way.

The lack of clarity not only makes the task of evaluation challenging; it also reduces the likelihood of having addressed all the important facts related to a certain goal.

The concept of “theory of change” was popularized by Carol Weiss<sup>1</sup> as a detailed description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen.

She challenged designers of complex initiatives to be specific about their theories in order to ease the evaluation process and strengthen the ability to claim credit for outcomes that were predicted in the planning phase.

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*The Aspen Institute and its Roundtable on Community Change further extended the concept and introduced a technique called “backward mapping”<sup>2</sup>, which requires policy makers to think in backward steps, from the long-term impacts to intermediate outcomes and immediate outputs.*

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The outcomes are considered to be preconditions for the desired impacts; and the outputs are preconditions for the expected outcomes. The links among these elements are depicted in a “policy roadmap”, a graphic representation of the change process.

This approach was embedded in the planning of the Romanian Urban Policy.

The theory of change unfolds throughout the Policy input report, which details: (1) the overall vision and underpinning principles for the urban areas, (2) the long-term goals, correlated with the Leipzig Charter, (3) the medium-term outcomes, connected to the specific objectives, (4) the immediate outputs of the planned measures, (5) the required institutional and legislative changes, (6) and possible financing sources.

The current document reiterates the main elements of the theory, in a synthetic manner. The aim is to ease the understanding of the strategy and to guide the future evaluations.

However, stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Urban Policy should refer to the full text document, with complete information on the planned interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> Weiss, Carol (1995). Nothing as Practical as Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families in ‘New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives’. Aspen Institute.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Andrea (2009). The Community Builder’s Approach to Theory of Change: A Practical Guide to Theory Development. Aspen Institute



## Chapter 2

## Vision, Goals and Objectives

### Vision

The vision of the Urban Policy expresses the “desired state” for the Romanian urban areas. The collective energies, resources and passion of a wide range of development partners will be mobilized towards a sustainable urban development.

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*Romanian urban areas are resilient, green, productive, competitive and inclusive, offering residents a high quality of life and economic opportunities. Local governments are proactive, interactive, accessible and fiscally sustainable. They place citizens at the center, through partnerships and collaboration to co-create smart and innovative solutions to their challenges.*

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### Goals

The goals of the Urban Policy should be understood as four mutually reinforcing understandings of how a city should be planned in order to ensure livability, the pursuit of common good, and an integrating urban planning that leaves no one behind in its evolution.

#### 1. GREEN AND RESILIENT CITIES

To talk about a green and resilient city means to ensure that strategies for climate change mitigation, alongside with climate change adaptation, and enhanced resilience to natural hazards are well-entrenched practices and are inclusive to all demographics.

#### 2. COMPETITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE CITIES

This goal acknowledges the role of cities as pivotal engines of economic growth. It is premised on ensuring strategies and policies that enhance the attractiveness of cities for business and labor force alike. This means addressing infrastructure gaps, and logistics, while also focusing on bringing up good and attractive environments for workers.

#### 3. JUST AND INCLUSIVE CITIES

This goal pivots around ensuring that urban transformation leaves no one behind in its evolution. Therefore, making sure that every demographic must have equal access to services of general interest – equitable access to the urban dividend.

#### 4. WELL - GOVERNED CITIES

This goal revolves around ensuring efficiency, transparency and accessibility to the governance process.

## Objectives

The Urban Policy identifies a broad pallet of policy objectives that instrument the consecution of each of the Leipzig Charter goals. The pallet shall be envisaged as menu of complementary policy dimensions that can be used by all city and town administrations as they elaborate their Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies.





## Chapter 3

## Measures

### MEASURE FOR GREEN & RESILIENT CITIES

Realization of green and resilient cities, livable and climate smart will be premised on:

- containing the phenomenon of urban sprawl, especially in areas with declining demographics;
- regeneration of built-up areas, paying specific attention to communist-era multi-family apartments, to brownfield and under-utilized patrimony and reducing vehicle clutter;
- investment in and activation of public open spaces, incorporating nature-based solutions and urban green infrastructure to mitigate hydrometeorological hazards;
- investment in reducing vulnerability to seismic risk.

### MEASURES FOR COMPETITIVE CITIES

In order to realize the goal of productive, competitive and jobs-friendly cities, government and development partners will:

- ensure investment in necessary economic infrastructure, especially green mass transit and rail;
- prepare and release well located land and properties for economic activity;
- counter the effects of demographic shrinkage by nurturing strategic partnerships with educational institutions and CBOs to develop, attract and retain a skilled workforce;
- ensure efficient governance processes that do not impede on economic competitiveness.

