

The Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (DDISDS) and the implementation of ITI mechanism

Context

Given the specific needs of the Danube Delta, a wide consultation process was initiated in 2012 with central and local institutions in order to identify the proper solutions for development of the area and to elaborate an integrated sustainable development strategy for the Danube Delta area.

The Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (DDISDS) was developed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MDRAP) with external expertise/advisory services assistance from the World Bank (financed from OP Technical Assistance 2007-2013).

The Strategy was developed based on a systematic technical analysis and a participatory process. Further on, there were defined the vision and the strategic objectives. The vision for the region was defined following additional consultations with the local communities and the authorities, as well as representatives of government units and other stakeholders and NGOs.

DDISDS status

The strategy has been elaborated and will be launched on the endorsement circuit for approval by Government Decision.

The content of the strategy was revised as a result of the comments made by the organizations participating in the consultation meetings and by the management authorities, as well as following the informal dialogue with the EC.

In order to establish the list of interventions within the Strategy, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MRDPA), with the support of the Ministry of European Funds (MEF), had several technical meetings with representatives of the Intercommunity Development Association – Integrated Territorial Investments (IDA ITI) which identified priority needs in the territory.

Currently, the main difficulty is to finalize the strategic environmental assessment process, including the cross border consultation process, mentioning that Ukraine did not answer yet, although the proposed deadline was already exceeded.

All the documents were sent by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ukrainian authorities, on 3rd of May 2016. In June, through an official letter, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed MRDPA that Ukraine informed Romania that they will provide an official position in June 2016.

DDISDS monitoring

The monitoring of DDISDS is ensured by MRDPA

The draft of the GD stipulates that MRDPA with MEF and MEWF (Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests), will elaborate on a regular basis (every 2 years) an implementation report.

The 7th section of the proposed strategy includes the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation, considering:

- ✓ **monitoring and the evaluation of the strategy** (performed by MRDPA and IDA ITI). There are considered 10 general indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy
 - 1) The employment rate of the population aged between 20 and 64,
 - 2) The percentage of the GDP allocated to research, development and innovation activities,
 - 3) The total volume of greenhouse gases emissions,
 - 4) The share of energy from renewable resources,
 - 5) The volume of CO2 emissions generated by the residential and public sectors,
 - 6) Annual drop-out rate,
 - 7) Share of young population (30-34) with higher education,
 - 8) The number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion,
 - 9) The aggregate value of the Local Human Development Index in the Danube Delta ITI territory,
 - 10) The aggregate amount of the Territorial Development Index in the Danube Delta ITI territory;
- ✓ **monitoring of the implementation of Danube Delta ITI mechanism** (achieved by the *Functional Working Group - Innovative Approaches*, coordinated by MEF, based on quarterly reports of activity submitted by IDA ITI, which include information related to the proactive actions for the support of ESI Funds project beneficiaries, updating / maintenance of the website of IDA ITI, ensuring the visibility of the projects under implementation and of the IDA ITI activities, project implementation status, difficulties, etc.).
- ✓ **monitoring the project level implementation**, achieved by management authorities and IDA ITI and every beneficiary according to MA / IDA ITI procedures.

Strategy and ITI mechanism management, including MA/ministries coordination
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The Intercommunity Development Association – Integrated Territorial Investments (IDA ITI) was created at local level in order to manage the ITI mechanism and the Strategy.

The Consultative Committee of the Association IDA ITI is a partnership body consisting of about 50 members (49% public institutions relevant to the targeted territory and 51% representatives of civil society - NGOs, professional associations, employers' associations, foundations, associations, business representatives, academia, research institutes, universities etc.).

The Thematic Advisory Subcommittees correspond to the five strategic pillars of the strategy:

- Thematic advisory subcommittee Pillar I: Protecting Environmental and Natural Resource Assets
- Thematic advisory subcommittee Pillar II: Improving the Economy
- Thematic advisory subcommittee Pillar III: Enhancing Connectivity
- Thematic advisory subcommittee Pillar IV: Providing Basic Services
- Thematic advisory subcommittee Pillar V: Promoting Efficiency, Affordability and Sustainability (including Administrative Capacity of Local Authorities and Technical Assistance for Program Implementation).

At the horizontal level of Partnership Agreement, the technical coordination is ensured through the **Functional Working Group - Innovative Approaches**, which is subsequent to the Steering Committee for Management of the Partnership Agreement. The coordination and the secretariat are assured by MEF through the General Directorate Analysis, Programming and Evaluation.

The members of the Functional Working Group - Innovative Approach are representatives of all Management Authorities of the programmes financed through ESI Funds, **Intercommunity Development Association – Integrated Territorial Investments, MRDPA and MEF – General Directorate Analysis, Programming and Evaluation.**

Prioritization of Strategy relevant projects

The draft of the GD establishes that the ITI implementing methodology is to be approved by Common Order of the Minister of European Funds, the Minister of Regional Development and Public Administration and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The methodology for prioritizing the projects is developed by IDA ITI.

Based on a concise project fiche, the IDA ITI gives a **compliance notice with the Strategy.**

This compliance notice represents an eligibility criteria/condition for project financing. At the level of each MA, the projects follow the general procedure for evaluation and selection.

The approach of ITI mechanism at the level of each program ITI is presented in the Annex.

