

## PRESS RELEASE

### European Funds, vital resources in developing the West Region

*At Timis County Council, citizens are properly informed about the major benefits of European Union's Cohesion Policy, through the campaign known as "Together for Cohesion: Let's rEUnite!". The EU will allocate a budget of 30.6 billion euros to finance the projects during the next financial programming period.*

We all know that the **European Union funds secure a favorable framework for the development of Timiș County**, in priority areas such as health, road infrastructure, tourism, environmental protection and emergency management. The support through raising these funds is associated to a deep breath of "oxygen" by our communities.

Our country is a net beneficiary of **EU structural funds, thus cohesion policy funds represent the main sources of investment for us**. Cohesion policy, also known as regional policy, is one of the most important and complex policies of the European Union, aiming to reduce the economic, social and territorial disparities between the regions of the Member States.

Therefore, it is important to focus on the significant added value brought to the whole country **during the current financial year, in which the EU has allocated over 350 billion euros for the cohesion policy**, suming up about one third of the total European Union budget.

**But where are these funds directed?** Mainly towards transportation and energy infrastructure development, but also towards developing new protective measures for the environment or efficiency management in terms of resources, towards increasing the competitiveness of SMEs are, social inclusion, reduction of carbon emissions or sustainable employment. Other areas where considerable funds have been invested concern climate change adaptation, educational and professional training, technical assistance, research and innovation, improvement of public administration efficiency, but also information and communications technology.

**Our West Region directly benefited from cohesion prioritization of the EU investment policies**, because the budget allocation of the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework has created thousands of new jobs, facilitated the rehabilitation of several regional roads, the provision of high-performance equipment for various hospitals and schools and considerable investments in terms of services and infrastructure. This is why we are entitled to say that cohesion policy, combined with foreign investments, represent the main factors to raise **Timis into the top counties with the lowest unemployment rate in Romania**. Since our 2007 accession to the European Union until the present, we lowered from a percent of 7.7 in 2006 to **a currently rate below 1%**.

**Hence the importance of informing citizens in the Region West, for them to be aware of the benefits EU Cohesion Policy can bring through accessing funds.** According to a recent Eurobarometer survey carried out on June 2017, **only 35% of citizens are aware of EU cohesion policy-funded projects in their regions**, and only 28% of them know about the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), while less than one in twenty respondents (4%) ever heard about the Cohesion Fund.

To the purpose of informing both citizens and local authorities, Timis County Council hosted the conference **"The benefits of cohesion policy to the citizens of the European Union"**, as part of the **"[Together for cohesion: Let's rEUUnite!](#)" #together4cohesion** project. Its aim was to promote the positive impact than cohesion programs bring to the regions, by involving stakeholders in specific discussions regarding how to effectively attract EU funds. Thus the representatives of public institutions and non-governmental organizations have acknowledged relevant details about the upcoming programming framework. Guests have also been informed on how our County took advantage of these funds so far. Speaking of, there have been detailed only few of the major successful Timis County's projects, funded through cohesion policy by Timis County Council:

**Expanding and modernizing the Emergency Receiving Unit of Timișoara County Hospital**, a total of 4.4 million lei, financed through the 2014 – 2020 Regional Operational Program. The Emergency Receiving Unit of Timisoara County Hospital receives approximately 200 patients every 24 hours. For the past three years, the number of patients has been continuously increasing by 400-500 patients per year. The Hospital is in charge with the most complicated cases and critical patients from Timis and other regions. The investment focused on three important aspects – **an increase of 25% in terms of workstations**, creating a much functional circuit for patient triage and ensuring greater comfort for both patients and their caregivers.

**Construction of a new Obstetrics-Gynecology clinic**, an investment of over 50 million lei, financed through an European project within the V-A Romania-Hungary Interreg Programm. The new clinic will be providing high quality medical care, including in-vitro fertilization, obstetrics-pathology, gynecology, laparoscopic and hysteroscopic surgery, physiological obstetrics and daily hospitalization. Intensive care and premature babies or eutrophic newborns units and facilities for companions are also provided. The maternity ward will also have an ATI section, a block operator, birth rooms and guarding rooms. Given the scale of the investment, we are speaking of building a regional maternity ward, providing top services for the entire western part of the country.