### MEASURES FOR JUST & INCLUSIVE CITIES

Responses to just, inclusive and sustainable cities shall pivot on:

- land-tenure regularization and regularization of ghettos to foster social housing and access to infrastructure services;
- provision of well-located appropriately designed and affordable housing;
- strong NGOs who extend government services and act as a bridge between vulnerable communities and governments;
- deliberate measures to improve access and affordability to public services;
- the reduction of the digital divide.

### MEASURES FOR WELL-GOVERNED CITIES

The goal of ensuring well-governed cities will be exemplified by:

- a system which fosters vertical and horizontal integration while respecting the autonomy of local governments;
- well-capacitated public corps;
- streamlined regulatory environment;
- efficient governance systems utilizing fit-for-purpose IT solutions;
- transparency and participatory governance;
- sound fiscal environment anchored on predictable fiscal flows and strong Own Source Revenues (OSR).



## Chapter 4

# Empowering Transversal Elements

### *Spatial planning*

The dual challenge of uncontrolled growth and shrinkage that Romanian cities are facing, calls for a versatile approach where the role of the spatial planning system is strengthened and shifted from land-use planning towards integrating, balancing and transposing sectoral development directions into the realities of the built environment.

For this purpose, four key policy directions ought to be integrated:

- establish a common vision to advance spatial sustainability and enhance the institutional capacity to promote sustainable urbanization patterns, by signaling the shared responsibility of all stakeholders and levels of government to act towards the respective goals and their interdependence on spatial planning;
- enable integrated planning of peri-urban development to shape compact, connected and diverse communities while containing uncontrolled expansion and addressing deficiencies in physical and social infrastructure in the existing peri-urban communities;
- capitalize on the existing urban assets such as patrimony and brownfields and to improve the attractiveness of the urban core and existing urban residential neighborhoods by

acting upon the aging building stock, parking overcrowding and limited public spaces and social infrastructure based on the principles of circular reuse and integrated planning;

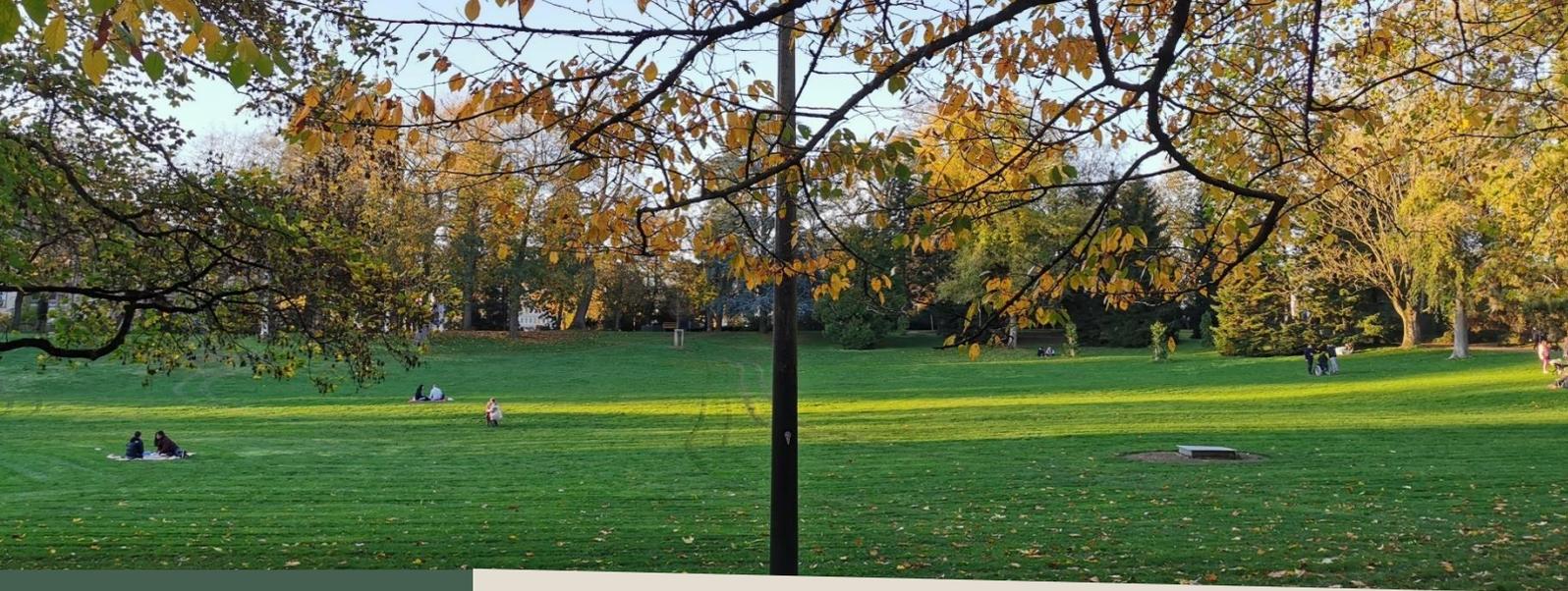
- enhance connectivity within and between the urban and peri-urban areas based on the principles of accessibility and policy integration of land-use and infrastructure planning, in order to reduce sprawl induced car use and enhance equitable access to resources.