The support provided to the beneficiaries for projects preparation and implementation

In order to coordinate and support the local beneficiaries, IDA ITI

- Develops and strengthens the partnership in the ITI area, by creating the ITI projects network, by guiding the involved staff at the level of County and Local Councils and by organizing seminars and workshops with all relevant actors;
- Organizes meetings with local beneficiaries in order to inform and explain them the eligibility criteria for the projects funded under ITI, according to the Beneficiary guidelines of each programme;
- Supports and monitors the performance of each beneficiary in the stage of projects elaboration and its implementation; acts accordingly to avoid delays or blockages;
- Provides help-desk to the beneficiaries (informs on the necessary documents, procurement procedures, selection criteria, practical tips, best practices etc.);
- Organizes meetings to ensure the DD ITI visibility and maintains the awareness and communication channels regarding the ITI issue with all relevant actors.

ITI Approach at programme level

OP/ allocation	IDA ITI Compliance Notice	Integrated territorial investment approach at OP level
NPRD 168 million €	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Compliance Notice with the DDISDS (Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy) issued by IDA ITI represents eligibility condition for obtaining the financing - This Compliance Notice is required to be submitted with the financing request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching ITI dedicated calls for proposals - The Beneficiary Guidelines – specific conditions are mentioning the obligation to present ITI IDA Compliance Notice - Until the approval of DDISDS, the potential beneficiaries of ITI territory (public / private) are not subject to the presentation of additional documents nor have restrictions on submitting financing requests under the already launched calls
ACOP 16 million €	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Compliance Notice with the DDISDS issued by IDA ITI represents eligibility condition for obtaining the financing - This Compliance Notice is required to be submitted with the financing request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching ITI dedicated calls for proposals (OS 1.1 and 2.1) - The Beneficiary Guidelines – specific conditions are mentioning the obligation to present IDA ITI Compliance Notice - Projects should correlate the needs identified in the DDISDS with the objectives of the Strategy for Strengthening the Public Administration
ROP 358.1 million €	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Compliance Notice with the DDISDS, issued by ITI IDA represents eligibility condition for obtaining the financing under PA 3,5,6,7,8 and 10; - This Compliance Notice is required to be submitted with the financing request - For projects submitted under PA2, the Compliance Notice is not mandatory (the eligibility condition for ITI DD dedicated calls refers to the location of project implementation: ITI DD area) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching ITI dedicated calls for proposals - The Beneficiary Guidelines – specific conditions are mentioning the obligation to present IDA ITI Compliance Notice - Competitive/non-competitive calls, depending on the specificity of each PA/SO/op - The applicants which will submit projects for ITI calls will be unable to submit the same type of projects under the SE Region regional call - The projects that will be implemented within the DD ITI area, will be eligible only under ITI dedicated calls - The Beneficiary Guidelines contain the clear indication of the fact that ITI DD applicants are not able to apply for funding within the regional calls or national EUSDR calls (EU Strategy for the Danube Region)

OP/ allocation	IDA ITI Compliance Notice	Integrated territorial investment approach at OP level
LIOP 407.64 million €	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Compliance Notice with the DDISDS, issued by ITI IDA represents eligibility condition for obtaining the financing (for new projects) - For the water phased project (<i>"Extension and rehabilitation of water and wastewater infrastructure in Tulcea County"</i>) the IDA ITI Compliance Notice is not required; - For waste phased project (<i>"Waste Management Integrated System in Tulcea County"</i>) the LIOP MA requires the IDA ITI Compliance Notice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No dedicated ITI calls - For the PA 4 and 6 (biodiversity and energy), the ITI projects will compete within the pre-allocated amount of the program; - ITI financial allocation is indicative for those PA/ SO where it is only one eligible project, its final value depending on the outcome of the feasibility study related to the project objectives
COP 60 million €	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Compliance Notice with the DDISDS, issued by IDA ITI represents eligibility condition for obtaining the financing - COP MA did not decide the moment when the Compliance Notice should be presented (the moment of submitting the financing request/contracting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In case of RDI projects, under PA1, for the calls already launched, the projects that were selected and are relevant for the DDISDS will be identified in order to be included in monitoring/reporting process; for future call for proposals ITI dedicated allocations will be established - Under PA 2, the COP specificity does not allow launching dedicated calls, excepting BB Broadband investments for which there was made a proposal by the IDA ITI
HCOP 60 million €	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Compliance Notice with the DDISDS, issued by IDA ITI represents eligibility condition for obtaining the financing - This Compliance Notice is required to be submitted with the financing request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching ITI dedicated calls for those PA with specific indicative allocation and drafting ITI dedicated Beneficiary Guidelines – specific conditions, especially for SO 4.2. IDA ITI will analyze each HCOP SO, especially for SO 4.2, to see their relevance to the ITI territory and for which the potential beneficiaries are interested. This analysis will support the HCOP MA decision for launching dedicated calls especially for the PA 3, 4 and 6, including the splitting allocations per axis / specific objectives; - For the ITI dedicated calls, it is mandatory that the target group to be in the ITI territory, but the applicant can be from the whole national territory; - The indicators related to the target group mentioned in the ITI guides will be established according to local specificities (based on IDA ITI analysis) - For HCOP priority axis where there is no ITI indicative financial allocation, the ITI area beneficiaries will be able to submit projects on the national calls.

OP/ allocation	IDA ITI Compliance Notice	Integrated territorial investment approach at OP level
FMAOP 37 million €	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Compliance Notice with the DDISDS, issued by IDA ITI represents eligibility condition for obtaining the financing - The Compliance Notice should be submitted within 15 working days after the submission of the financing request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under the national call for proposals, a part of the total allocation will be retained for the applicants from ITI area; - An applicant from ITI territory may submit a project both on the national allocation, without IDA ITI Compliance Notice, and on the ITI dedicated allocation, together with the IDA ITI Compliance Notice.