**The exit of the A1 Highway**, through extending the Dumbrăvița - A1 county road to four lanes. Worth 50 million lei, this is another project of the Timis County Council, financed by European funds through the Regional Operational Programm, to the great benefit of all citizens in our region, as well as to all those in transit on this route. The execution is meant to be completed by 2022.

**Modernising the DJ 693 county road to interconnect it with A1 highway and building a bridge over Mureș River in Pecica, Arad County**, is another example of a European Union financed project, meant to ensure the interconnection of road sectors from the border of Timis - Arad county, with the TEN-T network, as well as providing an indirect connection with the A1 highway.

Nevertheless, the Timis County Council ensures, through **ADIWest**, the co-financing of the Romania-Hungary cross-border project, of approximately 850.000 euros, having the aim to purchase three

complex intervention vehicles in order to increase the number of mobile units suitable equipped for emergency interventions and to reduce the average response time, both in rural and urban areas.

*"In this context, it is our duty to make full use of all the opportunities we are given in order to thoroughly involve and train ourselves in increasing the level of absorption of these funds to the benefit of the county's administrative-territorial units in the future"* said Călin-Ionel DOBRA, President of Timiș County Council. At the same time, the president of CJ Timiș launched an appeal to the mayors, vice-mayors and representatives of the city-halls all around Timiș county to strategically prepare for the next financial programming period. He advised them to make use of any means to make citizens aware of the long-term benefits of accessing funds through the membership in the European Union for their communities.

### **About „*Together for cohesion: Let's rEUnite*” Project**

Co-financed by DG Regio (Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy), the #togetherforcohesion project began in April 2019, through a communication campaign designed by a consortium formed by the European Assembly of Regions (ARE), as leading partner, mc Group - media partner and the local governments of six regions in five different countries: Trento (IT), Csongrad (HU), Timiș (RO), Alba (RO), Catalonia (ES) and Varazdin (HR). An ambitious team that aims to raise awareness among citizens, business owners and entrepreneurs belonging to all sort of domains, about the benefits brought to the regions by involving in projects and actions within the cohesion policy.

### **About *AER*:**

Founded in 1985, AER is the largest independent network of regions throughout Europe, bringing together over 150 regions from 30 countries - from Norway to Turkey and from Russia to Portugal. Political assembly reuniting elected regional representatives, AER is a dedicated platform for the best exchange practices, advocacy and EU interregional projects.

Covering a wide range of topics and with a flexible structure AER aims to support its members and partners, in order to implement actions and policies in various fields, by first and foremost informing them, about the options and methods available to them.

AER provides its members with access to specialized policy analyzes, advice on strategic aspects of policy, as well as regional and intermediary connections with European institutions.

AER monitors calls for projects and disseminates information on financing opportunities and partner searching, assisting members in finding partners for announced projects, writes and develops projects, participates in projects as a partner. With extensive experience in managing and financing European projects, AER assists its members in projects or programs at EU or regional level.

Last but not least, AER uses an expanded network to support regional causes, ensuring that regions and their voice are heard at the right time, at the right place, and by the right people.

In Romania, 30\* counties are AER members, and the organisation has an external office hosted by the Alba County Council. The office works in promoting the connection between the regions of Romania, the

south-east of Europe and the regions of the whole Europe within the events and activities of AER in Romania and Southeast Europe.

Timis County is a member of AER, being represented by Mihai RITIVOIU, county councilor, as President of the Commission 2 - Social Policy and Public Health.

\*AER's members in Romania: AB, AR, AG, BH, BN, BV, CL, CS, CJ, CV, DB, DJ, GL, GJ, HR, IS, IF, MM, MH, MS, NT, OT, PH, SJ, SM, SB, TM, TL, VS, VR.

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