### *Digital tools*

The deployment of fit-for-purpose digital tools enables more evidence based-decision making, appropriate and well targeted investments and efficient operations.

The Urban Policy proposes two levels of intervention in the development of appropriate digital tools:

- the first seeks to reinforce a coherent logic for smart cities that applies across all cities, underpinned by principles such as interoperability, visibility, etc. and premised on adequate capacity. etc.;
- the second focuses on city-level interventions and recommends specific tools necessary to accelerate the achievement of RNUP goals.



## Chapter 5

# Prioritization

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*“The key to becoming a more efficient leader is not checking off all the items on your to-do list each day. It is in forming the habit of prioritizing your time so that you are accomplishing your most important goals in an efficient manner.”*

*John C. Maxwell*

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### *Prioritized objectives*

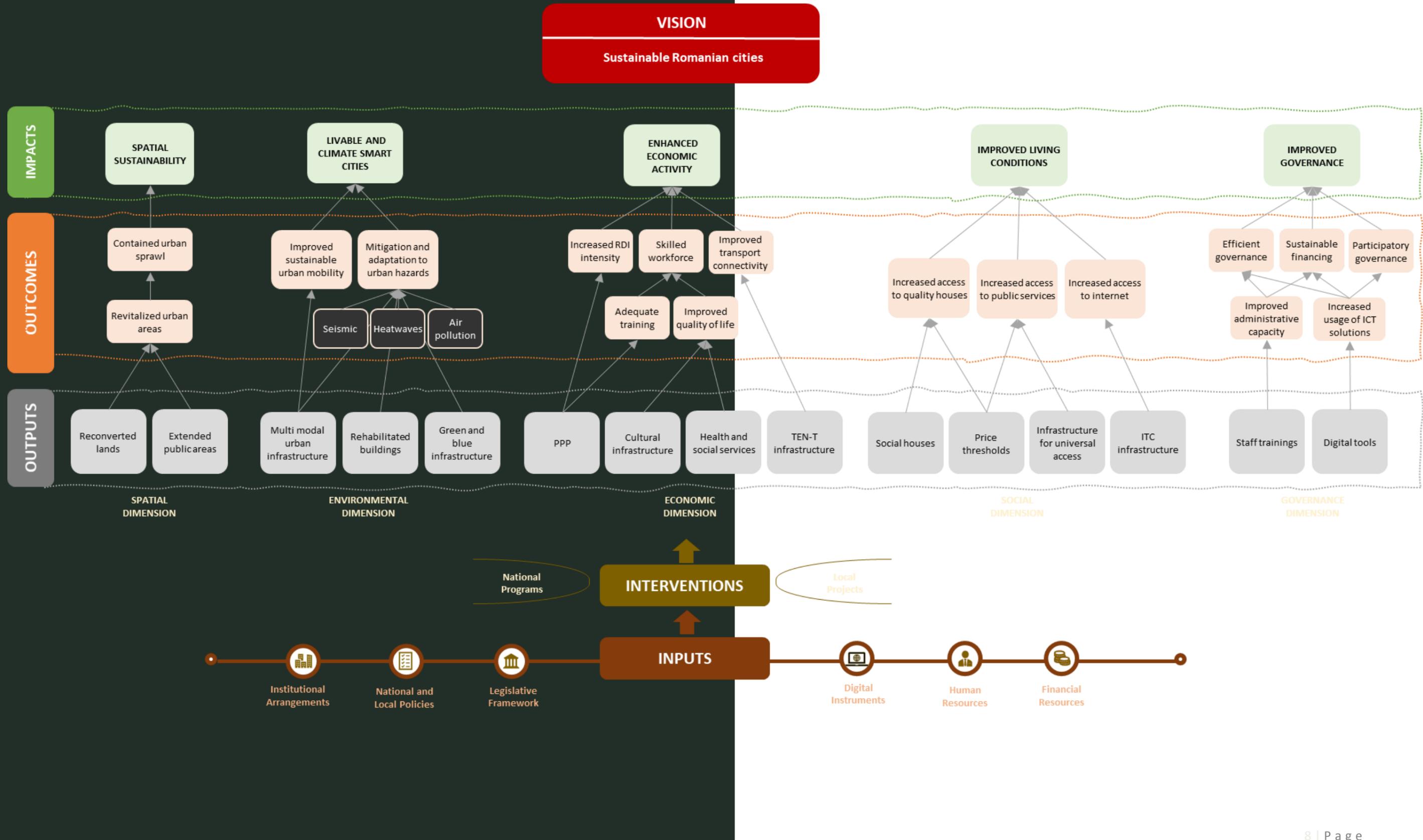
From the broad list of urban objectives, five priority objectives emerge as the most crucial directions for the Urban Policy, given their multiplier effect, capacity to bring about numerous co-benefits and simultaneous contribution to several goals.

- 1) Spatial Sustainability
- 2) Create livable and climate smart cities by enhancing green and blue infrastructure to mitigate and adapt to urban hazards
- 3) Enhance economic activity by providing quality living environments, improving job opportunities and well-served business locations
- 4) Improve living conditions notably by extending access to housing and public services
- 5) Improve public capacity and cooperation across jurisdictions and sectors

The non-prioritized policy objectives shall not be disregarded but envisaged as complementary policy directions that cities can integrate to further their pursuit to achieve the four overarching goals.

### *Prioritized measures*

The priority objectives encompass several associated measures that enable their operationalization, identify the legislative loopholes or needs, the institutional and/ or capacity needs, and the financing opportunities for their effective consecution.





# Chapter 7

# Monitoring and Evaluation

## Timeline

The monitoring function will be premised on regular checks on the progress of the Policy through a continuous and systematic collection and analysis of monitoring data.

The evaluation function will include selective assessments, aimed at providing feedback and lessons learned, to be embedded into strategic planning and decision-making process.

## Institutional Arrangements

The M&E Committee (within the Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration) will implement all activities related to monitoring function (e.g., collection and aggregation of monitoring data) and coordinate activities related to evaluation function (e.g., approval of interim and final evaluations).

Local Authorities are expected to submit annually information on the portfolio and progress of local urban projects.

The newly established Urban Observatory will alert about possible changes in the context of the Urban Policy (e.g., underperforming urban indicators).

External Technical Assistance is envisaged for assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and impact of the Urban Policy. Results will be disseminated through four evaluation reports.

2021	2025	2028	2032	2035
<p><b>- POLICY SET-UP</b></p> <p><b>Monitoring function:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the portfolio of projects</li> <li>Assess the adequacy of financial resources</li> <li>Discussions with Local Authorities</li> </ul>	<p><b>- FIRST RESULTS</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation function:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the set-up of the Policy</li> <li>Assess the interim progress (2021-2024)</li> <li>Provide recommendations for possible reallocations of EU Funds</li> </ul>	<p><b>- FIRST IMPACTS</b></p> <p><b>- UPDATED EU POLICIES</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation function:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the interim progress (2021-2027)</li> <li>Estimate the interim impact (2021-2027)</li> <li>Assess the relevance of the Policy and update the priority interventions</li> </ul>	<p><b>- NEW PROJECTS &amp; RELATED RESULTS</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation function:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-assess the set-up of the Policy (new portfolio of projects)</li> <li>Assess the interim progress (2028-2031)</li> </ul>	<p><b>- CLOSING</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation function:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the interim progress (2028-2035)</li> <li>Estimate the interim impact (2028-2035)</li> <li>Ex-post evaluation: overall results and lessons learned</li> </ul>

**CONTINUOUS MONITORING (M&E Committee)**



## Indicators

The M&E functions will rely on the system of indicators of the Urban Observatory, which comprises more than 800 indicators, associated with the five dimensions of the Urban Policy – spatial, environmental, economic, social and government. A closer monitoring will be ensured for the indicators directly linked to the priority interventions of the Policy, presented in the below table.

DIMENSION	CODE	INDICATOR
SPATIAL	1	Ratio of land consumption to population growth rate
	2	Adoption of integrated urban plans
	3	Satisfaction with public spaces (Urban barometer)
ENVIRONMENTAL	4	Greenhouse Gas emissions per capita
	5	Green zones per capita
	6	Number of times the limit of main air pollutants is exceeded
	7	% of people within 0,5 km of public transit running at least every 20 min
ECONOMIC	8	Gross Domestic Product per capita
	9	Skills gaps in the current workforce
	10	Research and development intensity
	11	Accessibility of national roads
	12	Freight train traffic
	13	Satisfaction with social and health services (Urban barometer)
	14	Satisfaction with cultural, recreational and leisure services (Urban barometer)
SOCIAL	15	Population at risk of poverty or exclusion
	16	Affordable homes delivered
	17	Population with access to internet
GOVERNANCE	18	Own revenues per capita
	19	EU funds received
	20	Allocation of expenditure for staff trainings
	21	Cooperation with other municipalities and other levels of government
	22	Citizen participation in local planning
	23	Satisfaction with opportunities to participate in local planning (Urban barometer)

